ABSTRACT

FRANCO, KARINA ELIZABETH. How Do Black Male College Students Develop Supportive Relationships with White Faculty Members and Advisors at a Predominately White Institution. (Under the direction of Dr. Joy Gaston Gayles.)

This qualitative study examined how Black male students develop supportive relationships with White faculty members and advisors at a predominately White urban institution in the Southeastern United State. A multiple-case study method was used to explore how Black males define support, what faculty and advisor characteristics attract Black male students, what events promote relational growth between Black male students and White faculty member or advisors, and how race impact their relationships.

Findings suggest that participants were more likely to seek support and build relationships with White faculty members and advisors who gave direction, advice, and informational support. It also appears that White personnel were able to leverage commonalities they have with participants to strengthen their relationships. When White faculty members and advisors practiced the behaviors listed above, they helped participants overcome negative impressions or assumptions they made of these professional staff based on race. Finally, the classroom was found to be an effective place for White faculty members to communicate to participants that they were available for relationships.

Findings also suggest that Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) Cross-National Mentoring Theory may be useful in understanding how Black male students and White faculty members and advisors move from casual to mature relationships. However, there was not enough data to determine how useful Cross’s (1991) Model of Black Identity and Sellers et al.’s (1998)
concept of racial salience could be in understanding cross-cultural racial formation between the pairs in the study.
How Do Black Male College Students Develop Supportive Relationships with White Faculty Members and Advisors at a Predominately White Institution

by
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all the young Black men at Southern State University who are overcoming obstacles and breaking the stereotypes society holds about them. I am especially grateful to the young men who chose to be interviewed and share their experiences at Southern State with me. I am honored by their willingness provide me with an opportunity to hear their stories.
BIOGRAPHY

Karina Franco has worked in higher education for the past twelve years. She has served students through career counseling, leadership training, academic advising, and academic support programming. Most recently she was hired to direct an academic advising center which serves over 3,000 undergraduates at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She earned a Bachelor’s of Journalism in Advertising from The University of Missouri and a Masters of Arts in Student Development from The University of Iowa. She is an active member of her church and enjoys travel, baking, volunteering, and learning about entrepreneurialism.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................... xiii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................. 1
   Background of the Study ................................................................................................. 1
   Purpose of the Study and Research Questions ............................................................... 7
   Definition of Terms ......................................................................................................... 10
   Significance of the Study ............................................................................................... 10
   Chapter Summary and Organization of Study .............................................................. 12

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................... 14
   Introduction .................................................................................................................. 14
   History of Blacks in Higher Education .......................................................................... 15
   Black Student at PWIs .................................................................................................. 18
   Black Men in College .................................................................................................... 20
   Mentoring .................................................................................................................... 24
      Definition .................................................................................................................. 24
      Development of Mentoring Relationships .................................................................. 26
      Impact of Culture on Mentoring ................................................................................ 27
   Theoretical Framework ................................................................................................ 31
      Racial Identity Development .................................................................................... 31
      Black Identity Development ..................................................................................... 31
      Racial Salience .......................................................................................................... 33
      Mentoring Relationship Development ....................................................................... 34
      Kram’s Theory of Mentoring Relationship Development ........................................ 34
Murphy and Ensher’s Cross-National Mentoring Theory .................36

Summary ...........................................................................................................37

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .............................................................................39

Introduction .........................................................................................................39

Overview of the Methodological Approach .......................................................40

Site Selection and Sampling ............................................................................42

The Research Site and Study Context ...............................................................42

Gaining Access ....................................................................................................46

Participant Sampling ..........................................................................................47

Data Collection ....................................................................................................49

Data Analysis .......................................................................................................53

Trustworthiness: Researcher Validity and Reliability ........................................58

Subjectivity Statement .......................................................................................60

Ethical Issues .......................................................................................................62

Limitation of the Study .......................................................................................64

Chapter Summary ...............................................................................................65

CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDIES ..............................................................................67

Case One: Bruno .................................................................................................68

Personal Profile ..................................................................................................68

Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships ..........................................69

Role of Race in Relationship Development ....................................................71

Using Race to Understand Bruno’s Story .........................................................72
Case Two: Calvin

Personal Profile

Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships

Role of Race in Relationship Development

Using Race to Understand Calvin’s Story

Case Three: Donovan

Personal Profile

Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships

Role of Race in Relationship Development

Using Race to Understand Donovan’s Story

Case Four: Fredrick

Personal Profile

Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships

Role of Race in Relationship Development

Using Race to Understand Fredrick’s Story

Case Five: Jay

Personal Profile

Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships

Role of Race in Relationship Development

Using Race to Understand Jay’s Story

Case Six: Jerrod

Personal Profile
Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships.............................................97
Role of Race in Relationship Development......................................................99
Using Race to Understand Jerrod’s Story.........................................................100
Case Seven: Kenny ..............................................................................................101
  Personal Profile.................................................................................................101
  Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships..........................................103
  Role of Race in Relationship Development......................................................104
  Using Race to Understand Kenny’s Story.........................................................105
Case Eight: Roger ..............................................................................................106
  Personal Profile.................................................................................................106
  Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships..........................................108
  Role of Race in Relationship Development......................................................110
  Using Race to Understand Roger’s Story..........................................................111
Case Nine: Shaun ..............................................................................................113
  Personal Profile.................................................................................................113
  Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships..........................................115
  Role of Race in Relationship Development......................................................116
  Using Race to Understand Shaun’s Story..........................................................117
Case Ten: Stefan ...............................................................................................119
  Personal Profile.................................................................................................119
  Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships..........................................120
  Role of Race in Relationship Development......................................................121
Using Race to Understand Stefan’s Story ................................................................. 123

Case Eleven: Terrence .......................................................................................... 124

Personal Profile ..................................................................................................... 124

Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships ............................................. 126

Role of Race in Relationship Development ....................................................... 127

Using Race to Understand Terrence’s Story ..................................................... 128

Summary .................................................................................................................. 130

CHAPTER 5: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS ..................................................................... 132

Definition of Support ............................................................................................. 134

Providing Direction ............................................................................................... 134

Giving Advice .......................................................................................................... 139

Reaching out and Taking Initiative ...................................................................... 142

Getting Personal ..................................................................................................... 144

Going Above and Beyond ...................................................................................... 146

Faculty Characteristics that Influence Relational Development ...................... 148

Open and Vulnerable ............................................................................................ 148

Personable ............................................................................................................. 150

Intelligent and Knowledgeable ........................................................................... 152

Commonalities with Participant ......................................................................... 154

Available ................................................................................................................. 155

Events that Influence Relationships Growth .................................................... 157

One-on-One Meetings ............................................................................................ 157
Interactive Course Discussion ................................................................. 158
The Role of Race in Cross-Cultural Relationships ................................. 161
Factors that Influence How Race Impacts Relationship Development .... 161
   Social Context .................................................................................. 161
   Racial Identity Development ............................................................ 162
   Level of Relational Development ....................................................... 164
Themes: How Race Impacts Relational Development .............................. 165
   Race and Initial Impression ................................................................. 165
   Race and Connecting ........................................................................ 169
Summary ............................................................................................... 174
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS ........................................ 176
Summary of Findings ............................................................................. 179
   Acts of Giving Promote Relational Growth ........................................ 180
   Commonalities Can Be Leveraged for Relational Growth .................. 181
   Negative Impressions and Assumptions Can Be Overcome ............... 183
   The Classroom Experience Matters ............................................... 185
   Significance of Findings for Black Males at PWIs ............................ 187
Implications .......................................................................................... 188
   Implications for Theory .................................................................... 188
      Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) Theory .............................................. 188
      Racial Identity Models and Concepts .......................................... 191
   Implications for Practice ............................................................... 194
Recommendaions for Further Research.................................................................198

Conclusions............................................................................................................199

REFERENCES .......................................................................................................201

APPENDICES ......................................................................................................217

Appendix A: Approval Letter from Institutional Review Board.........................218

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form .................................................................220

Appendix C: Interview Protocol for Semi Structured Interviews.....................223
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1  Sample Matrix for Organizing Themes ...............................................................57
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Enrollment of traditional-aged Black Americans in bachelor’s degree programs has nearly doubled over the past 40 years (U. S. Department of Education, 2011a). As a result, the percentage of Blacks, ages 25-29, that possess college degrees grew from 7% in 1971 to 20% in 2011 (U. S. Department of Education, 2012). While these gains are encouraging, Black men have not made the same progress as Black women. The U.S. Department of Education (2010) reports that 33.1% of Black males enrolled at public colleges and universities complete their degrees within six years, compared to 44.8% of Black females. This is the largest gender gap within any racial group. Even more troubling, Black males are the least likely of all gender-ethnic groups to complete a college degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

The discrepancy between Black male and other gender-racial group graduation rates is a concern because degree attainment is associated with greater wealth, career opportunities, and quality of life (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012; Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009). A Black American with a college degree earns 81% more, on average, than a Black American who possesses only a high school diploma (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). In 2009, 7.3% of Black college graduates were unemployed, compared to 14.0% of Black high school graduates. This was the greatest unemployment gap between college and high school graduates of any racial group (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010). Lower educational attainment has also been correlated with lower quality health and,
for Black males, higher incarceration rates (Petit & Western, 2004; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009).

The dire outlook for Black males without advanced education has many higher education administrators and researchers actively searching for factors that may influence attrition rates among these students. The issue, however, is complex and has many layers which must be considered. Black males face obstacles in elementary and secondary education that put them at a disadvantage for even considering college (Garibaldi, 2007). They are suspended, expelled, held back, and placed in special education more frequently than any other group in the K-12 system (Garibaldi, 2007). A number of the Black men who do persevere and go to college possess pre-entry characteristics that put them at risk for not graduating. These include poor academic preparation, low socio-economic status, and low parental academic attainment (Horn & Carroll, 1998; Strayhorn, 2008a). It is difficult for Black males to improve their pre-college status because society often works against them. Bonvilla-Silva (1997) describes a *racialized social structure* in America, where the dominant (White) group tends to receive greater economic remuneration and access to better occupations and/or prospects in the labor market, occupies a primary position in the political system,….often has the license to draw physical (segregation) as well as social (racial etiquette) boundaries between itself and other races. (p. 470)

For Black men, this means little access to social networks that can open doors to better job opportunities and less encouragement from K-12 teachers and administrators to pursue college preparatory academic tracks (Gray, 2010; Royster, 2003). Some Black males respond by rejecting the dominant culture’s value of education (Majors & Billson, 1993). In
fact, Black community members may view the pursuit of academic success as a White behavior. Therefore, Black males who wish to further their educations may be criticized by their peers and family members for “acting White” (Fordman & Ogbu, 1986; hooks, 2004). Other Black men choose to fight these injustices, but may find themselves vilified as angry Black men who are dangerous and to be feared (Guinier, 2010). Jenkins (2006) concludes that such racism results in the “positioning of Black males at the lower rungs of society and their experiencing underachievement in all aspects of life” (p. 127).

Various programs have been developed in higher education to help Black males overcome obstacles that may decrease their likelihood of graduating from college. One common programmatic approach is mentoring. Mentoring is a centuries old practice that is traditionally defined by a senior person providing support and instruction to a junior person (Clawson, 1985; Levinson, 1978; Thomas, 1993). More modern definitions recognized that mentoring is a reciprocal relationship in which a mentor and protégé receive emotional and tangible benefits from the interaction (Jacobi, 1991).

Jacobi (1991) and Crisp and Cruz (2009) conducted reviews of mentoring literature to identify common themes among definitions and practices. Both concluded that there is no universal definition that covers the scope of relationships classified as mentoring. However, they agree that in addition to be characterized by reciprocity, mentoring typically involves intimate connections between individuals that make them personal. Jaeger, Sandmann, and Kim (2011), on the other hand, believe that the reciprocal and personal aspects of mentoring described in literature do not always occur in practice. The diversity in mentoring definitions and practice may make it difficult to determine what truly constitutes mentoring.
Nonetheless, formal college mentoring programs have been connected to higher student retention (LeVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). However, few institutions have the financial resources to offer these structured experiences. Therefore, an institution’s ability to foster informal mentoring relationships between Black males and professional staff is just as important as its ability to offer formal mentoring programs (LeVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are institutions established before 1964 to educate Black Americans. They began to appear in the 1830s, but experienced the greatest growth at the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865 and after the passage of the second Morrill Act in 1890 (Browning & Williams, 1978; Fleming, 1984). The former was a result of Northern missionary efforts to equalize educational opportunities between Whites and Southern Blacks (Fleming, 1984). The latter was a result of government efforts to separate Blacks and Whites in educational settings (Browning & Williams, 1978). According to the law, HBCUs were to be equal in quality to schools available to Whites. However, in practice this did not occur (Browning & Williams, 1978).

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled “separate but equal” unconstitutional in the *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* case. By 1964, Blacks had the opportunity to pursue higher education at institutions that had previously been closed to them. Despite attempts to oppress Blacks through the HBCU system, these institutions developed a tradition that emphasizes social uplift and community for Black students (Baker, 2007; Browning & Williams, 1978). They have a strong reputation for providing Black students with opportunities to develop mentoring relationships with faculty members and advisors (Baker, 2007; Hirt, Amelink,
McFeeters, & Strayhorn, 2008). Black males at HBCUs report that faculty members are accessible, concerned, and willing to build supportive relationships with them (Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010).

Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), however, have less documented success in helping Black males cultivate supportive mentoring relationships with professional staff, particularly White faculty members (Baker, 2007; Guiffrida, 2005). PWIs are colleges and universities that were established during the colonial period to educate Americans from European dissent. During this time, the student population lacked diversity and consisted primarily of White males (Rudolph, 1991). Some of these institutions began admitting Blacks in the 1930s, but in small numbers (Fleming, 1984). When school segregation became illegal in the 1950s, an increased number of Black students chose to pursue higher education at PWIs (Peterson, 1978).

At the institutional level, many PWIs implemented programmatic supports for Black students, but this did not guarantee relational support from faculty. Mingle (1978) studied faculty response to increased Black student enrollments at 13 Midwestern universities in the 1970s and found that new faculty, who often taught introductory courses with high Black enrollment, were frustrated by the amount of time they devoted to helping Black students with course material and institutional adjustment. Faculty members who believed that race should not be a special consideration on their campuses were often opposed to providing counsel to Black students (Mingle, 1978).

Strong relational support for Black students from White faculty members is still difficult to find today at PWIs. Various factors contribute to this problem. Austin,
Sorcinelli, and McDaniels, (2007) found that, in general, university faculty members are not perceived as offering quality mentoring support to students. Black students have described White faculty as aloof and unwilling to make significant effort to support them (Guiffrida, 2005). This may occur because some faculty members possess low multicultural competence (Sue, Torino, Capodilupo, Rivera, & Lin, 2009). It may also occur because some faculty fear too much support may be perceived as racist (Gonsalves, 2002).

Cross-cultural relationships occur when individuals from different cultural traditions seek to develop connections. Each member of the relationship has been socialized to behave and interpret others’ behaviors according to their cultural traditions (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996). Furthermore, individuals view themselves and others in certain ways as a result of their personal racial identity development (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1993). Relational conflicts may occur when one person fails to meet the other’s cultural expectations or a person’s racial identity causes him or her to view other races negatively (Cross, 1991; Gundykunst, 2004; Helms, 1993). Cross-cultural conflict is common in America despite efforts to promote multicultural appreciation (Sadri & Flammia, 2011). This is particularly true when minority groups, such as Black Americans, interact with Whites, who make up the dominant culture (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). PWIs serve as a microcosm for the issues that plague communication between Whites and Blacks in American society.

Some researchers believe cross-cultural relationship problems between Black students and White faculty at PWIs could be alleviated by encouraging more same-race mentoring for Black students. However, this is unrealistic given that only a small percentage of faculty members at these institutions are Black (Baker, 2007). There is also concern that a focus on
same-race mentoring communicates that non-Black faculty members are not interested in supporting minority students (Tinto, 1993). Therefore, formal and informal mentoring relationships between Black male students and White faculty members and advisors must be cultivated (Baker, 2007).

Students who build relationships with faculty members report greater learning outcomes, especially if they are students of color (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). Black males are generally more satisfied with their college experience when they are a part of a supportive relationship, which could help them overcome disadvantages associated with low socio-economic status and low academic preparation (Strayhorn, 2008b). Given the large number of Black males educated at PWIs, administrators need to better understand successful mentoring relationships between Black male students and White faculty members and advisors so they can develop practices, policies, and environments that encourage healthy relationship development. When students build relationships with faculty members, they often report greater academic satisfaction and are more likely to persist (Hazler & Carley, 1993). On the flip side, students who feel distant from faculty have lower motivation in academics (Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010).

**Purpose of the Study**

It is estimated that nearly 67% of Black males who enroll in college will not finish their degrees within six years (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). A majority of these men enroll at PWIs, which means these institutions must address attrition issues on their campuses (Harper, 2006a). Black students often struggle to build social connections with majority faculty, advisors, and students at PWIs (Gonsalves, 2002; Guiffrida, 2005; Lewis,
Chesler, & Forman, 2000). This inhibits their ability to form mentoring relationships, a key component to many successful Black male retention initiatives, with White faculty members and advisors.

Additional research is needed to understand how White faculty members and advisors can more effectively mentor Black males in college. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how Black male students develop supportive relationships with White faculty members and advisors at a PWI. I used a multiple case study approach to examine how Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) Cross-National Mentoring Theory and Cross’s (1991) Model of Black Identity inform this phenomenon.

**Theoretical Framework and Research Questions**

Researchers in business and workforce development have studied mentoring since the late 1970s (Levinson, 1978; Kram 1983). One of the issues that has gained prominence in the business world is mentoring relationships between individuals from different cultures and ethnic groups (Grandrose & Oskamp, 1997; Thomas, 1990; Thomas, 1993). This has led to the development of theories to explain cross-cultural mentoring relationship development (Murphy & Ensher, 1997). Educational researchers have also examined cross-cultural mentoring, but have focused more on history and outcomes than theoretical descriptions of these relationships (Baker, 2007; Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004).

Murphy and Ensher (1997) created a theory to describe how cross-cultural mentoring relationships develop in the workplace. This model can be applied to educational settings in the same way that other business mentoring literature has been used to inform mentoring in
higher education. It consists of five phases that explain how an experienced, senior person and a junior person establish an attraction that leads them to pursue regular contact which grows and matures their relationship (Chapter 2 offers a detailed description of this model).

Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) theory primarily considers challenges in cross-national relationships that result from differences between cultural groups. An individual’s beliefs and assumptions about their culture and others’ cultures also impact cross-cultural relationships. As a result, racial identity development is another factor worth considering in mentoring relationships (Carter, 1993). Therefore, Cross’s (1991) Model of Black Racial Identity will also be used to understand participant perceptions of their relationships in this study. Cross’s (1991) model describes how Blacks frame their racial identity in a society dominated by Eurocentric values and traditions. It consists of five stages Blacks navigate as they work toward a positive Black identity.

The purpose of this study is to examine how Black male students develop supportive relationships with White faculty members and advisors at a predominately White institution. I will use a case study approach to answer the following research:

1. How do Black male students define support in relationships with faculty and advisors?
2. What personal characteristics of White faculty members or advisors cause Black males students to seek increased interaction with them?
3. What events promote relational growth between Black male students and White faculty members and advisors?
4. How does race impact relationship development for Black male students?
Definition of Terms

Before embarking on this project, it is important to clarify the meaning given to key terms. This is especially true since race, which has a socially constructed definition, is a central component of the study (Weber, 2010). This section defines key terms and explains why these specific meanings were chosen.

**African American:** This term will be used when scholars, study participants, and government reporting agencies use it to describe Black students. I do not use it to describe study participants because it excludes students whose ancestors are of Caribbean descent or who recently immigrated to the United States.

**Black:** This term describes students of African or Caribbean heritage. It was chosen to describe males in this study because it is a commonly used term that includes students of multiple heritages.

**Mentoring:** For this study, mentoring will be used to describe any relationship that provides a student with emotional or psycho-social support (Baker, 2007). It can be formal or informal, but its depth develops naturally through regular, meaningful interaction (Murphy & Ensher, 2007).

**White:** This term describes students, faculty members, or administrators who are of European descent or who, by appearance, are members of the dominant racial group in the United States.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it will help members of the higher education community better support a population that faces significant economic and social
disadvantages as a result of low educational attainment. Black males without college degrees are more likely than those with degrees to have low incomes, be unemployed, and experience low quality health (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). If administrators and faculty members at PWIs want to help Black male students overcome these disadvantages and social injustices, they must help them persist in college.

Findings from this study can enhance White faculty member and administrator responses to cross-cultural mentoring issues. White faculty members and advisors can examine the findings and conclusions presented in this study to explore how their personal behaviors encourage or discourage Black males from pursuing relationships with them. Administrators can use the findings of this study to guide the development of mentoring programs or mentoring resources on their campuses. The findings could inform training strategies, topics for discussion, and activities that are adopted by the programs.

This study will also expand the application of existing theory. Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) Cross-National Mentoring theory has primarily been applied in workplace settings. While some studies have considered cross-cultural relationships between students and professional mentors, they have focused on career, rather than academic mentoring (Ensher & Murphy, 1997). Applying Murphy and Ensher’s theory to supportive relationship development in higher education creates two opportunities. First, it could offer new insights into relationship development between faculty and students. Second, it can be used as a starting point for developing a new cross-cultural mentoring theory in higher education.
Chapter Summary and Organization of the Study

Black males lag behind all gender-ethnic groups in degree attainment (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This negatively influences their economic and social welfare (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012; Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009). Evidence suggests that supportive relationships with faculty can enhance Black male satisfaction and retention in college; however, many males struggle to develop these relationships at PWIs (Guiffrida, 2005; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Strayhorn, 2008). This study aims to explore how supportive mentoring relationships develop between Black male students and White faculty members at PWIs. The results will inform higher education administrators and faculty as they try to facilitate better cross-cultural interactions between these two groups in a predominately White setting.

Chapter 2 offers a brief overview of existing literature pertinent to the research. It begins with a history of Black education at PWIs and then describes the often negative climate faced by Blacks at these institutions. It examines the practice of mentoring, paying particular attention to development of cross-cultural relationships. Finally, it provides a detailed outline of Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) model for cross-national mentoring relationships and Cross’s (1991) Model for Black Identity Development. Chapter 3 discusses the research methods that were used to select interview participants and collect and analyze data. It also describes how trustworthiness was promoted and ethical issues were addressed.

Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the research findings. Chapter 4 specifically provides a case description for each student who participated in the study. Chapter 5 offers a cross-case analysis which showcases similarities and key differences between the participant cases. The
project concludes in Chapter 6 with conclusions about the study, including how the findings can be used to shape theory, practice, and future research. The ultimate goal of this research is to provide insights into a phenomenon that has not been thoroughly explored in existing research. The findings can fill literature gaps and inform new directions for programming that targets Black males at PWIs.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The cross-cultural communication challenges that Black male students and White faculty members face are a result of the historical and social contexts in which they exist. Almost 400 years of segregation between Blacks and Whites in the United States fostered racial tensions that prompted some Whites to protest Black enrollment at PWIs (Peterson, 1978). While most of the legal barriers to Black admission were removed at PWIs by the early 1970s, social barriers to full community membership within these institutions continued to exist. White administrators, faculty, and students often failed to welcome or support Blacks as they attempted to integrate into their campus culture (Bowles & DeCosta, 1971; Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000). The result has been a community of Black students who often feel isolated and alienated from White people (or the dominant racial group) on their campuses (Coleman, 2008; Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klekken, Pollio, Thomas, & Thompson, 2004; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007).

This has had negative consequences for one-on-one relationships between Blacks and Whites. Lack of cultural knowledge, fear of the unknown, and general ignorance has prevented some Blacks and Whites from trusting each other or feeling comfortable forming intimate relationships (Gonsalves, 2002; Grant-Thompson & Atkinson, 1997). This, in turn, has reduced the number of supportive relationships that develop between Black students and White faculty members at PWIs.

This chapter seeks to further explore the historical and social background that impacts the growth of mentoring, or supportive, relationships between Black male students and White
faculty members and advisors at PWIs. It begins with a history of Black education and Black integration at PWIs. Next, it identifies the challenging experiences Black students report at PWIs, along with the emotional and relationship consequences of these experiences. It further outlines the unique experiences and responses of Black males in college and specifically at PWIs. The section concludes with a discussion of identity development theories, cross-cultural relationship literature in higher education, and the role mentoring can play in supporting students.

**History of Blacks in Higher Education**

Opportunities for Black Americans to pursue higher education began to emerge in the 1830s. Northern states opened a small number of colleges for Blacks, while some existing institutions, such as Oberlin College in Ohio, admitted Black students along with Whites (Fleming, 1984; Waite, 2001). The number of Black colleges grew significantly in 1865 at the conclusion of the Civil War, when Northern missionary groups began investing in education as a means of social uplift for newly freed Southern slaves (Fleming, 1984; Browning & Williams, 1978). The Black college system that developed was diverse in purpose and curricula. Some taught elementary and secondary level material because many former slaves had little or no prior education (Humphries, 1991). Others offered a rich liberal education, similar to collegiate curricula, to prepare Blacks for active participation in mainstream society (Browning & Williams, 1978).

After Reconstruction ended in 1877, Southern governments imposed laws to restrict opportunities for Blacks to access higher education. Some colleges where converted into vocational training centers which limited Blacks to “inferior” industrial careers (Browning &
Separate education for Black Americans was further perpetuated in the South after the passage of the second Morrill Act in 1890 and the Supreme Court’s *Plessy vs. Ferguson* ruling in 1896. The former required states to offer educational facilities for Blacks that were equal to those available to Whites or integrate their public colleges and universities. Many Southern states elected to establish new Black colleges and universities to prevent integration (Fleming, 1984). *Plessy vs. Ferguson* secured the states’ right to manage “separate but equal” institutions for Blacks and Whites by ruling that the practice was constitutional (Browning & Williams, 1978). Therefore, separate institutions for Blacks and Whites were common, although equality appeared nonexistent.

Sixteen states established separate Black and White higher education institutions with monies allotted from the second Morrill Act. The historically black schools, which became known as “The 1890 Land Grant Institutions,” received less funding than their predominately White counterparts (Humphries, 1991). Other Black colleges open during this time period were funded by missionaries and private Black organizations. In the early 20th century, many of these institutions faced severe financial problems. As a result, they struggled to pay teachers’ salaries and purchase equipment and books for students (Anderson, 1988).

Industrial philanthropists offered Black colleges the money they needed to keep their institutions open, but at a cost. Many philanthropic organizations had an ulterior motive to direct and limit opportunities for Black education (Anderson, 1988). For example, in 1920, an industrial philanthropist campaign was initiated to raise a $1,000,000 endowment for Fisk University. Fisk was chosen because it was viewed as an institution that would educate Blacks in a manner that sustained the racial hierarchy in America. Its leadership sought to
raise-up Black leaders that knew and stayed “in their place” in Southern society (Anderson, 1988, p. 267).

“Separate but equal” stood for 58 years, but in 1954 the Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation was illegal in public education in the *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* case. This ruling ushered in major change for Black enrollment in higher education. Prior to 1950, only 10% of Blacks were educated at PWIs (Fleming, 1984). Today, over 49% of Black students attend some type of degree-granting institution where less than one-fourth of the study body is Black (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b).

The shift in Black enrollment from HBCUs to PWIs was not a smooth transition, especially in the Southern United States. Violence, rioting, and military intervention accompanied the first Black students who enrolled at the University of Alabama and University of Mississippi (Fleming, 1984). Other institutions were less militant in their opposition to Black enrollment, but made little effort to recruit Black students or help them transition to campus once they arrived (Bowles & DeCosta, 1971). This, combined with PWI administrator beliefs that integration would happen naturally, resulted in backlash from Blacks on campus and created problems with Black student retention (Fleming, 1984).

Today, PWIs are more proactive in their efforts to recruit and retain Black students. (Holmes, Ebbers, Robinson, & Mugenda, 2000; Love, 2008). Many institutions have developed recruitment strategies that specifically target Black and other minority students. Others have established student centers, academic support programs, and student organizations exclusively for Black undergraduates in an effort to increase their sense of belonging and retention (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Patton, 2006). Despite these efforts, Black
student retention rates, particularly for males, continue to be lower than those of White and Asian students (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). One factor that is consistently named as a potential contributor to low Black retention is the racial climate at PWIs. The next section explores Black student experiences at these institutions and how they respond to the environment. It illustrates how the social context of a PWI may prevent Black students from seeking and acquiring the support and resources they need to maximize their success.

**Black Students at PWIs**

Black students enrolled at PWIs report a more negative social climate than their White classmates (Coleman, 2008; Davis et al., 2004; Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003). Numerous research studies have been conducted to better understand the experiences that lead Black students to interpret the PWI environment in this manner. Davis et al. (2004) interviewed 11 Black students who were within a year of completing their degrees at a PWI to examine how they described their experience. Participants indicated that they often faced unfair treatment, sabotage, and isolation from members of the campus community. One student said he felt like a “fly in the buttermilk” because he was consistently noticed or ignored because of his race (Davis et al., 2004, p. 434). Other students echoed his feelings of hypervisibility on campus, saying it ultimately meant the institution “failed to offer an environment that was healthy for black people” (Davis et al., 2004, p. 427).

For some students, hypervisibility leads to overt experiences with racism. D’Augelli and Hershberger (1993) found that 48% of Black students in their study believe African Americans were mistreated on their campus. Eighty-nine percent had heard derogatory
remarks directed toward them or their peers while two-thirds could recount incidents of other Black students being mistreated. Swim et al. (2003) explored the frequency and types of racist incidents encountered by Black students at a PWI. Participants in their study reported 1.45 racially charged incidents over a two week period. Incidents included hostile or suspicious stares, slurs or culturally insensitive remarks, bad service at campus establishments, and general rudeness, awkwardness, or nervousness from members in the campus community.

The chilly climate at PWIs has negative consequences for Black students. Feeling alienated and out of place causes some Black students to avoid campus involvement opportunities and underutilize academic support resources (Coleman, 2008). Acts of racism, in and out of the classroom, leave many Blacks feeling mentally tired, frustrated, and angry (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). Some Blacks experience so many negative racial encounters that they direct time that should be devoted to their studies toward combating stereotypes (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). Other students may drop classes, change majors, and even leave their institutions altogether in response to cultural racism (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

Black males face an additional set of challenges at PWIs due to racism and stereotypes that are more likely to be directed toward them than Black women (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2007). The next section will examine some of these issues. However, it will begin by examining Black male experiences in college so that an appropriate overview is given.
Black Men in College

For the past half century, Black women have graduated from college at higher rates than Black men (Garibaldi, 2007). This is due, in part, to larger growth in the number of Black women who choose to enroll in college compared to Black men (U. S. Department of Education, 2011c). It is compounded by the fact that Black women are more likely to stay in college until their degrees are completed (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The discrepancy in college enrollment and graduation rates between Black males and other racial-gender groups has led to an influx in research devoted specifically to the Black male college experience (Cuyjet, 2006, Harper, 2006; Harper & Nichols, 2008; Harper & Quayle, 2008; Harper, 2009; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008a; Strayhorn, 2008b).

Problems with Black male academic preparation, academic achievement, and engagement on campus are commonly discussed in higher education research (Cuyjet, 2006; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010; Palmer & Young, 2008). While this research can help administrators and faculty better understand issues that Black males may face in college, it has perpetuated the idea that all Black males are underachievers who will struggle to graduate (Harper, 2009). The reality is Black males are a diverse group.

Harper and Nichols (2008) examined peer relationships among Black males in college and, in doing so, shed light on the heterogeneity within this student population. They found that Black males noticed considerable differences in the dress, speech patterns, and cultural interests of peers who came from neighborhoods with a different ethnic make-up than their own. For example, students from predominately Black neighborhoods were more
likely to wear baggy, urban apparel and say “what’s up” to greet someone, while those from predominately White neighborhoods were more likely to wear Abercrombie & Fitch or other mainstream clothing brands and use “hi” or “hello” as a greeting (Harper & Nichols, 2008).

Participants also indicated that diverse extra-curricular pursuits among Black males contributed to differences within the group. A male’s involvement in intercollegiate athletics, Black or White fraternities, or student government influenced whether or not he shared interests or experiences with another Black male. Heterogeneity among Black males led to some stereotyping between different subgroups. The findings suggest that university administrators cannot assume Black males will develop solidarity and social support with same-race peers simply because they share the same racial heritage (Harper, 2009).

Another factor that differentiates Black males from each other is academic performance. Some research emphasizes social obstacles Black males must overcome, particularly from same-race peers, when they are academically successful (Fries-Britt, 1998; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; hooks, 2004; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Yet Harper (2006b) found that high achieving Black males avoided criticism for academic performance when they build relationships with equally successful, same-race peers. In his study, Harper interviewed high performing Black men at six PWIs. He found that those who developed close relationships with other high performing Black males did not perceive their success as “acting White” and faced little or no intra-racial criticism for excelling in school. This contradicted Fordman & Ogbo’s (1986) theory that high achievers will be criticized by other Blacks for succeeding academically (“acting White”).
Overcoming stereotypes and prejudice is more difficult, however, in a predominately White environment. Watkins, Green, Goodson, and Guidry (2007) found that Black males at PWIs experience stress from racism, cultural conflict, trying to fit in, and lack of social support. Their counterparts at HBCUs experience stress from non-school related factors. The stereotyping of Black men as criminals has been particularly harmful to these students at PWIs. Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) interviewed 36 African American males at five elite PWIs and found the men encountered racial profiling by campus police and other members of their university community. Some participants reported that they had been stopped for questioning because they fit the description of a criminal suspect (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Others said they were often monitored when gathering in commons areas or asked to disband when White males in similar situations were not.

Smith, Yosso, and Solorzano (2007) attribute hostility toward Black males on college campuses to Black misandry. They define Black misandry as “exaggerated pathological aversion toward Black men created and reinforced in societal, institutional, and individual ideologies, practices, and behaviors” (p. 559). Smith attributes some of the negative beliefs held about Black men to racial priming (cited by Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2007). This occurs when racialized messages about minorities are spread by individuals and mass media, both directly and indirectly (White, 2007). White children are particularly impacted by priming because they are socialized by these mainstream cultural messages (Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2007).

To help administrators understand the impact of Black misandry, Smith, Yosso, and Solorzano (2007) used responses from focus groups with Black male students at five elite
research institutions to develop a narrative that illustrated the themes they found. Their story revealed that negative pathologies toward Black males led Whites on campus to create false rumors or misinterpret events involving Black males. The story also demonstrated how the lack of an anti-racist learning environment harmed Black male academic success. They concluded these issues ultimately marginalized Black men, causing them to disengage from campus.

Since Black males face hostility and suspicions that Black women are less likely to encounter, they display another set of responses to the predominately white environment. Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) concluded that the anger, confusion, frustration, and distress that Black males reported in response to hostility was best described as *racial battle fatigue*. This term describes a stress response minorities may experience as a result of microaggression and racism. The literature on racial battle fatigue is rooted in studies on military personnel and how they respond to hostile environments. In the case of Black men, the battle fatigue causes stress that ultimately “diminished (their) sense of belonging on…campus” (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007, p. 573).

Black males at PWIs are concerned about the negative stereotypes some member of the dominant culture hold and seek to fight them (Harper, 2009). Harper (2009) examined interview transcripts from 143 Black males at 30 PWIs across the country that were collected as part of the National Black Male College Achievement Study. This study is the largest empirical research project that has ever been conducted about Black undergraduate men. Harper (2009) found that men in the study fought stereotypes by becoming actively involved in campus, directly confronting racism, and pursuing success in the classroom.
Administrators at PWIs have been encouraged to find ways to improve the environment for Black students on their campuses and many are attempting to answer the call (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Holmes et al. 2000; Love, 2008). Formal mentoring programs are a programmatic response to helping Black students adjust to and navigate life at PWIs (Lee, 2009). A significant number of these programs are directed toward Black males because of their low representation in higher education and their high risk for attrition (SAAB, 2008; The University of Georgia System, 2011).

Strayhorn (2008b) analyzed the responses of 231 African American males who completed the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ). He found the participants reported greater satisfaction in college when they were involved in supportive relationships. A major problem, however, is that many schools don’t have the resources to create more formal programs for Black males (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs 1997). This means mentoring at PWIs is often informal, if it takes place at all. To better frame mentoring relationships and how they take shape at PWIs, the next section seeks to define the practice and outline the challenges PWIs face in implementing it.

Mentoring

Definition

The term mentoring is derived from the Greek mythological tale told in Homer’s The Odyssey. Mentor, a servant of Ulysses, was instructed to train and support Ulysses’ son Telemachus as he grew into manhood (Clawson, 1985). Mentoring is used to describe a number of practices in educational, vocational, and religious training. In fact, its common use makes it difficult for scholars to agree upon a singular definition for the term (Crosby,
The most extensive research on mentoring has been conducted in the fields of business and education (Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1983; Kram, 1985; Shandley, 1989; Thomas, 1990; Thomas, 1993). Therefore, this section explores mentoring definitions found in these two fields.

In business, mentoring has traditionally been viewed as a senior person guiding, counseling, and supporting a junior person in their professional or personal life (Kram, 1983; Thomas, 1993). In higher education, Shandley (1989) described mentoring as an interaction between two individuals that promotes growth and development for a protégé. While these descriptions offer a basic understanding of the phenomenon, they fail to capture how mentoring is practiced and any processes associated with its implementation (Jacobi, 1991).

In an attempt to generate a better understanding of mentoring, Jacobi (1991) conducted the first large-scale study of mentoring literature. She concluded that no singular definition for mentoring could be created from existing descriptions and practices. Despite this, Jacobi (1991) identified mentoring characteristics that were common enough to serve as a foundation for future research and practice. These include 1) fostering protégé achievement, 2) providing “emotional and psychological support,” career guidance, or “role modeling,” 3) providing reciprocal benefits to mentors and protégés, and 4) exchanging personal information (p. 513). Jacobi (1991) also found that it was most common for mentors to have a higher level of achievement in relation to their protégés.

In 2009, Crisp and Cruz conducted a study to determine how the definition of mentoring and its practice had evolved since Jacobi’s (1991) study. The team examined definitions for mentoring found in 52 theoretical essays and empirical studies. They found
that no progress had been made to create a clearer understanding of mentoring. However, they did agree that research since 1990 continues to support Jacobi’s (1991) conclusion that mentoring involves promoting a protégé’s attainment, providing support in some key area of protégé need, and establishing a mutually beneficial relationship between the mentor and protégé. Due to the ambiguity in what constitutes mentoring, I will not define mentoring in this project. Instead, I will allow study participants to define mentoring through their description of what constitutes support from faculty and advisor at a PWI.

Mentoring can be formal or informal (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). Formal mentoring offers the advantage of connecting a mentor and protégé together in a structured context. However, matching is often based on convenience and may fail to consider the true compatibility of the mentor and protégé (Germain, 2011). Informal mentoring is typically spontaneous and unsolicited so it is difficult to measure its frequency and depth (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). Despite the lack of documentation, Jacobi (1991) cites informal mentoring as a contributor to student academic success in higher education. Informal mentoring benefits students, even if their pre-entry characteristics would lead one to believe otherwise (Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010). In a review of mentoring literature, Schlosser, Lyons, Talleyrand, Kim, and Johnson (2010), found that students who enter relationships with faculty casually, on their own terms, express more support, satisfaction, and enjoyment.

Development of Mentoring Relationships

Various factors determine whether a relationship between two people will develop into mentoring. LeVant, Anderson, and Tiggs (1997) determined that the frequency and
quality of an interaction are two factors that often dictate how a relationship will evolve. Cox and Orelovec (2007) echoed the importance of frequency and quality in faculty-student relationships in their study of a residential college. They created a typology of relationships based on the kinds of interactions students had with faculty. Students were found to be disengaged, incidentally in contact, functionally connected to, or mentored by faculty. The more frequent and intentional the relationship was and more likely it was to include discussion of academic and personal matters, the richer the relationship was said to be. Only those students who received professional guidance, psychological support, and could see faculty members as role models were considered to be mentored.

While frequency contact can enhance mentoring, it is not always essential. Schlosser, Knox, Mostovitz, and Hill (2003) indicate that the perceived availability of an advisor is often more important than the actual frequency of interactions. Student perception of faculty can impact whether or not they pursue relationships with them. Faculty who are seen as more sociable, supportive, and objective attract more students (Komarraj, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010). Komarraj, Musulkin, and Bhattacharya (2010) found that students expressed greater confidence and academic motivation when faculty members were approachable and available to them outside of the classroom. In fact, just by considering themselves as mentors, faculty can better engage students, causing students to be more satisfied in the relationship (Schlosser et al., 2010).

**Impact of Culture on Mentoring**

Similarities and differences in culture can influence the development of mentoring relationships. Closer relationships are more likely to develop between two people who share
common traits (Schlosser et al., 2010). Thomas (1990) found that mentors who were of the same race as their protégé were perceived as offering more support than those who were of a different race. Black students may prefer Black mentors because the mentors can relate to their experiences with aloneness and isolation in predominately white environments (Bowman, Kite, Branscombe, & Williams, 1999). The shared experience may also lead Black faculty to “go the extra distance” for Black students when others will not, which can be extremely encouraging to the students (Moore & Toliver, 2010, p. 941).

Several studies have explored Black students’ experiences and perceptions of relationships with Black versus White faculty members and sponsors. Guiffrida (2005) interviewed 19 high achieving African American students and found the students’ relationships with faculty either positively or negatively influenced their college experiences. In general, students felt they had more meaningful relationships with Black faculty members than White faculty members. They described Black faculty members as more “student-centered” because they were more likely to listen to their concerns and goals. Black faculty members were also perceived as more likely to advocate for the students and support them. White faculty members were perceived as less like to exert themselves to help African American students.

Level of trust is also important in the development of mentoring relationships. Grant-Thompson and Atkinson (1997) studied the influence of a student’s level of cultural mistrust on how credible and culturally sensitive they viewed an advisor to be based on race. They ask 74 Black undergraduates at a community college to listen to audio recordings of mentoring sessions between Black students and either White or Black mentors. Students
with higher levels of cultural mistrust were more likely to rate the Black mentor as more credible and culturally competent than the White mentor. The lower a student’s level of cultural mistrust, the more equal his ratings were between Black and White mentors.

Black males may have just cause for feeling that White faculty mentors are less competent. Gonsalves (2002) conducted interviews with 10 Black males and 12 White faculty members to understand their communication pitfalls during an introductory writing course. She found that White instructors struggled to make connections with Black students. White faculty often delayed confronting students regarding academic performance concerns to avoid appearing racist or pushy. This made Black males feel blindsided, which resulted in frustration and anger. White faculty members often maintained a general fear of marginalizing Black students. Yet many of their efforts to avoid marginalizing students negatively impacted the quality of relationships they built with them.

These findings have led some to argue that Black males need more opportunities to connect with same-race faculty. However, PWIs typically do not offer Black students adequate access to same-race faculty. In 2009, only 9.3% of college faculty members were Black (U. S. Department of Education, 2011d). At flagship institutions, which enroll a high number of Black men, only 1.1% of faculty are Black males (Harper, 2006a). The low number of faculty at research institutions led Gasman, Perna, Yoon, Drezner, Lunday-Wagner, Bose and Gary (2009) to stress the importance of White faculty members stepping forward to intentionally minority students.

It is also important for White faculty members and advisors to form supportive relationships with Black men because concentrating on same-race mentoring ignores the
need for non-Whites to be invested in supporting minority students in higher education (Tinto, 1993). In fact, Chang (2007) found that cross-cultural interactions can promote various positive educational outcomes, so it is important not to disregard its place in promoting Black male retention.

Some research findings allude to the fact that race is not everything when it comes to mentoring. Lee (1999) studied mentoring relationships between African American students and faculty in a college transition program. He found that students were more interested in having mentors who shared their career interests than their ethnic heritage. Even Guiffrida (2005) who found that Black students viewed Black faculty as more student focused discovered that meaningful cross-racial mentoring is possible. The students she interviewed indicated they were more concerned with the quality of advising they received from a faculty member than they were about his or her race. A White mentor’s approach to students can also have a major impact. White advisors that are seen as culturally responsive have better images among students of color (Grant-Thompson & Atkinson, 1997).

One factor that may impact trust and openness between Black male students and White faculty members and advisors is racial identity. This, in turn, may influence whether or not relationships between the two parties exist as acquaintanceships or evolve into mentoring. Due to the potential relationship that may exist between racial identity and relational depth, theories from racial identity and mentoring relationship development have been chosen to build the theoretical framework for this study. The next section provides an overview of theories that will be used for data analysis.
Theoretical Framework

Racial Identity Development

Krogman defined race as “a sub-group of peoples possessing a definite combination of physical characters, of genetic origin, the combination of which to varying degrees distinguishes the sub-group from other sub-groups of mankind” (cited by Helms, 1993, p. 3). While there is a genetic component to race, Omi and Winant (2006) argue that race is not as much a genetic phenomenon as a social one. They contend that race is a constructed identity that is used to determine the political, economic, and social status of individuals.

In the United States, White racial group membership is associated with power and privileges, while Black racial group membership is associated with racism and oppression (Bonvilla-Silva, 2006; McIntosh, 1989). As a result, the identity development process is different between Blacks and Whites (Helms, 1993). Racial identity is a factor that could influence relationship development. Therefore, Cross’s (1991) Model of Black Identity has been used to enhance understanding of the experiences and perspectives described by study participants. The social context of a relationship also has the potential to influence interactions between people of different races. Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous’ (1998) definition of racial salience was used to shed light on this phenomenon.

Black Identity Development.

A major identity challenge for Black people is developing a healthy sense of self when they regularly encounter racism and oppression from the dominant culture. Cross’s (1991) model describes how Black adults assimilate to their Black identities given these hardships and the emphasis placed on Eurocentric values and experiences in American
society (Cross, 1991). The model has been revised since its introduction in 1971, but still consists of five developmental stages (Cross 1991).

Stage one is *Pre-encounter*, which represents a Black person’s view of self from a Eurocentric frame of reference. Black adults may develop anti-Black attitudes or become pre-occupied with the social stigma associated with Blackness until they progress through this stage. An example of pre-encounter behavior could be Black community members criticizing Black males for pursuing education. This is an attack against a fellow Black person and reflects anger that is being directed toward one’s own race (hooks, 2004; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Cross (1991) and Tatum (1997) believe the rejection of academic pursuits among Black men illustrates that Black males have been “miseducated” about their racial identity. Some Black adults, however, never move beyond pre-encounter because they achieve well-being and happiness by cultivating other parts of their identities (Cross, 1991).

*Encounter* is the second stage and begins when a single event or series of events cause Black people to question their current identity. These events trigger a range of emotions that increase the desire to search for their Black identity. Microaggression and racism directed toward Blacks at PWIs may serve as a catalyst event and send students into stage three (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Cross (1991) calls *Immersion-Emersion* the “vortex” of development because individuals become intensely focused on replacing their old identities for ones that are more Afrocentric. They may cling to symbols associated with Blackness until their concept of identity matures. They may also become more confrontational with non-Blacks and begin to make personal sacrifices for the Black community.
As they move forward, Black people view Black symbols and experience in a more substantive way. They are committed to Black issues because they believe in the cause. Many of the high-achieving Black males in Harper’s (2009) study provide an example of individuals in immersion. These men directly confronted racist remarks and assumed leadership roles on campus to counter negative beliefs held about them. Transitioning through this stage is complex which may lead some people to regress to pre-encounter or dropout of identity exploration altogether. In fact, Cross (1991) indicates that Black college students may abandon Black activities once they graduate because they become content with just feeling good about their Black identity or they begin to focus on other parts of their identity as they enter the workforce and consider marriage and family.

Stage four is Internalization and takes place when people settle into their new Black identity. This identity could be nationalist, multicultural, or somewhere in between. The end point does not matter as much as the sense of peace, self-confidence, acceptance of the Black community that follows. Cross’s final stage is Internalization-Commitment. It is not psychological different from internalization, but is characterized by a continued interest in and commitment to Black issues.

Racial Salience.

Cross’s (1991) Model of Black Identity and other traditional models of racial identity often consider race as either stable across time or contingent primarily on a person’s position along a developmental continuum (Sellers et al., 1998). Sellers et al. (1998), however, decided to focus on “the significance and meaning African Americans place on race in defining themselves” (p. 19). The result was the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity
(MMRI). This theory considers an individual’s racial identity at a given point in time, rather than within a stage in a sequence.

One of the key concepts of Sellers et al. (1998) theory is *racial salience*. It is defined as the extent to which race is significant to an individual at a specific time or within a specific context. For example, a Black male might have less racial salience in a classroom of all Black students than he has in a classroom of all White students. It should be noted that salience is not strictly dictated by time or situation, but is also influenced by the centrality of race to someone’s identity (Sellers et al., 1998). Therefore, one cannot assume that all Black males will have the same racial salience as the male in the example above. A male who does not perceive race to be a critical component of his identity may experience no different in racial salience in an all-Black vs. all-White classroom.

Seller et al.’s (1998) concept of racial salience is worth considering along with Cross’s (1991) because of the natural limitation of a research study. This inquiry focused on student experiences at a given point in time in their college careers. It is difficult to determine if participant relational experiences best reflect their racial identity along a development path or the importance they place on race at a predominately White university while interacting with White faculty members and advisors. Therefore, using the Cross’s (1991) model with the idea of racial salience enhanced the richness of conclusions.

**Mentoring Relationship Development**

**Kram’s Theory of Mentoring Relationship Development.**

Research on mentoring began to emerge in early 1970s and late 1980s (Germain, 2011). As its importance was elevated, theories about how mentoring relationships develop
began to take shape. Kram (1983, 1985) introduced one of the first models for mentoring relationship development. She studied 18 pairs of managers, one senior and one junior, in different stages of a developmental relationship. Each member of the pair was interviewed to identify the psychological and organizational factors that influenced the development and progression of their relationship. She proposed four distinct phases and experiences that were common for each manager within a phase. The first phase is *initiation* which occurs when a mentor is seen as a competent professional who can support the developmental needs of a protégé. The protégé is viewed as someone who has potential and is capable of being coached by the senior person. The relationship between both individuals solidifies as each member fulfills the other’s expectations.

Phase two, *cultivation*, evolves when career and psychosocial support reach their prime. As the pair interacts more frequently, there are greater opportunities to for protégés to be coached and challenged, while mentors gain satisfaction from nurturing and influencing a younger person. Emotional intimacy grows deeper in this phase. *Separation* is the third phase Kram describes. The junior person has become more competent and autonomous over time, meaning the nature of the relationship changes and reassessment is necessary. Changes in jobs for both parties can also promote the need for separation. In some instances, separation can lead to resentment, hostility, and feelings of loss.

The final phase is *redefinition*. This occurs once the developmental phase of the relationship ends and pairs recover from negative emotions. They are now able to interact as peers, rather than mentors and protégés. Kram’s study involved primarily White mentors and protégés. While she explored the influence of gender on mentoring in her 1985 book,
Mentoring at Work, she did not explore the impact of racial culture on mentoring. Thomas (1990, 1993) and other researchers began to explore race and mentoring in the late 1980s. Murphy and Ensher published their theory for cross-national mentoring in 1997. This is the actual theory that will be used in this study.

**Murphy and Ensher’s Cross-National Mentoring Theory.**

Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) theory is based on mentoring, cross-cultural interaction, and leader-member exchange theory research in the workplace (Kram, 1983; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991; Triandis, Kurowski, & Gefand, 1994). They identify five phases of mentoring relationship development. In the first phase, attraction, mentors and protégés examine their differences and similarities to decide how much they like each other. Cross-cultural pairs that find multiple similarities are more likely to develop strong attraction. For this reason same race pairs are often more attracted to each other (Thomas, 1990). However, it is interesting to note that similar attitudes toward race can facilitate attraction. Thomas (1993) found that mentors and protégés who manage racial differences in the same manner developed closer relationships. For example, dyad members that ignore or deny racial issues in the same way formed just as close of a bond as pairs that directly addressed racial differences.

Phase 2 is contracting, where mentors and protégés test their attraction by interacting with one another. During this phase, the pair negotiates and establishes the roles each will play in the developing relationship. Each member’s expectations are shaped by their cultural values. In growth, Phase 3, the mentor and protégé actively seek opportunities to interact. They build trust with each other and exchange information about themselves. Differences in
communication norms can generate conflict in this phase. Members’ abilities to manage conflict influence how long they stay in this phase and whether or not they progress to the next one.

A limited number of mentors and protégés reach Phase 4, *maturation*. In this phase, the pair overcomes cultural differences to establish stability, congruence in communication, and “reciprocal support” (Murphy & Ensher, 1997). Murphy and Ensher include a fifth phase in their model called *transition*, which occurs when a relationship is discontinued due to choice or natural events. Transition will not be explored in this study because the research is concerned with how Black males and White faculty members navigate the first three phases to achieve Phase 4.

One critique of prominent mentoring models is that they oversimplify mentor-protégé relational dynamics. They do not lend themselves well to the negative behaviors, such as overprotection, exploitation, extreme dependence or excessive criticism that can transform mentoring into a harmful experience (Eby, McManus, & Simon, 2000; Levinson et al., 1978; Kram, 1985). Nevertheless, the models do provide a general framework for exploring relationships. To that end, Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) theory will be used to explore the research questions in this study.

**Summary**

Relationships between Black male students and White faculty members at PWIs are complex. This chapter outlined the history of segregation that impacted Black student ability to attend PWIs and continues to influence their ability to adjust to the social environment present on these campuses. It also considers the Black student experience at a PWI to
promote understanding for why Blacks may not trust or feel comfortable interacting with White faculty members. Finally, it describes mentoring and cross-cultural relationships. It informs the challenges that can exist and the stages that can help mixed pairs move beyond casual relationships to supportive relationships. The next chapter explains the research design that was employed to understand mentoring relationships between Black male students and White faculty members and advisors at PWIs. It outlines how data was collected and analyzed and how trustworthiness was achieved.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine how Black male students develop supportive relationships with White faculty members and advisors at a predominately White institution. Using a case study approach, I addressed the following research questions:

1. How do Black male students define support in relationships with faculty and advisors?
2. What personal characteristics of White faculty members or advisors cause Black males students to seek increased interaction with them?
3. What events promote relational growth between Black male students and White faculty members and advisors?
4. How does race impact relationship development for Black male students?

Qualitative inquiry was used to answer the research questions because it provides “rich… description of people, places, and conversations…that are not easily handled by statistical” or experimental procedures (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 2). Furthermore, it examines “things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of…phenomena in terms of the meaning people give to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Rich description and participant meaning are both needed to understand cross-cultural relationship development.

Qualitative research methods also align with the theoretical assumptions upon which this study is grounded. I maintain the constructivist perspective that “reality is socially constructed” and a product of the historical and social contexts in which individuals live (Mertens, 2005, p. 14; Creswell, 2007). Therefore, I expect that racial inequality in America will influence how participants characterize cross-cultural relationship development at a
PWI. Lincoln and Guba (2000) indicate that qualitative inquiry can facilitate constructivist research because it allows participants to interact directly with researchers to ensure their views of reality are accurately represented.

**Overview of Methodological Approach**

A case study approach was used to conduct this qualitative inquiry. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe a case study as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (p. 25). Yin (1994) elaborates further by insisting that case studies are particularly useful when a phenomenon is difficult to separate from its context. This research project fits the case study approach because cross-cultural relationships are bound by their members and cannot be extracted from the social environments in which they exist. The PWI environment serves as the primary context for relationships studied, while the students’ major department and college serve as a sub-context for their relationships with White faculty and advisors.

Case studies are also a preferred method when researchers want to answer “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 1994). This study examines how Black male students develop relationships with White faculty members and uses a number of how questions to understand this phenomenon. This further supports the use of case study for this project. Since each study participant’s experience was unique, I chose to have each participant represent an individual case in this study.

A major debate in case study research is what unit of analysis constitutes a case? (Yin, 1994). Yin (1994) asserts that an individual can serve as a case, but Stake (2000) warns that a single member of a group may not offer a rich enough description of a phenomenon.
This can cause problems for researchers because it may prevent them from establishing the transferability or generalizability of their work (Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Researchers that note the intrinsic value of a case may not be concerned about transferability because they believe their target audience will be interested in results regardless of their generalizability (Stake, 1994). Others may pursue transferability by identifying several people that have experienced a phenomenon or fit their study criteria and compare their cases with other cases in a study. This is called a multiple case study approach (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994).

I chose to use the multiple case study approach for this project for a few key reasons. Merriam (1988) and Yin (1994) suggest that collecting multiple cases, rather than a single case, allows researchers to report more robust, comprehensive findings. Researchers can identify commonalities across cases, which readers may use to make broader generalizations (Merriam, 1988). Merriam (1998) notes that reviewing a broad range of cases with similarities and differences can ultimately be beneficial when one considers an individual case. The patterns and themes that emerge from the cross-case analysis may explain how or why a single case evolves as it does (Merriam, 1998).

Eleven Black male students were identified as single cases to ensure that the findings from this study are compelling. A case report was created for each student and then cross-case analysis was conducted. This method generated findings that honored the uniqueness and complexity of each student’s experience, while answering the research questions from the common themes that emerged across cases.
Case studies are developed when data are collected and analyzed from multiple sources (Merriam, 1998). Multiple data sources allow researchers to develop rich descriptions, which is a signature trait of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). The data used in a case study may be qualitative, quantitative, or both (Yin, 1994). In this study, interviews with the Black male students, which were qualitative, provided the primary data. However, statistics from institutional research reports and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSEE) were used to generate a broader understanding of the environment in which the relationships exist. These data sources were both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Despite the review of some quantitative data, the study remains a qualitative study because numbers are used for descriptive purposes.

Qualitative researchers often debate the appropriate way to classify case studies (Creswell, 2007). Some believe case studies are the products of qualitative inquiry (Stake, 2005; Merriam, 1988). Others claim case studies are a process for investigating a phenomenon (Yin, 1994). I, like Creswell (2007), view case studies as both. They are a method for collecting data within a bounded system, which ultimately leads to a deliverable case description. The Data Collection section of this chapter outlines the specific process I used to execute the case study approach while the Data Analysis section describes how I generated individual cases and the cross-case analysis.

Site Selection and Sampling

The Research Site and Study Context

This study was conducted at a large, predominately white research institution, located in a metropolitan area of the Southeast. It will be referred to as Southern State in this
study. Southern State is classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a doctoral research institution. It enrolls over 25,000 graduate and undergraduate students, making it the fourth largest public university in the state. The university is located in the state’s largest city and, according to its mission statement, strives to leverage its location to offer “exemplary” educational programs that are affordable and easily accessible to the state’s population. Southern State is classified as a predominately White institution, with 62% of its undergraduate student body classified as Caucasian.

The institution has multiple distinctive characteristics that make it an appealing location for this study. In fall 2011, 16.8% of its 20,283 undergraduates were classified as Black. Black males comprised 6.1% of Southern State’s undergraduate population. This is a larger than average Black enrollment for a PWI, which generated a larger pool of potential study participants (University of Alabama, 2009).

The Educational Trust, a nonprofit organization which promotes educational equity for students of color and low-income students, recognized Southern State in 2010 as one of only 23 public colleges and universities that equalized graduation rates between Black and White students (Lynch & Engle, 2010). The Associate Provost for Academic Services credits Southern State’s academic success and transition programs, targeted at minority students, as a factor in the institution’s achievement.

The university introduced a summer bridge program for incoming freshman from underrepresented groups in 1986 that helps them transition into college life. It also offers a year-long transition program, targeted at minority freshmen, which features tutoring, specialized advising, opportunities to interact with faculty, and connections to leadership
programming to help new students excel academically and build a positive self-concept. Underrepresented students in science, engineering, and math fields can take advantage of another program which offers tutoring, mentoring, and financial awards. Finally, Black males can participate in a specialized program that strives to increase their retention and graduation at Southern State through peer mentoring, coaching, life skills workshops, and other relationship building activities.

I contacted the university’s Office of Institutional Research, Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, and Office of Multicultural Academic Affairs to determine if any studies on race, discrimination, or social climate had been conducted at the institution in recent years. None of the university officials with whom I spoke were aware of such projects. Therefore, I did not have access to data that indicated how a large population of students and faculty described the racial climate at Southern State.

Southern State is also unique in that it enrolls the highest number of transfer students of any public, four-year institution in the state. Approximately 43% of students admitted to the institution in fall 2011 were transfer students. As a result, transfer students make up a large proportion of Southern State graduates. In fall 2011, 53% of graduates began their academic careers at the university as transfer students. In spring 2012, 46% of graduates began as transfer students. This was important to mention because it influenced the students who were solicited and chose to participate in the study. Four, or 36%, of study participants are classified as transfer or second degree students.

In 2009, Southern State University participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). This survey measures student and institutional behaviors that are
connected to student success in college, so that institutions can improve practices and adopt policies that enhance student outcomes (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2012). Survey results offer insight into Southern State student perceptions of faculty and the campus environment. NSEE asks students to rate the frequency at which they interact with faculty on campus. These activities include discussing course topics and career materials in and outside of class, and receiving written or oral feedback from instructors. At Southern State, 37.6% of seniors indicated they regularly experienced these types of interactions with faculty, compared to 41.3% of students at other institutions with a Carnegie classification of Doctoral Research University.

NSEE also asks students to rate the support they receive on campus, which includes the quality of relationships with faculty and administrative personnel, and resources for academic success. At Southern State, 54.7% of seniors indicated high levels of campus support, while 57.0% of students at other Doctoral Research Universities said they received high levels of support. Both the differences in student-faculty interaction and campus support were statistically significant.

It is important to consider the characteristics of Southern State because they work together to create the social context in which the study participants interact with faculty, administrators, and other students. Case study methodology encourages researchers and readers to view study findings in light of the environment in which events and experiences take place (Merriam, 1988; Merriam 1998; Stake 1995; Yin, 1994).
Gaining Access

One of the challenges to performing qualitative research is gaining access to the site and individuals to be studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007). Gaining access can be difficult because it requires obtaining permission from multiple gatekeepers (Creswell, 2007). The first step to gaining access is traditionally acquiring approval to conduct research from a university Institutional Review Board (Creswell, 2007). I began my process of gaining access to study participants by seeking approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at my degree granting institution and Southern State.

The next set of gatekeepers from which one must gain approval are typically members of the organization or group whom you wish to research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Gaining their permission requires communicating the research purpose, what activities will take place, how the research will impact regular organizational or personal functions, how results will be used, and any benefits an organization or individuals will gain (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). For this study, I attained cooperation from two gatekeeper groups.

The first was the Southern State’s Office of Multicultural Academic Services. I met with the director to describe the research I would be conducting and ask his assistance in obtaining a list of eligible study participants. He agreed and solicited the assistance of one of his staff members to generate a list of students who met the participant requirements, which included their Southern State email addresses. Next, I had to gain buy-in from eligible participants so that I could interview them. I describe the process I followed to gain access to these students in the next section.
Participant Selection

Supportive relationships between Black male college students and White faculty members are thought to be atypical (Guiffrida, 2005). Therefore, it was necessary to select a sampling strategy that maximized opportunities to solicit participation from students that met the study criteria. In general, sampling in qualitative research is purposeful (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) says this method is dominant in qualitative studies because it allows the researcher to choose “individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 125). The sampling was purposeful in that I specifically targeted requests for participation to Black male students on campus. I also only wanted to study Black males who were traditionally aged and in good academic standing at Southern State. As a result, only Black men between the ages of 18-24 who carried a grade point average equal or greater to 2.0 were a part of the sampling pool.

This study sought to explore a particular phenomenon among Black male students, therefore, I used a specific type of purposeful sampling called criterion sampling. This sampling method is characterized by selecting cases that meet a pre-established “criterion of importance” (Patton, 2001, p. 238). It is useful when trying to study cases that are unique among a population. The criterion used for sampling was student relational status with White faculty members. Only Black males who identified themselves as being in a supportive relationship with a White faculty member or advisor were eligible for the study.

Prospective study participants were identified with assistance from Southern State’s multicultural academic affairs office. The unit is charged with increasing retention and
graduation among minority undergraduates. The director of this office agreed to have one of his staff members generate a report of Black males who fit the study criteria for me. This staff member emailed me the list of potential candidates. The report included the full name, age, GPA, major, class standing, and email address of each undergraduate eligible for the study. The total number of students listed on the report was 612.

I began the sampling process by sending an email to the eligible students to request their participation. This email was pre-approved by the institutional review boards at my degree granting institution and Southern State. Students who were interested in the study replied to the email with their telephone number so that I could call them to discuss the study further. Nineteen males responded to my initial inquiry. I was able to reach 15 candidates by telephone to explain the study in further detail and screen them for eligibility. Ultimately, 11 students participated in interviews.

I empowered students to define a supportive relationship because their perception dictates whether or not the relationship was emotionally, professionally, academically, or psychosocially beneficial. This aligns with my constructivist perspective, which maintains that reality is socially constructed (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). This is particularly important in this study because Blacks have historically been oppressed by Whites (Weber, 2010). I reduced the chance of promoting additional oppression by allowing each student to use his own judgment about the relationships he has with White faculty and advisors on campus. This means if a student said during phone screening they were supported by a White faculty member or advisor, I considered this to be true.
I also gave the Black males the liberty to define the race of the faculty member with whom they have a supportive relationship. Some of the faculty members who supported students in this study might self-identify as non-White. However, this study design did not allow me the opportunity to talk with the White faculty members. Since race is a socially constructed phenomenon, I allowed the Black males to define the race of their mentor (Weber, 2010).

**Data Collection**

The primary data source for this study is individual interviews. Patton (2001) stresses that interviews are valuable because they allow people to “enter into (another) person’s perspective” (p. 196). A researcher can gain access to feelings, thoughts, and past experiences of a participant that they could not capture in any other way (Patton, 2001). The interview format for this study was semi-structured. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state this type of interviewing allows researchers to ask additional questions as appropriate and reflect comments back to participants to acquire a more detailed description of their experiences. Merriam (1998) further explains that semi-structured interviews “respond to the situation…and new ideas” as they surface (p. 74).

Each participant was interviewed privately, apart from other study participants to ensure that the elements of their individual experiences were fully captured. The private interview location also supported the participants’ anonymity and gave them a space to freely express thoughts and feelings. The interview protocol was developed to answer the research questions that guide this study. Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) cross-national mentoring theory
and Cross’s (1991) model of Black identity were also used to develop questions since these theories are the primary components of the study’s theoretical framework.

The working interview guide consisted of fifteen questions and provided a general structure for the interviews. Since the interviews were semi-structured, I added and altered questions based on topics that emerged during the conversations.

I scheduled a single, one-hour interview with each participant based on his availability. I confirmed the interview time and location via email and attached a copy of the consent form to this email. These interviews took place in private study rooms in the Southern State library. Before the interviews began, I considered ways to build rapport with the student so that I could collect the most authentic data possible. Merriam (1998) indicates that the interviewer-interviewee relationship is complex because “both parties bring biases, predispositions, attitudes, and physical characteristics that color the interaction and the data elicited” (p. 87). In the case of this study, differences in gender, race, and age were factors that could create power issues and negatively impact the data collection process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam 1998). I adopted two strategies to reduce issues that might result from differences between study participants and me.

First, I promoted equality and openness by managing the physical space in which the interview was conducted. Some rooms I used were furnished with a desk and computer station, making them feel like offices. I did not want students to feel like they were coming into an authority figure’s office to be interviewed, so I chose to sit on the side of the desk opposite the computer when using these rooms. This is the seat that the person with less authority or power typically takes in an office. I felt my assumption that students would
view the seat behind the computer as a seat of authority was proven when one participant physically hesitated to sit in that chair. He asked me if he should sit behind the computer, and I smiled and said yes. I felt that giving him and other students this seat demonstrated that I saw them as an equal.

Second, I built rapport with the students by making small talk. Mertens (2005) says establishing rapport with participants in a study is an important part of qualitative research process. I asked participants about their day or weekend. I found out if they had upcoming tests or plans for spring break. I also shared my background with them so that they knew more about me and my reason for conducting the study before they were asked to disclose information with me. I found that doing this broke the ice and helped the students and me transition into the formal interviews.

Before officially beginning the interviews, I asked each student to review the informed consent form. The form restated the purpose of the study, my interest in the topic, the potential risks associated with participation, and a student’s right to discontinue participation at any time. It also confirmed that the interviews were anonymous and pseudonyms would be used to protect them from being identifiable in study findings. Participants were also invited to ask questions about the study. Once all their questions were answered, I asked the students to sign the consent form so that we could begin the interview. No students received compensation for their participation.

The interviews were digitally recorded. I did not take notes during interviews to eliminate distractions for the participants and myself. Instead, reflective field notes were drafted immediately after each interview to capture impressions and thoughts that could
impact my understanding of our dialogue (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). All interview recordings were transferred from a digital recorder to a password protected laptop computer. Each recording was electronically submitted to a transcription service within 48 hours of the interview. By creating transcripts as soon as possible, I had data available for analysis throughout the data collection process. Mertens (2005) indicates that data collection and analysis happen simultaneously. Therefore, collecting transcripts throughout the study allowed me to read and reflect upon the interviews as needed.

Prior to coding any of the transcripts, I checked them for accuracy by reading them while listening to the audio recordings. There were a small number of instances in which the transcriptionist inaccurately recorded a word or phrase in the interview dialogue. This process of reading and listening allowed me to make these corrections when the transcriptionist made an error. Once this was completed, I emailed each participant a copy of his transcript for review. This is known as member checking, and is recommended to ensure that a participant’s intended meaning is represented in the transcript (Mertens, 2005). Participants were given the opportunity to correct, clarify, or strike statements that they were uncomfortable having shared in a case report. Only two participants responded to my request for a transcript review, both of which indicated that no changes need to be made to their transcripts.

Various steps were taken to ensure that participant confidentiality was maintained and files were well organized. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym on the day of their interview. All participants were given the option to choose their pseudonym, but only two chose their own new names. The pseudonyms replaced their real names on labels for digital
recordings, transcripts, and fieldnotes. I maintained one spreadsheet with the participants’ real names and email contact information that was used for the member checking follow-up. However, once that was complete, I had no reason to refer to it and I began to know the students during data analysis by their pseudonyms. When writing up my finding report, I omitted or replaced names of people, majors, or special programs students mentioned to further conceal other identifying characteristics.

Information about Southern State and the individual colleges in which the students were enrolled was collected to supplement the interviews when needed. As previously mentioned, the experiences that students have at a PWI cannot be separated from the social context of the institution. Therefore, documents that help generate a rich description of the institutional setting inform this study. Each college on campus also has a unique culture based on its members, traditions, and academic disciplines. Websites and college reports that described the colleges enhanced my understanding of contexts in which specific participants interacted with faculty and advisors.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process by which researchers makes sense of the information they have gathered during data collection (Merriam, 1998). It entails “consolidating, reducing, and interpreting” data to uncover the meaning and insights that constitute study findings (Merriam, 1998). Creswell (2007) warns that data analysis has no formula and it is not a linear process. Therefore, researchers build a strategy for analysis that suits their project and may find that it is not distinctly separate from data collection or reporting findings (Creswell,
I established the following data analysis strategy to match my research methodological approach.

Multiple case studies require two levels of data analysis to create representative findings. First, each individual case must be examined so that an individual case description can be developed. Next, individual cases are compared to derive possible explanations and themes (Merriam, 1998). Miles and Huberman (1994) warn that cross-case analysis is challenging. They state that researchers must dive deep into the complexities of individual cases if they expect to generate patterns or themes that are true representations of the cases they studied.

Mertens (2005) recommends that qualitative researchers adopt a specific series of practices to effectively analyze data. I used her recommendations to begin my individual case analysis. The first step in Mertens’ (2005) process is to review reflective fieldnotes. I took notes after each interview to record the thoughts I had and assumptions I made from my contact with the study participants. This helped me identify topics or ideas I needed to consider while reading a participant’s transcript.

Each student’s interview transcript was analyzed independently. I had previously read each transcript while listening to the corresponding audio recording to make sure the transcript was correct. For formal analysis, I printed a copy of each transcript and read it so that I could write additional thoughts and perceptions in the margins that would be useful later in the data analysis process. Before moving forward, I set aside time to review the research questions and theoretical framework that guided this study. I did this in order to create a set of what Crabtree and Miller (1992) call pre-figured codes (cited by Creswell,
Pre-figured codes are most common in scientific research because they create a structure for analysis that is often desired in more objective settings. I chose this method of coding because I felt it created the structure I needed as a new researcher. I wanted to make sure that I had a workable framework by which to analyze data in the context of theory and my research questions.

This style of coding is similar to Creswell’s (2007) “lean coding”, which is the practice of developing a small list of codes that can be expanded as data analysis continues (p. 152). Since there is no one way to conduct qualitative research, I used the pre-figured and lean coding concepts, but gave myself permission to broaden or narrow a code if it helped me better honor the student’s stories. I started with 6 pre-figured, lean codes for initial analysis: examples of support, opposite of support, characteristics that connect, events that connect, racial identity clues, and race and relationships.

I began coding by reading each transcript a second time. I chose to manually code the transcripts using different colors to represent each major code I established. This method was most practical for me because I was reviewing a relatively small number of transcripts. This strategy also afforded me the flexibility to quickly flip between pages in a transcript as I made connections between different parts of a participant’s story. While I was coding, I also created another set of transcript notes. They summarized key stories told by each participant and included additional impressions I had about each participant’s experience. These notes were used to develop the individual case descriptions and then were put aside for use during cross-case analysis and theme development.
Once all transcripts were coded, I used a method to sort codes that is recommended by Foss and Waters (2007). The authors suggest using scissors to cut out coded excerpts out of the transcripts so they can be grouped together. I did this for each of the color coded categories. It was important that I was still able to attribute each statement back to a particular participant. Therefore, each time I cut an excerpt, I wrote the participant’s pseudonym and transcript page number on the slip of paper. I included the question I asked that elicited the response to make sure I clearly understood the context under which the student made the statement.

Next, I read the excerpts that I placed in each code pile. From this, I developed sub-codes, which offered the descriptions that would be used to develop the themes within each code. Yin (1994) recommends creating word tables or other diagrams to organize information during cross-case analysis. Using this method to sort data was helpful because I could visually divide student statements into sub-codes. As a result, I could easily identify which sub-codes were experienced by only an individual student and which were more descriptive of the larger group of participants.

I started with a matrix for the code *examples of support*. I drew 11 columns and wrote each student’s pseudonym in a box at the top of a column. Next, I read the experts for that code. When an idea emerged from a participant’s statement that could be used as a sub-code, I listed it in a row on the left side of the matrix and put a tick mark under the student’s name. When another student’s statement mirrored that sub-code, I put a tick mark under his name. If the same student repeated an idea in another interview excerpt, I put an additional
tick mark in the box that corresponded with his name and the sub-code. Table 1 offers a sample of the examples of support matrix.

Table 1

Sample Matrix for Organizing Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Support</th>
<th>Bruno</th>
<th>Calvin</th>
<th>Donavon</th>
<th>Fredrick</th>
<th>Jay</th>
<th>Jerrod</th>
<th>Kenny</th>
<th>Roger</th>
<th>Shaun</th>
<th>Stefan</th>
<th>Terrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reaching Out</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivating/Pushing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know my personal</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Foss and Waters (2007) note that a researcher’s understanding of an excerpt may change as coding progresses. Therefore, if an excerpt did not seem to match the original code in which I placed it, I moved it to another code category. As I progressed through this process of reviewing excerpts, I also considered similarities between codes. When it appeared that two codes were becoming difficult to distinguish from each other, I created a journal entry to brainstorm what each code truly represented.

For example, it became obvious during analysis that participants’ examples of support overlapped with their descriptions of faculty and advisor characteristics that attracted greater interaction. I reread the research questions that were the basis of each code and created a journal entry that described what I was trying to uncover with each question. I came to the conclusion that examples of support should be active. This meant anything a student
described as an action or verb fell under this code. Faculty and advisor characteristics, on the other hand, were traits or adjectives that could described who the person was or how they were perceived. This helped me reorganize some of the experts into a more fitting code category.

After I generated the sub-codes for each category, I looked for similarities among the sub-codes. For example, I felt that participant examples of being guided by faculty were similar to their stories of being pushed. Therefore, these sub-codes were consolidated to create a theme that I named Providing Direction. Before using this information to outline my findings, I reviewed the research questions again. I made sure that the themes I created provided answers for the research questions with which they corresponded. I also looked over excerpts to identify quotes that could be used in support the cross-case analysis findings I offer in Chapter 5.

**Trustworthiness: Researcher Validity and Reliability**

The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in qualitative research. Humans are not perfect, so as Merriam (1998) indicates, “the investigator as human instrument is limited by being human—that is, mistakes are made, opportunities are missed, personal biases interfere” (p. 20). Therefore, a major concern in qualitative research is how well the findings represent a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

There is debate among qualitative researchers regarding the role of validation in their work (Creswell, 2007). Some believe that it is necessary for qualitative researchers to mirror quantitative validation measures in order to be taken seriously in a numbers-driven world (LeCompte & Goetz as cited in Creswell, 2007). Others argue that quantitative terminology
is not congruent with qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I contend that the unique truths that emerge from qualitative inquiry can best be assessed using qualitative standards. Therefore, I apply Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) terminology for establishing trustworthiness.

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are terms used by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to establish standards for trustworthiness. Credibility represents how accurately a researcher represents social constructs that emerge from the data. The multiple case study method was selected to promote credibility. A single case study could be useful in understanding how supportive Black male students develop supportive relationships with White faculty members and advisors. However, a single case offers the perspective of only one student who has experienced a phenomenon. By using a multiple-case approach, common themes that were shared among various cases were reported in the study findings. Credibility is also promoted through member checking. This practice allowed participants to review their interview transcripts to make corrections or clarify statements before data analysis was conducted.

Transferability refers to how well a study can be generalized to other settings. Most qualitative researchers do not strive for empirical generalizability the way that quantitative researchers do (Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000). Instead, they report findings that provide enough details that readers can make generalizations as they see appropriate (Mertens, 2005). In fact, Lincoln and Guba (1989) say the ultimate “burden of proof” for generalizability is on the reader, not the researcher. Therefore, a rich description of themes and connections to the theoretical model has been provided so readers can decide if the findings are transferrable to the students, faculty members, and advisors with whom they
interact. Furthermore, Merriam (1998) indicates that the collection and analysis of multiple cases contributes to transferability because it helps the researcher establish common themes across cases which can also serve as generalizations.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) use dependability to describe how researchers must continually assess and update their inquiry methods to successfully answer research questions. I promoted dependability by providing a detailed description of my data collection and analysis methods, which also reflected any changes I made during the study process. Finally, confirmability represents how well the findings could be corroborated by other researchers collecting and analyzing the same data. To illustrate confirmability, I kept detailed descriptions of data collection methods, deviations from my original plans, fieldnotes, and memos from data analysis. Outsiders could use this information to understand the logic behind my decisions and interpretations.

**Subjectivity Statement**

Before I discuss how I addressed ethical issues in this study, it is important for me to explain my interest in and connection to this topic. I became interested in Black male college persistence during a student affairs conference in 2007. I attended a session that introduced me to the achievement gaps between Black males and other students, and the negative consequences that resulted. It absolutely broke my heart. How much progress had we really made as a society if access to good K-12 education and support was still so strongly correlated to race?

When I returned to my advising job at a large PWI, I became more aware of the challenges faced by my Black male advisees. One student lost his athletic scholarship which
covered his tuition and almost had to leave school. If his high school principal had not paid his tuition bill, he would not have been able to remain in school. Another Black male showed unbelievable determination to complete his degree. I later learned it was because he did not want to fall into the life of gangs and drugs that many of his high school friends lived. There were so many stories and so many obstacles. Therefore, when I started doctoral study in 2009, I knew I wanted my dissertation to address a topic related to Black male retention in college.

I have read numerous studies which indicate that relational support plays a role in retaining Black males who are at risk for college dropout (Palmer & Young, 2008; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010). These studies also indicate Black males are more likely to find this kind of support at an HBCU than a PWI. I find this unacceptable. Therefore, I would like to shed light on the pockets of strong relational support that are being extended to Black males at PWIs from members of the majority culture. I would like to help institutional decision-makers and faculty who interact with Black males daily learn from examples of what works on campus so that they all can do more of it.

Despite my passion, I had to be cautious while undertaking this project. I am a White female who already possesses a college degree, which influences my perspective of the students who participated in this study. I had to remind myself of the privileges I have as a White, middle-class American who is college educated. I wanted to make sure this did not lead me to consider the study participants as weaker people who needed a savior from the dominant racial group. I also needed to be aware that being a female did not influence my perceptions of male study participants or faculty and advisors that were described during the
interviews. I believe that my desire to genuinely be an advocate for Black males helped me approach this research with compassion, humility, and openness to learning. I spoke with Black classmates and colleagues during the data collection and research process which I think helped me maintain an accurate view of participants.

**Ethical Issues**

Any study of human subjects creates a potential for harm. To reduce harm, researchers must take appropriate steps to protect their participants. A number of precautions were taken to ensure that participants’ rights were honored, risks were minimized, and confidentiality was protected. I clearly communicated to participants their rights multiple times during sampling and interviewing. In my email solicitation for participants, I outlined the rights they had if they agreed to take part in the study. I verbally described these rights to students during their telephone screenings. These rights were reiterated in the consent form participants read prior to their interviews and signed at the beginning of their interviews. Finally, participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at the conclusion of their interviews.

The participants of this study face unique risks because they are members of an ethnic minority group. Creswell (2007) warns that research can “potentially (and often unintentionally) exploit the vulnerable populations we study” (p. 44). As the literature shows, Black students, especially Black males, may be targets of oppression and hostility on college campuses (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Therefore, my biggest priority was to avoid behaviors, questions, or reporting that would contribute to unjust treatment of these students. One of the ways I addressed this risk was to be candid with students about my
background and interest in this topic throughout their participation. I was honest about issues of which I might be ignorant. I also was forthcoming with how I planned to use my findings to influence practice and educate higher education administrators through training programs and conferences.

Participants also faced risks as a result of personal disclosure. Expressing details about any intimate relationship can be awkward. But it can also place participants in a vulnerable position because they are sharing intimate details about relationships with people who may be perceived to be in authority. To promote safe disclosure, I took time to build rapport and a basic connection with each participant, so that he understood I had pure motives and truly wanted to learn about his story. I also gave the participants an opportunity to review their transcript for accuracy before data analysis. If a participant felt uncomfortable having a story shared or wanted to clarify a statement, he was offered the chance to do so.

The final ethical consideration of this study was how to best protect participant identities. Participants’ remarks about Southern State or its administration could carry consequences for them if their identities were revealed. Therefore, I did not attach a participants real name to paper and electronic records I maintained. I also replaced names of people, locations, and degree programs with more generalized phrases in my findings chapters. For example, instead of using a faculty member’s formal name, I used terms such as history professor or faculty advisor.
Limitations of the Study

One of the core limitations of this study is that results were dependent on my ability to find participants that had experienced the phenomenon of having a supportive relationship with a faculty member, and this is not something that is obvious without speaking directly to a person about their relationships. Therefore, identifying a large enough variety of cases was challenging. I believe soliciting participation from the entire, eligible Black male community at Southern State enhanced my ability to build a strong pool of cases. However, I have no way to tell if the 11 students who chose to be interviewed are a good representation of the types of experiences other Black males have on campus.

This study is also limited by specific characteristics of participants. Five of the participants were enrolled in the College of Business. This college is a smaller community within the larger Southern State community, which means their ability to connect with White faculty and advisors may be different from students in other colleges. As a result, the findings may be biased by the context offered to business students.

In addition, most of the participants in the study were about to graduate from Southern State. This is important to note because it impacted the types of faculty and advisors with whom a student interacts. Black males who are freshmen are more likely to interact with faculty who teach general education courses and have more opportunities to receive advising from the Southern State support programs that target minority students. Not only does this influence the type of faculty or advisor with whom they interact, but it also influences the types of relationships they compare with one another. For example, a student who regularly meets with an advisor who supports a minority-targeted academic program
may view their White faculty members as less responsive because they do not attend to the same types of issues.

Another factor that limits the study is the length of time in which I interacted with the study participants. I used cross-cultural mentoring and racial identity theories as the theoretical framework for this project. Relationships and identity are complex phenomena to examine because of the diversity that exists among individual experiences (Cross, 1991). In order to develop a deep understanding of each participant’s relationship with a White faculty member or advisor and his racial identity, I would likely need to spend a significant amount of time talking to and observing him. Since my research design did not include these activities, the depth to which I can apply the theory is limited.

A final factor that limits the study is its institutional context. This is a large, research university in an urban area. While PWIs are often portrayed as homogeneous in literature, each has unique cultural features based on traditions, leadership, and location. For example, urban areas are often considered more open to diversity. This could impact the perspectives of faculty who teach at the institution and are members of this urban community. The pool of students at the institution also impacts the study. A significant number of students on this campus are on financial aid, indicating they come from lower-income families. These characteristics could also influence the culture that is created. As a result, the study may not be suitable for comparisons to PWIs in small towns or that enroll high income students.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter describes the research design and strategies I used to conduct a multiple-case study analysis of Black male relationships with White faculty members and advisors at a
PWI. It provides justification for the selected methods and explains how trustworthiness and ethical considerations were addressed. By following these procedures, I was able to create a case description for each of the 11 males who participated in the study and a cross-case analysis that offer a response to the research questions. The next chapter will introduce readers to the study participants and their experiences at Southern State.
CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDIES

This chapter presents case descriptions for each of the 11 Black male college students interviewed for this study. The cases provide description and analysis, both of which Richards (2009) considers to be essential to understanding data that has been collected. The reader may begin to see individual responses to the primary research question, *how do Black male college students develop supportive relationships with White faculty members at a PWI.* This question will ultimately be explored through a cross-case analysis. However, it is important to reflect upon each participant’s experience before embarking on a cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006). Stake (2006) says it is valuable to understand individual cases, even when conducting a multiple case study, because it allows the researcher and reader to experience the “complexity and situational uniqueness” of each case (p. 5). He goes on to say that individual cases have a distinct “sub-context” that needs to be considered (Stake, 2006, p. 12). Therefore, a rich and thick description of each study participant’s story is provided to help readers understand the unique experience of each student before cross-case analysis is offered in Chapter 5 (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The general format of the cases is common. Each begins with a personal profile that includes the name of the college at Southern State in which the student will earn his degree, why the student chose to enroll at the university, family background, and any events that have impacted the student’s college experience. Two additional sections offer information related to the four sub-questions which guided this inquiry. The final section of each case offers a direct analysis of the student’s stories as they relate to the study’s theoretical framework.
Just as each participant’s experience is different, so is their willingness to share information. Therefore, the cases vary in length and detail. Participants who offered a more thorough description of their relationships with White faculty members are also referenced more in Chapter 5.

**Case One: Bruno**

**Personal Profile**

Bruno is a 21 year-old junior enrolled in Southern State’s College of Business. He is an out-of-state student who entered the institution as a freshman. He grew up in a primarily Black environment, but participated in athletics with a number of White peers. He thinks his family and the quality of schools he attended prepared him for college. Older members of his family attended college in the past, but none of them graduated. His brother is the first college graduate in his family and Bruno plans to be the next.

The primary reason Bruno chose Southern State is because it offers a specialized engineering program that interested him in high school. He also liked the university because it is more diverse than his elementary and secondary schools. Bruno indicated he could have selected an HBCU but feels he is getting a better quality education at Southern State. Bruno particularly enjoys the opportunities at the university to build relationships with people different from himself.

I wanted to get out of that (primarily Black) environment and come to a majority White school. I actually like the diversity, seeing different people every day, and meeting intelligent people as myself…and just building relationships, diverse relationships.
Bruno described his transition to college as fairly easy. He participated in intramural basketball and student organizations as a freshman, which helped him make friends.

Bruno describes himself as very “determined and ambitious.” He entered the university as an engineering major, but switched to the College of Business at the beginning of his sophomore year after some career exploration. Bruno completed a manufacturing internship the summer following his freshman year. During the experience, he noticed many of his fellow interns were pursuing business degrees instead of engineering degrees. Upon returning to Southern State that fall, Bruno discussed what he observed with a White faculty member he had grown to trust in his engineering program. The professor helped him understand the similarities and differences between his options and encouraged him to change majors if Bruno felt the opportunities in the other program better aligned with his career goals. Bruno greatly appreciated this faculty member’s willingness to take his best interest to heart.

**Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships**

Bruno defines support as availability. This is so important to him that he said, “I see (support) as one being available at all times, or at least 24-7.” This type of availability may seem somewhat unrealistic, but Bruno said he likes “people that go above and beyond because I’m gonna go above and beyond to help someone too.” Bruno’s desire for “24-7” faculty availability may stem from his perception of a White math professor’s accessibility. He said she “allowed us to call her house phone…it made me feel better as far as the class. If I ever needed anything, help on homework, any questions…we were able to call her at
home.” Bruno did not actually call the instructor at home, but said that just knowing she was willing to make herself that available made him feel supported.

Bruno described the faculty and advisors in The College of Engineering as more supportive than those in the College of Business. This appears to be directly related to advisor accessibility. He said, in the business program, “you have to set appointments to just go in there and talk to an advisor,” whereas the engineering program “allowed you just to pop-in and talk to your advisor and see how they’re doing, and just ask quick questions when you needed.”

In addition to availability, Bruno values it when faculty and advisors give “advise without you asking”, extend opportunities, and anticipate what you need. He indicated it is particularly important for faculty and advisors to give accurate information. The engineering faculty member who helped Bruno change his major offered all of these things, even when it meant the program would lose a student, so that gave him “validation to switch majors.” This faculty member’s willingness to help him, especially when it offered him no benefit, is the reason Bruno described him as the most supportive White faculty member he has interacted with at Southern State.

Despite his critique of advisor availability in the College of Business, Bruno has received support from White faculty members in the college. He has sought out relationships with those faculty members whom he feels are experts in his areas of interest. He said once he found out one of his White management faculty members had worked for a company that interested him, “I knew right then and there that I needed to be getting advice from him for my major.”
Role of Race in Relationship Development

Bruno indicated that race “is not a factor” in the relationships he has built with White faculty members at Southern State. He said, “I build my relationships (based on) you helping me out, and…just being there for me as well.” He is open to interacting with faculty members and advisors who are, not only accessible, but go above and beyond to help.

It’s based on the person’s character, and how they treat me in their role…as far as an advisor to students, you would want to go out of your way to help these students get through college in the minimum timeframe possible…so you want to go out of your way to see that they’re doing what they need to do.

The White faculty in engineering and business whom Bruno described seem to have won his trust because they were willing to offer him advice and information that supported his academic goals. He believes Black students may have an “initial perception (that) White faculty” will “treat them differently, (but) once they get to know and…see that” the faculty members are there to help them, a “better relationship” can develop between them.

Bruno did mention one math faculty member whom he felt did not “acknowledge or even answer my question” and he thought it may have been a result of prejudice. However, Bruno spent very little time discussing this and it appeared it did not have a major impact on him at the university. Bruno credits his regular contact with White people growing up to his view of race.

(Race) is always gonna come up based on our experience, but I think that the Black population is being raised (in a time) that everybody’s equal now. It’s not back in the day…we are all raised now with White people. I was raised around…a lot of Whites, and that’s never been an issue for me.
Using Theory to Understand Bruno’s Story

Bruno did not talk much about race during his interview. This makes it challenging to offer a thorough analysis of his racial identity development. However, he did share some information that offer clues about the role of race in his life. Bruno had numerous experiences interacting with White people while he was growing up that led him to conclude that “everybody is equal now.” This indicates that Bruno does not perceive major struggles for power between people from different ethnic groups. He seems confident in himself and his right to receive support from faculty members and advisors at Southern State. He is willing to seek out assistance from White faculty and advisors, which shows he is not intimidated to ask for what he wants and is willing to extend trust to them.

Bruno’s racial salience can be described as low since he did not emphasize race in his experiences at Southern State (Sellers et al., 1998). In addition, Blackness does not appear to play a major role in his life and has little impact on his “sense of happiness and well-being” (Cross, 1991, p. 190). This could mean Bruno is in Cross’s (1991) pre-encounter stage. Such a hypothesis is reasonable because Bruno has built his identity around his desire and ability to succeed in the professional arena. He seeks out relationships from anyone who can help him achieve his goals, regardless of their racial or cultural background. In short, he appears to have achieved “a meaningful existence, and an internal sense of stability” outside of the racial realm (Cross, 1991, p. 191).

Bruno is not actively engaged in a relationship with any of the people he described as supporting him at Southern State. This could be a result of Bruno seeking support for his situational needs, rather than his long-term or ongoing psychosocial needs. Therefore, I
believe Bruno’s interactions with the faculty members who have supported him align best with Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) contracting phase of cross-national mentoring. During this phase, mentors and protégés are drawn into closer relationship when the other party’s behaviors and traits match their expectations (Murphy & Ensher, 1997).

Bruno expected faculty and advisors to be knowledgeable and willing to go above and beyond. When he saw that the White engineering and management professors were knowledgeable about his career field, he developed an initial attraction toward them. However, Bruno sought more in-depth contact with them when he discovered they were willing to share their expertise in a manner that could benefit him. This is particularly evident in his relationship with the White engineering faculty member, who was willing to help Bruno change majors because it was in Bruno’s best interest.

Case Two: Calvin

Personal Profile

Calvin is a graduating senior, completing a degree in the College of Business. He is 23 years-old and transferred to Southern State from an HBCU. Calvin grew up out of state, but moved to the state to live with his aunt and uncle during his last three years of high school. Both relatives have high paying, professional jobs, so Calvin described himself as living a more affluent lifestyle when he moved in with them.

In high school, Calvin faced criticism from same-race peers who accused him of “not being Black enough” because he lived in a wealthy neighborhood and carried a 4.0 grade point average. This bothered him, because his Black classmates did not know his upbringing
was actually very similar to their own. Instead of getting mad, Calvin decided to focus on being himself.

There were times where people would question whether I was Black enough…it really kind of bothered me inside that people would really question that. So I said to myself, well, I just wasn’t going to let that affect me. I was gonna make sure that I just stay in my own lane and be who I am.

Calvin has faced challenges while trying to be true to himself. He enrolled in a nationally-acclaimed HBCU his first two years of college, where he was surrounded by high performing Black students, just like him. Calvin succumbed to pressure to “go along the path of others” and to do “the popular thing,” which caused him to focus less on his studies. As a result, his grade point average dropped and he lost his tuition scholarship. Calvin could not afford the expensive private school tuition, so he returned to the state and enrolled in Southern State. He initially was successful at the university, but his academic performance suffered again when he pledged a traditionally Black fraternity. Calvin decided he needed to commit to his studies and truly be his own person. His past experiences have led him to develop a strong value for individuality and belief that Black males need to “feel comfortable in their own skin.”

Calvin finds Southern State’s diversity to be more reflective of the “real world.” He said the university “puts a premium on diversity. It’s one of (its) selling points.” This has allowed Calvin to build a diverse group of friends. His best friend is Hispanic, but he also has friends who are Caucasian and Middle Eastern. He said “there is never an issue, like, ‘Oh, you don’t look like me,’ or ‘You’re not like me.” In fact, the main thing Calvin seems to value among people is authenticity.
I put a high premium on people that are themselves, whether you're cool, you're a nerd, or you're an athlete, or you're an administrator, or you come from this background, you come from that background…I just really respect and love people that are themselves.

He believes authenticity is particularly important to Black males because they often face pressure to “be cool.”

I would say it’s important for Black males to try to feel comfortable in their own skin…not trying to fit in…or be somebody that they’re not…The sooner you realize that you don’t have to be like everybody else and be cool…the sooner you can really, effectively become a better person (and) achieve your goals and dreams.

**Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships**

Calvin said that supportive faculty and administrators in college guide students to resources “that could help them reach their goals…or a task they need to complete.” He specifically mentioned the importance of someone willingly sharing their experiences “so that (students) don’t make the same mistakes and go down the same (wrong) path.” He also indicated that emotional support is important for students when they face adversity.

Calvin has received this type of support from a White faculty member in his college who teaches an advertising promotion class. He decided to meet with the professor after class to learn about his experiences in the workplace and his career journey. The professor asked Calvin questions to learn about his plans after graduation. Through their out-of-class interactions, Calvin said his professor and he “gained…a mutual respect for each other and a mutual interest in what each other was doing and…had done.” The professor was particularly helpful in explaining to Calvin that he could still succeed without having completed an internship if he learned to “sell it right” and obtained other experiences. Calvin was extremely encouraged by this discussion.
Calvin has also built a strong relationship with his White Residential Director (RD). He considers his RD to be his greatest supporter on campus. Calvin described him as a mentor because the RD has taught him how to successfully complete his job as a Residential Advisor (RA) while balancing his other extra-curricular activities. He specifically said the RD has shown him how to “remain himself” while being a campus leader.

**Role of Race in Relationship Development**

Calvin did not describe race as having played a major role in his relationships with faculty and administrators at Southern State. He has had many opportunities to interact with non-Black faculty and administrators through classes, serving as an RA, and involvement in Greek life. Overall, he expressed having had positive experiences with everyone with which he has interacted at the university. One reason race is not an issue for Calvin is because he likes to focus on commonalities between others and himself, rather than differences. He said when you get to know someone, you learn:

> they come from a different background, but we have a lot more in common than we do different, which I think is natural amongst human beings. We…talk about the differences all the time, but…we have more in common than we do different.

Commonality plays a role in the relationship Calvin has built with his advertising promotions professor. In addition to finding the professor supportive, Calvin sees himself as being very similar to the professor. He described the professor as “thinking outside of the box” and Calvin said he tries to do the same thing. The professor has taken an alternative, more conversational approach to teaching, and Calvin appreciates the uniqueness of this style of teaching.
Calvin indicated that a primary reason he has a close relationship with his RD is because they have similar personalities and many things in common. During staff meetings, Calvin noticed his RD and he found the same things funny which often led them to have conversations afterwards. They were also able to talk about similar experiences in Greek life because his RD is an alumnus of a White fraternity. Their commonalities caused them to interact more frequently, so Calvin feels comfortable seeking his advice about how to do his job and address personal issues. Calvin only mentioned race as being important when it was connected to a concrete, common experience. For example, he finds it easier to talk about Greek life issues with his former RD who was a Black male because there are more similarities between their Black fraternities than with his current RD’s White fraternity.

**Using Theory to Understand Calvin’s Story**

Calvin’s racial identity appears to have influenced how he approaches relationships with White faculty members and advisors at Southern State. He did not place heavy consideration on race in his relationships at Southern State, which points to his racial salience as being low. One explanation for this could be that he has achieved an internalized racial identity (Cross, 1991). Cross (1991) classifies internalization as the stage in which a Black person feels “more at ease with self” and finds “confidence in (their) personal standards of Blackness” (p. 210). Calvin appears to have navigated emotional and relational challenges resulting from high school peers questioning his Blackness and college peers encouraging him to adopt a specific way of being Black. Yet, in the end, he decided fitting into a mold was not important.
The whole thing about worrying about ‘I need to have these clothes so everybody accepts me’…or, ‘I need to listen to this type of music and imitate what I hear and what I see on TV,’ you get older, you realize a lot of that stuff is not important at all. It has no value whatsoever in regular daily life in society.

Calvin also said, “I don’t have to conform…I’m just myself.” This leads me to believe he has discarded pieces of the stereotypical Black identity that do not fit him and establish his own identity.

Calvin has learned to value individuality and connecting with others based on true similarities. This could explain why Calvin is comfortable interacting with a variety of White faculty and advisors on campus. As long as these individuals are authentic and offer him respect, he seems to be more than willing to interact with and seek them out. Calvin indicated that race is not a factor for him, unless a shared racial experience helps him build a stronger connection with someone.

Calvin described one White faculty member and one White advisor who have supported him at Southern State. While both relationships have enhanced his experience, he has achieved a different relationship status with each individual. Calvin’s relationship with his advertising professor is described best by Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) contracting phase. Calvin was attracted to the professor because they both are outside of the box thinkers. The similarity prompted him to pursue greater contact with the faculty member which led them to develop a mutually beneficial relationship. Murphy and Ensher (1997) indicate that relationships in this stage are characterized by mentors and protégés maintaining contact because it is beneficial to each dyad member. This fits with Calvin’s description of the relationship.
Calvin also initiated greater contact with his RD because he was attracted to their personality similarities. However, Calvin appears to have developed a stronger bond with his RD that corresponds with Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) growth phase. The growth phase is signified by “an increased number of exchanges in which trust and greater sharing of information occur” as well as “more informal communication in which values and intimacies are shared” (p. 224). Calvin said his RD and he have regular interaction in which they share different details about their lives. Calvin uses the term mentor when he talks about his RD, which demonstrates he has reached a level of relationship with him that goes beyond casual interaction. This appears to be the type of relationship that could continue to grow to maturity.

Case Three: Donovan

Personal Profile

Donovan is a 21 year-old senior enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences. He transferred to Southern State after completing an associate’s degree at a community college in a rural area of the state. His father was in the military so he grew up in many different places, but he was living in the state prior to enrolling in college.

Donavon’s two year college offered him a “close-knit” community because the town in which it is located is small and the faculty see students more “like their kids.” He chose to continue his education at Southern State because it is in a larger city that is more diverse and offers more job prospects than where he studied previously. He will earn his bachelor’s degree from Southern State after only one year of study, making his total time to degree three years.
The transition to Southern State was huge for Donavon. He was not used to “so many classes being taught and so many different faculty (members)” teaching in his college. Due to the large volume of faculty members in his major and his short enrollment period, Donavon has not had many opportunities to build close relationships with his program faculty. Donavon did not offer much information about his personal background so much of his story is told through his relational experiences at Southern State.

**Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships**

Donavon feels most supported by faculty members who offer students concrete resources and information to help them succeed academically. Faculty members who have supported Donavon have taught him skills to improve his writing, provided him with information about conferences, and offered him opportunities to collaborate with them on research. He likes to focus on school topics when interacting with faculty members, so he does not seek or expect support for personal issues. However, he does like faculty members to share life skills, such as how to avoid “beating yourself up…or how not to procrastinate.”

Donavon appreciates it when faculty members notice that you may be struggling in class.

(Faculty might say) ‘Hey, I notice you’re kind of slipping off here, this may not be your strong suit. Do you want to meet after class?’ Or ‘I kind of see you down today, are you okay?’…I love when a teacher asks you ‘hey, you look kind of tired today, are you alright?’ (They) kind of make sure you’re okay.

Donavon has not been able to build many strong relationships with faculty in his department. He described the department culture as very “researched based,” so faculty devote a large amount of time to work that does not necessarily involve students. He has
enjoyed the opportunities he has been given to gain exposure to research, but this culture, combined with the large number of students in the department, makes it “harder to get that relationship established.”

Donavon considers his most supportive relationships to be with the two White faculty members who advise the honor society for his major or those who have offered him opportunities to assist with research projects. One of the reasons he feels closer to these faculty members is because he gets to interact with them outside of class. This has helped him break the view of faculty members as “uptight (people) that never go anywhere or…(don’t) have a real life.” He also said they were generally “helpful” and “kind.” Donavon also mentioned that he is drawn to faculty members who have a similar personality to him.

The first two characteristics that go to my head that I’ve noticed from teachers that I have gotten close with (are) being eccentric and being very energetic, out there kind of mentally…not taking everything so serious. Kind of being a smart-alek…just loose. I’m very much like that so our personalities will very much connect.

Donavon indicated it is also important for faculty members to “be open and maybe tell…their life stories and struggles.” He said, if “you can be open to me, then I feel more (like) I can be open to you.”

Role of Race in Relationship Development

Donavon says race should not matter in relationships, but he has felt like some White faculty members have brought race into his relationship with them.

Some faculty may…kind of expect more from you or maybe expect less because I am part African American. They expect me to either slack off or they push me harder because they expect me to…fail.
He went on to say,

If I’m late (to class) they kind of take it out more on me than they have on other students. If I turn in an assignment late, for whatever reason,…it’s because of race. (They think), ‘He must be like one of them.’

These experiences with White faculty members have not surprised Donavon because he believes “we all want to believe that racism doesn’t exist anymore, but in 2012, it still does to a degree.” Racism has prompted Donavon to “prove them wrong.” He feels pressure to “step it up a notch” and show members of the dominant culture “what I’m capable of.”

His hope is that people in society will eventually look beyond race and see that they have more in common than they do different.

At some levels you just have to…show a person that you can’t judge a book by its cover…so when it comes to relationships…the most important thing is building that relationship past the race issue…just showing them that you can get to know me and I’m just like you. There is no Black thing or White thing. It’s really just people.

**Using Theory to Understand Donavon’s Story**

Donavon offered multiple examples in which he felt faculty treated him differently because he is Black. This demonstrates he has a heightened awareness of his Blackness, which is reflective of high racial salience (Sellers et al., 1998). While he said that these experiences have increased his awareness of racism, he did not give any indication that they have influenced his identity. Therefore, Donavon’s story might be described by Cross’s (1991) encounter stage. During encounter, Blacks become the “object of an…event” that causes them to become aware of racial inequalities (Cross, 1991, p. 200). Individuals can experience the event, which means they have awareness with no identity change, or they can personalize it which causes them to enter a stage of identity questioning and exploration...
Donavon seems to have experienced racism, but gave no indication of change. He decided, instead, to focus on proving himself through strong academic performance.

Donavon’s racial identity, along with the social culture in his academic department may explain why his relationships with White faculty are superficial. He seems sensitive to negative stereotypes White faculty and advisors may hold toward Blacks, which causes him to limit contact with these professionals. The high student-to-faculty ratio in his program does not give him much opportunity to connect with faculty members who might otherwise show themselves supportive and accepting. As a result, Donavon’s relationships seem to have stalled in Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) attraction phase. Donavon is attracted to some of his faculty because of their research experience. He is also attracted to the faculty members who have shown him they are “real people” by advising his honor society. However, these attractions have not progressed to anything more than “liking between dyad members” (p. 217).

Case Four: Fredrick

Personal Profile

Fredrick is a 21 year-old senior pursuing a major in the College of Business. He is an in-state student and chose Southern State because it was affordable and he fell in love with the campus during a visit his senior year of high school. He participated in a summer program related to business and it solidified his decision to earn a degree in the field. Fredrick grew up in what he described as an all-Black area of his hometown. It was a lower income neighborhood and as a result, he said the street he lived on was not paved until he
was 16 years old. Fredrick’s high school friends did not go to college, but his brother and he have both attended college.

Fredrick has taken advantage of a number of programs in his academic college. He participated in the College of Business Honors and Dean’s Fellows programs. Fredrick also took initiative and started a student organization on campus for Black entrepreneurs. Much of the drive Fredrick has today is a product of the experiences he had during the summer after his first year of college. As a freshman, Fredrick was involved in some extra-curricular activities and earned good grades, but it was not enough to get him an internship. Fredrick spent the summer in his hometown working as a custodian at his church. It required a lot of physical labor and he did not like it. Around the same time, Fredrick started a business and began to change the people and things that influenced him. The changes made him decide he wanted to redirect his self-presentation.

(I thought) if I’m going to be representing a business and trying to be taken seriously, then some things have to change...I used to walk around campus in a fitted cap. I wouldn’t even wear jeans to class. It was always ballin’ shorts, t-shirts, sweats, something like that.

Fredrick “came back…sophomore year a totally different thing.” By his description he went “hard core” and wore suits most of the time. He said it “shocked people at first,” but people got used to the new Fredrick. When asked, Fredrick said none of these choices had to do with race; they were all a result of his career goals. Fredrick has been successful in reaching his goals, as he recently accepted a full-time job in a large Midwestern city, and will be moving out-of-state upon graduation.
Fredrick has been involved in multiple programs for Black students at Southern State, and seems to see himself as an advocate for the Black community. He said “I’ve been on the front lines as a young African-American male trying to help these (other Black) guys and girls out there.” He spoke highly of programs that target Black students, but expressed concerns that there is not greater collaboration between these groups at Southern State, particularly those that are directed toward Black males. Fredrick would like to see all Black men on campus “come together” and participate in one single program. He thinks this is important to prevent younger Black male students from missing out on opportunities.

There are some Black guys on campus that are lost in the mix, lost in the sauce. They don’t do anything, but if you had something that all the Black men were a part of…maybe they would be encouraged to get involved in other aspects of campus life instead of sitting on the back burner…(Older Black male students) have access to a lot of resources and we can hook people up with certain things.

**Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships**

Fredrick said that people who are supportive provide what you need “that will help you achieve whatever…you’re trying to achieve.” He offered an analogy of what this support looks like.

I guess (it’s) like a good running shoe, to give you that support as you’re running the path that you’re going, providing you with information and resources…that would be supportive. Providing the information and resources…when you have struggles and questions.

In Fredrick’s view, faculty and advisor support should be focused on career and academic goals. He said some people may want more personal support in college, but that does not interest him.
When it comes to getting support, Fredrick thinks faculty members have a responsibility to “open the door for the relationship,” however students need to “walk through the door.” He acknowledges that “everyone is different and they’re going to have a different way that they need to be supported,” however he feels students universally welcome faculty members “opening the door.”

Fredrick said that faculty members in the College of Business do a good job of communicating to students that the door is open for a relationship, which has helped him feel comfortable approaching many of them. The White faculty member who has supported him most serves as the Associate Dean of his college. Fredrick met the Associate Dean in his introductory business course during his first semester at Southern State. Although the dean instructed the course, Fredrick did not interact with him much. He did, however, develop enough trust in the dean to approach him about joining the Business Honors Program. The honors program traditionally accepted new freshmen each year, but for a reason unknown to Fredrick, did not accept new students his first year. Fredrick asked the dean if he could have permission to join as a sophomore. The dean agreed, which gave Fredrick a new set of opportunities in the college.

Fredrick’s relationship with the dean grew when they met together during his junior year. He completed a summer internship and worked with the dean to earn academic credit for the experience. Fredrick described the dean as “flexible” during this experience. Since then, the dean has written recommendation letters for Fredrick as he has applied for scholarships. Overall, he says the dean and other advisors affiliated with the business honors program have been a major professional resource for him at Southern State.
Role of Race in Relationship Development

Fredrick feels like race impacts the way in which faculty “open the door” to help and build relationships with students. He feels like Black faculty have more actively pursued relationships with him than White faculty.

(Black faculty members) show even more passion…I mean they are a little more assertive as far as (saying), ‘Hey, come talk to me after class.’…I had that once (with) one professor. I made an announcement for something that was going on and he just said, ‘Come talk to me sometime.’ So it was a little more assertive as opposed to the (White) ones. The door would be open and I would step through it, (but) they wouldn’t peek out the door and tell me to come in.

Fredrick said he prefers the more “assertive” approach he has experienced with Black faculty because it gives him more confidence that the faculty member sees “some way that they can really benefit or help you.”

Although Fredrick prefers faculty to take initiative with students, he is willing to seek out interaction with faculty members on his own, including White faculty members. One reason this may be easy for him is that he generally trusts his faculty.

My approach when dealing with faculty and staff is, I already have respect for them. Pretty much they are innocent until proven guilty. So I’ll trust them until they give me a reason not to trust them…In my past relationships, (faculty members) never gave me a reason not to trust them, so that trust just stayed intact.

In fact, Fredrick said White faculty members may need to be even more “assertive” with Black males because “a lot of my counterparts wouldn’t have the same level of trust” he has for people.

Using Theory to Understand Fredrick’s Story

Fredrick demonstrated a deep dedication to the Black community at Southern State and seemed concerned that Black students may need additional supports to succeed in an all-
White environment. He did not express anger about the situation. Instead, he took a proactive stance by mentoring younger Black students and creating a student organization to help Black students develop stronger business-related skills. Fredrick’s high awareness of differences between Black and White students’ needs at Southern State reveals his high level of racial salience. His attitudes and behaviors seem to align most with the internalization stage of Cross’s (1991) model of Black identity. In this stage, Blacks are able to maintain a conscious awareness of racism and racial inequality without distorting “non-threatening information and events” into racist encounters (Cross, 1991, p. 251).

Fredrick trusts White faculty, unless they prove themselves unworthy of this confidence. He noticed a difference in the way White and Black faculty engaged him in and out of class, but did not make accusations about White faculty member intentions. He simply indicated that White faculty may be missing opportunities to better involve Black students in the community. Fredrick maintains to a strong commitment to uplifting the Black community while personally being more focused on his professional identity. He seems to find Blackness important, but did not appear hypersensitive to his own Blackness.

Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) model of cross-national mentoring provides some insight into Fredrick’s most supportive relationship with a White faculty member. Much of Fredrick’s relationship with an associate dean in his college was a result of formal interactions. The two began their relationship in a classroom setting, which gave Fredrick the confidence to approach the dean about joining the business honors program. After this, most of Fredrick’s interactions with the dean were through honors program activities or the dean’s sponsorship of his summer internship for academic credit.
Due to these circumstances, Fredrick’s relationship with the dean is best classified by Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) contracting phase. The attraction between the two did not appear to be based on commonalities or personal interest in each other. Instead it appears to have been established by mutual trust. Fredrick believed the dean was willing to help him and the dean saw Fredrick as someone who deserved certain opportunities. Since Fredrick described their continued interactions as positive, I believe the dean and he each established a role in the relationship that the other found to be acceptable and beneficial (Murphy and Ensher, 1997).

Case Five: Jay

Personal Profile

Jay is 19 years-old and a second-year student in the College of Architecture. He entered the institution as first-time freshman, but was classified as a junior because he earned a significant amount of college credit in high school. Today, Jay has senior standing at Southern State, but will not be eligible to graduate for another two years. Jay has known he wanted to be an architect since he was 11 years-old. He comes from an affluent background with well-educated parents, so he only considered the top architecture programs for his bachelor’s degree. He chose Southern State’s program because of its strong national reputation.

Jay has a diverse ethnic background. His father is Liberian and Barbadian while his mother is Scottish, Chinese, Indian, and Liberian. He said his background does not typically come up unless someone brings up race in a conversation. People are usually surprised that Jay has such a mix of ethnicities in his background because they identify him by his Black
skin. Some people ask him questions about his heritage when they learn about his parents, but this does not bother him.

Jay said gaining faculty and peer support is critical for architecture majors because the most creative and innovative solutions evolve from collaboration. He has been able to build strong relationships with his peers in architecture, where there is very little ethnic diversity. Architecture is an intense program of study, so Jay feels pressure to do well. He feels additional pressure because he is Black.

Nobody wants to mess up, no matter the color of your skin...in the back of your mind, the race thing is there, like I don’t want to be one of those, that people are like ‘Oh man, he couldn’t do it.’ You always want to be seen as somebody who could do what everybody else could.

Jay also expressed concerns about social expectations students or faculty members may have for him since he is Black.

Here, it’s like people expect me to be one way and because I’m not exactly the way they would perceive me to be, then they’re like ‘oh, you’re not Black.’ I’m like, the way I act has nothing to do with who I am. There are bad individuals in every race. I don’t know if they expect me to be like a gangster or something like that. You have that in every race.

Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships

Jay defined support as a group of people “keep(ing) you on track toward a goal.” He thinks this is primarily important in topics related to school and career. However, Jay said students can get themselves in some “interesting situations” personally that “affect (their) work or slow (them) down.” As a result, he thinks faculty and advisors need to be willing to address these personal topics with students.
Jay considers himself to be supported by White faculty in the College of Architecture, but not for the reasons he described above. There are four White faculty who teach freshman architecture courses. Two of the faculty members are new professors in their mid- to late-twenties and the other two are more seasoned professors in their forties or fifties. Jay said the younger faculty members are friendly, outgoing, and actively engage students, but he has not been able to connect with them.

Jay considers the older faculty to be more supportive because he sees them more like parental figures. He believes that they have had life experiences that make them more understanding.” Despite this belief, Jay has hesitated to share personal information with these faculty members. Recently, Jay has missed class and failed to turn in assignments because he has been caring for his girlfriend who is battling cancer. He would like to talk to one of the older White faculty members about his situation, but says the “timing” just has not been right.

While Jay has not sought or received personal support from faculty members in his college, he has received encouragement that has motivated him to work harder. There is a senior White faculty member in Jay’s college that has a high national reputation for being an architecture expert. He gave Jay an honest, unsolicited critique of his work during an informal interaction at a college event. The White faculty member was complimentary, but challenged Jay to push himself harder to achieve his potential. Jay described their interaction this way:

(It was) the biggest help that I’ve had in my entire scholastic career. From being in kindergarten to now, I can say that was one of the happiest times I’ve had in school, having that five minute conversation with him actually acknowledging me.
Based on Jay’s examples, it appears it may be more important to him to find older faculty members who will share their expertise than faculty who will get involved in his personal situations.

**Role of Race in Relationship Development**

Jay did not indicate that race impacts his relationships with the White faculty in the College of Architecture, but he did say race has influenced his interactions with a Black male faculty member. Jay worries that this architecture faculty member might hold him to higher standards than other students because the faculty member sees Jay as a younger version of himself. The faculty member has not directly said or done anything to Jay that communicates he evaluates Jay differently. However, Jay still fears the professor is more critical of him when he messes up.

I always feel weird coming in late to class. I know he probably doesn’t, but I almost feel like he looks at me more, as a young Black man…because Black males count for less than one percent of architects. So I feel weird there for like a split second.

This story indicates that Jay notices the professor and he are both minorities in a very competitive field. Since the Black faculty member has not critiqued Jay’s behavior or given non-verbal cues that imply disapproval, Jay might actually be projecting his own disappointment in himself for falling short of what others expect of him onto the faculty member.

While having a same-race faculty member has caused Jay to feel insecure at times, he still believes shared race can connect individuals. Jay alluded to the fact that race has the potential to create a bond between people which can result in one member of the group
offering privileges to another members of the group. He wondered if he might be able to take advantage of this bond when speaking to the Black faculty member about his course grade.

I went to...speak to him about my grade...because I wanted to end the class with an A or B...I was going to talk to him about that and I joked to myself, like ‘Come on, man. You’ve got to keep me up here.’ But...of course our interaction was formal and he treated me just like any other student.

Jay’s interactions with this Black faculty member illustrate that students who are members of a minority group may still have worries about being accepted, even when they are building relationships with same race faculty and advisors. They also demonstrate that students may hope that sharing a unique experience with a faculty member might offer them special benefits.

Using Theory to Understand Jay’s Story

Jay’s story demonstrated a unique blend of what could be perceived as security and insecurity in racial identity. He is comfortable with his ethnic heritage and demonstrates a confidence in who he is when peers introduce race into conversations. Jay is also willing to confront inaccurate stereotypes held by non-Whites about Blacks. However, Jay struggles to feel comfortable with race when interacting with a fellow Black male in his profession. This suggeests he thinks about race, but may not have established a Black identity with which he is universally comfortable.

The significance Jay puts on race appears to be impacted by his context, therefore his racial salience varied. This illustrates the key point Sellers et al. (1998) make in their theory that the role of race can be dependent on situation and time just as much as it is by a person’s
place on a developmental path. Jay exhibited some behaviors that align with Cross’s (1991) encounter stage. Encounter is characterized by Black individuals having an experience that disturbs their current understanding of self (Cross, 1991). While Jay seems to have already adopted a positive view of self when interacting with Whites, he has now come face to face with the fact that he is less certain of his identity in relation to other Blacks. I argue that this aligns with what Parham (1989) refers to as recycling. Recycling occurs when an individual meets a new challenge in a different life-stage that causes them to process through stages of identity development again.

Jay likely conducted some exploration of his Blackness when faced with stereotypes and questions about his ethnic background as a youth. However, it appears that he may have made the “discovery that there is another level of Blackness” he must negotiate in his relationships with other Black professionals (Cross, 1991, p. 201). As a result, he might need to further explore his racial identity to understand who he is in relation to other members of his racial group.

Jay participated in this study because he felt he has received support from White faculty members in his college, however Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) theory does not accurately describe his faculty relationships. The first stage of this cross-national mentoring theory is attracting. During this stage, both the mentor and protégé develop an attraction to each other that encourages them to consider interacting more frequently and at a more intimate level. Jay indicated he developed an attraction toward some of his faculty members, but it seemed they did not direct much attraction toward him. As a result, Jay entered into the first stage of Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) model, but the faculty did not.
Jay’s interaction with the older faculty member in his program with a national reputation is the only example he offered of a faculty member taking an interest in him and his work. However, Jay crosses paths with this faculty member sporadically, so it’s unlikely that a relationship will develop between them. It is evident from this interaction that Jay needs recognition and encouragement to feel like a faculty member has interest in him. He gave an example of how he had approached the young faculty members seeking their praise, but received what he interpreted as weak acknowledgement.

I’ve tried to (speak to the young professors). I’d go to them and be like ‘Hey, look at this thing I did.’ I see other people doing that outside of class…They’re looking at me like ‘Oh, okay. Good.’ And I’m like ‘Okay, well, alright.’

Since Jay has received few messages from faculty that indicate they desire to connect with him, his interactions with them are superficial. This may explain why he did not feel he could talk to one of his freshman faculty about his girlfriend’s cancer and its impact on his course attendance.

Case Six: Jerrod

Personal Profile

Jerrod is a 21 year-old senior in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. He is an in-state student who will graduate from Southern State at the end of the semester, after only three years of study. His mother and aunt are Southern State alumni, so he said he “didn’t have much choice” when he was decided where to attend college. Jerrod, however, does like the university because it is relatively close to his hometown and he wanted to stay in the South.
Jerrod went to a predominately White high school and said he was often the only Black student in his classes. He felt that being a minority was a good experience because he got to build relationships with people that did not look like him. Jerrod did not directly talk about his family’s economic standing, but alluded to the fact that he grew up with fewer financial resources than some Southern State students.

Jerrod enrolled in a challenging science major to prepare for medical school. The program has a reputation for being so difficult that “most people call it ‘the five year program’ because you are expected to repeat courses.” Although he has not changed his major, Jerrod has abandoned his original career plans. He now intends to pursue a career in scientific research, which means he will apply to graduate schools soon. Jerrod’s faculty advisor played an influential role in his decision to consider careers other than medicine.

Jerrod felt prepared for the academic challenges of pursuing a degree in the hard sciences, but had some challenges socially adjusting to college as a freshman.

I’ve always been more of an introvert…so it was hard to build relationships with new people. Getting used to the independence (of) being in college, that was the hard part…the work part was easy.

He also feels his race and socio-economic status have impacted his ability to feel connected in his program.

You go in (to class) and it’s just you and it seems like most of the discussion or references are being directed toward everyone (else)…you feel isolated from the class and the rest of the population because maybe you…went to a school that wasn’t as prepared or well-funded or equipped as another student, and maybe you might not know (how to) or be as willing to reach out and have the same type of study groups as another student.
Despite these challenges, Jerrod has built friendships with the “core group of students” who have matriculated in the major with him. Jerrod made no mention of involvement in extra-curricular activities at Southern State.

**Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships**

Jerrod named two key elements necessary to support students in college. He said faculty members and advisors should be “reaching out” to students and finding ways to facilitate “constant interaction.” A supportive person is “always there.” Jerrod said support should extend beyond academics and thinks faculty members should be “supporting (students) in personal matters” such as time management, setting life priorities, and developing moral character.

Jerrod believes it is difficult to find the support he described in his major because there is a “gap between faculty and students.” He said faculty members use “tough love” to weed out unprepared or uncommitted students. As a result, he feels like it is “every man for himself” to be successful in the program. While the support Jerrod desires may be rare, he has built a strong relationship with a White faculty member in his program, who has become his advisor.

Jerrod is surprised by the relationship he has developed with his faculty advisor because his initial impression of the advisor as an instructor was negative. The advisor teaches the introductory course in Jerrod’s major and has a bad reputation for failing students and being disconnected with their experiences in the major. Jerrod was skeptical about how helpful his advisor would be when he approached him about dropping the introductory
course, but he reached out to the advisor anyway. The advisor encouraged him to stick it out and this began their close bond.

That was the first positive experience I had (with) him. I saw it was the beast in the classroom (and) the supportive faculty member outside of the classroom…that gave you encouragement. That progressed and he became my advisor…that’s when he became the supportive faculty member.

One of the reasons Jerrod’s perception of his advisor changed was because his advisor showed “realness” and “sincerity” when they met one-on-one. He encouraged Jerrod and “personally challenged me to do well,” which tapped into Jerrod’s motivation. Jerrod felt like the advisor was telling him “I see it in you. You say you can do it, now show me you can.” This made Jerrod feel like his advisor was holding him accountable to achieve his goal. He also started to notice and value that his advisor was very authentic.

Everybody looked at him as being an a-hole…continually sarcastic (and) just arrogant. I like that cause to me it was real, like it was his trueness and he…showed it to everybody at all times. This consistent behavior, talk, and action is something that I can trust.

The relationship between Jerrod and his advisor grew as the advisor took time to ask and learn about his academic and career goals. Jerrod considers their discussions to be personal because his goals are the core of who he wants to be as a person. During their conversations, the advisor also showed interest in Jerrod’s personal life and relationships. His advisor openly described his own school successes and failures, which helped Jerrod relate to him more. These discussions taught Jerrod to more openly consider options for his future.

When I…talked to him, he made it personal…he told me about classes he failed, experiences with professors he didn’t like. He told me about his undergrad days as well as his graduate days…So by telling me those personal matters, it gave me a goal
or an alternative, and also showed me…not to be…single-minded or close-minded about a direction and what I want to do. There are always alternatives and other opportunities.

Jerrod said his advisor “took it over and above” which is why this White faculty member became his mentor.

**Role of Race in Relationship Development**

Jerrod said similarities in minority status may have helped him build a stronger relationship with his faculty advisor. Although Jerrod identifies the advisor as White, he thinks he may have some Spanish heritage. Therefore, Jerrod feels they may share some experiences of being minorities. In addition, Jerrod believes the professor has developed some multicultural competencies as a result of working with other minority students. He said the professor seemed to know that some minority students might be “standoffish, or afraid, or hesitant to come approach professors.” Jerrod feels his advisor’s past experiences working with minority students may be one thing that “influenced him to help me out and give me advice.”

Jerrod has not had as positive of an experience with other White faculty members in his major. He feels his race has prevented some White faculty members from seeing him as an individual. A number of them recognized him in class because he was Black, but confused him with the other Black male in the course. Jerrod was not angry about the experience, but wanted to be recognized as an individual. He hopes that White faculty can learn to better reach out to Black males so they feel validated.
Using Theory to Understand Jerrod’s Story

Jerrod did not describe ways that being Black has impacted his self-perception or choices, but he did offer examples of how being Black led him to feel isolated, invisible, and hypervisible (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007). In high school, Jerrod had positive experiences interacting with Whites, so he did not have a reason to think his Black identity. However, in college, Jerrod noticed that his race caused him to be treated or noticed differently in class than White students. He also began to feel like his experience as a lower-income Black made certain course discussions irrelevant to him because he did not have a context for understanding him.

Jerrod’s racial identity appears to have grown more salient as he moved from high school to college. This could be because his encounters with Whites have been different at Southern State. Cross (1991) defines encounters as events that cause Blacks to become more aware of their Blackness. Each time Jerrod felt rejected or isolated due to race could be classified as an encounter. However, he gave no indication that these events have encouraged him to seek to develop a stronger Afrocentric identity. Therefore, Jerrod’s experience may be most similar with Cross’s (1991) encounter stage of racial identity. His awareness that the Black experience is different has grown, but he did not describe any actions he has taken to explore or defend his identity (Cross 1991).

Although Jerrod described feeling like an outsider at times due to race, his relationship with his faculty advisor has helped him establish stability at Southern State. They have achieved Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) fourth phase of cross-national mentoring, which is maturation. Despite a rocky beginning, Jerrod and the faculty member developed an
attraction for each other. Jerrod appreciated his faculty advisor’s authenticity and expertise, while the faculty advisor appreciated Jerrod’s strong work ethic. As they built rapport with each other, they began to share more intimate information with each other.

In many ways, Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) fourth phase of mentoring relationships looks like phase three, growth. However, maturation is distinguishable from growth because relationships in the fourth phase exhibit increased stability and are more routinized (Murphy & Ensher, 1997). Dyads in this phase “feel that they think alike” (Murphy & Ensher, 1997, p. 227). Jerrod reported regular, in-depth contact with his advisor. He also grew to appreciate his advisor’s personality more because he identified increasing similarities between them. The faculty member opened up about his experiences and guided Jerrod in career decision making, yet was open to Jerrod’s feedback and recommendations. Jerrod called his faculty advisor his mentor which demonstrates a deep relationship that they had developed over the course of four years.

Case Seven: Kenny

Personal Profile

Kenny is a 20 year-old junior in the College of Health and a member of Southern State’s track and field team. He began his college career at an in-state HBCU, but transferred to Southern State when he decided to change majors. His mother works in the health care field and this “sparked” his initial interest in pursuing a health-related career. As a high school student, Kenny took medical science classes and initially chose a major that would allow him to practice in a clinical healthcare setting. However, he decided to change to a
major in the field that he feels has a broader application. This major was not available at the HBCU, so he transferred institutions.

Southern State was attractive to Kenny for other reasons as well. He grew up in the city where the university is located, which he describes as a “culturally diverse community.” Therefore, a “historically Black college…was just like a culture shock” to him. Kenny said this “wasn’t a problem” and he “enjoyed it” but he “wanted to come here just to experience…different connections…with different types of people.” He specifically mentioned that these new connections could help him get a job and network.

Kenny’s parents did not complete four-year degrees, but they put a high value on education. Kenny remembers them constantly pushing him to complete homework and sometimes keeping him up as late as midnight to write or do math problems. This instilled in him the value of discipline.

My parents didn’t have to say anything to me. I knew when I got home (to) do my homework and then do other activities…So I give it all to my parents. Just molding me and grooming me to be successful in life and just not to settle for anything less than success.

Kenny’s parents’ values continue to influence him. He wants to enter graduate school or the job market with “a great educational background,” so he is actively engaged in his education. He says some students “just come to class and sit there, fall asleep, or just text.” Kenny, on the other hand, wants to show faculty that he is trying to learn what they are teaching. He also wants to take “advantage of the resources” at Southern State because he feels they are “so much better here than…at the HBCU” he previously attended.
Defining and Developing Support

Kenny believes that people who support you “pick you up” when you are down. They “motivate you” and push “harder than what you’re pushing…and (are trying) to just get you to the point of success.” He also says people who are supportive will not let you fail. They are willing to take their success and “pass it down to other people that may be struggling.”

Kenny has only been at Southern State for two semesters, so has not had opportunities to build relationships with faculty members in his department. He believes there will be more opportunities to build these types of relationships once he enters the upper-division courses, which are more discussion-focused. Kenny has, however, felt supported by three White instructors from the College of Arts and Sciences. He described many commonalities between these instructors. All of them teach in a way that Kenny feels actively engages students in class discussion. They are easily accessible outside of the classroom and willing to help. Kenny said this about his White public speaking professor:

She is phenomenal…any time I needed help, I was able to go to her office, even outside of her office hours, (and) she was able to help me. Also I applied for the (academic) program this March and she actually wrote me a letter of recommendation, and I feel like she does this for a lot of students. She goes above and beyond for students.

Kenny said each of these White faculty members have reached out to him or other students when they faced difficulty, rather than waiting for students to approach them. He was impressed with the actions taken by his history professor when she noticed students were having problems with writing in class.
She was able to reach out to them and said ‘Hey, stop by my office. I can teach you some reading methods, some writing skills, stuff like that.’…it was more than just she was trying to teach. She was trying to groom you to succeed in college.

Kenny did not express an interest in developing relationships with instructors that focus on personal matters, but has appreciated times when faculty members have shared things about themselves that show they are “a real person.” Knowing that faculty have problems and experience stress too has helped Kenny develop a greater admiration for their efforts to support him, especially his health communications professor.

She has family problems right now,…and she teaches elderly people water aerobics. She has a lot on her plate, and for her to just take a couple of minutes out of her day to actually help me out was really big for me.

Kenny also finds it easier to trust faculty members when they are “straight forward” with him and can “just keep it real with me and just tell me ‘Hey, this might be wrong,’ or ‘Hey, you’re wrong.’“ In summary, faculty members who are accessible, reach out, and are “real” make Kenny feel supported, even if he has not developed a deep relationship with them.

**Role of Race in Relationship Development**

When asked if race and culture have played a role in his relationships with White faculty members at Southern State, Kenny said race has not but gender has played a role. He feels that female professors are “more willing to build relationships with the students than male professors.” He provided a description to explain his assertion.

I just feel like (male professors) are on a time crunch…as long as they come in here and teach and do their job, they can just go ahead and leave…I’m not saying all male professors are like that, but there’s been a couple that I’ve encountered (that were) not willing to go beyond to help you, even though they see you trying.
Kenny did not speak much about race during his interview, except when he noted the higher number of resources he found available at Southern State compared to resources at the HBCU he attended. Kenny may not have discussed race for a few reasons. First, Kenny grew up in an environment that he described as culturally diverse, so his experience at Southern State may be typical for him. Second, he intentionally chose to re-enter this more diverse environment, which indicates he feels comfortable in this type of setting.

Using Theory to Understand Kenny’s Story

Race seems to play a secondary role to Kenny’s identity. He acknowledged that it was unique for a Black male to attend a PWI, especially if he was not an athlete. However, outside of this he did not talk about how race impacts his perception of self or his goals. His racial identity can be described as having low salience (Seller et al., 1998). Based on the way Kenny described himself, he may be experiencing the pre-encounter stage of racial identity (Cross, 1991). During pre-encounter, Cross (1991) says “being Black and having knowledge about the Black experience has little to do with…perceived happiness or well-being” (p. 190). It is not that Kenny was ignorant of Blackness, but it seems to contribute very little to his everyday life (Cross, 1991).

Kenny’s existing Black identity appears to be positive or neutral because he gave no indication that stereotypes or social stigma led him to have a negative self-concept. As a result, he seems to trust White faculty members and advisors and evaluates them based on characteristics other than race, such as gender. The pre-encounter status could explain Kenny’s comfort with a predominately White academic environment. Since Kenny’s
experience in mainstream society that has shaken his existing identity, he is at ease in becoming part of this community.

Kenny felt supported by a number of White faculty members who taught his general education and elective courses, but seemed to interact most with his health communications professor. His relationship with her is best described by Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) contracting phase. Kenny was initially attracted to this faculty member because she reached out to him, which demonstrated her interest in him and openness to an out-of-class relationship. The professor met Kenny’s expectation of being helpful, so he continued to visit with her out-of-class. As a result, they began to have conversations about non-school related topics.

It appears that Kenny and the professor did not continue to develop their relationship after the semester ended. Therefore, it did not reach the growth phase, which is characterized by more intimate sharing and each member developing a greater sense of the other person’s needs (Murphy & Ensher, 1997). Although the relationship did not reach a deeper level of mentoring, Kenny still seems to have benefited from the support he received from the health communications professor.

**Case Eight: Roger**

**Personal Profile**

Roger is a 22 year-old senior who will graduate from the College of Business this semester. He is from out-of-state and his home city is eight hours from the university. As a middle and high school student, he gained exposure to college through two programs designed to promote college attendance among minority or low-income students. Through
the programs, he visited colleges in the United States and Canada. He ultimately decided to consider colleges in the state because he has family here. He chose to enroll at Southern State as a freshman because “it had a beautiful campus” and he likes the city where it is located.

During his early high school years, Roger described himself as “shy and really quite.” However, he saw that this behavior prevented him from getting what he wanted. He “decided that it was time…to open up” and he started initiating contact with other people. This is what influenced Roger to become a very proactive college student. He said he “spent a lot of time” his freshman year “interviewing people in the faculty (and) around campus trying to figure out what (he) really wanted and how to get there.” Roger appears to be less interested in building in-depth relationships and more interested in learning as much as he can to succeed.

I’ll usually go to multiple people (for advice). So I got advice from all faculty members whether they were White, Black, Hispanic, whatever. If you were where I wanted to be, I talked to you. Even if you weren’t where I wanted to be I talked to you because maybe you have something that you wish you could have done differently (that will) get me to where I want to be.

Roger chose his major in the College of Business after enrolling in a minority internship program, which he learned about through his campus networking efforts. A White faculty member who teaches classes for a concentration within this major made a presentation to students in the internship program. The presentation persuaded Roger to seek an internship in insurance. He has since built very strong relationships with this faculty member and his colleague, and been active in student activities affiliated with the academic concentration.
Roger has experienced “a lot of chaos” and hardships in college. He described his ability to graduate from Southern State in four years as “a miracle.” During his sophomore year, his grandmother passed away and his mother experienced an emotional breakdown. Roger spent much of the spring semester that year commuting between Southern State and his hometown, which was physically and emotionally draining. His situation was further complicated because he had overcommitted to extra-curricular activities.

Roger could have failed or quit, but he chose to persevere. He holds very high expectations for himself, so he did not consider quitting an option. He said, “If I went over four years, I would let myself down and I don’t let myself down.” Reminded of the fact that some of his friends who did not go to college are in jail or involved in drugs, he decided to seek help. Roger saw a counselor and reduced his extra-curricular commitments. He said this helped him stick to his goal of graduating on time.

Roger feels many talented Black students are tempted to over-commit themselves to extra-curricular activities at PWI’s because they are bombarded with requests to get involved.

You have a lot of opportunities when you’re in college, especially as an African American, especially when you’re a star. So people want you to be socially active. They want you to be active (in the community). They want you to be educationally active and, I don’t know, they want you to be a freak’n hero…if you’re not used to having an opportunity, you go after every single one.

Roger has learned some difficult lessons in college, but appears to be coming out on top.

**Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships**

Roger defines support as someone guiding him on “a path that is productive for my future.” He greatly values faculty that take initiative, “even if I didn’t go out and reach out to
them, they always reached out to me.” Roger does not have a lot of strong relationships with past teachers or college faculty members because he believes “a lot of them had attitudes.” Two White faculty members in Roger’s major department, however, have earned his trust and are among his strongest supporters at Southern State.

Roger said the passion these faculty members have for their specialty program and students plays a significant role in his positive opinion of them. They have reached out to him without him having to take action. He said they “found uses for me in the program even though I was a little sophomore” and students are not formally admitted to the major department until their junior year.

As an upperclassman, he has interacted with the faculty members more regularly in class and through a concentration-specific professional society. The relationships Roger has built with the faculty members have grown more personal because of their consistent interaction.

They care immensely about the program and about the students that come in. So if you show interest, they’ll show 110% interest back. Even if you try and run away, which I tried a few times (and it) didn’t work.

He also appreciates the way they have stretched him beyond what he would normally do on his own.

(They) pushed me to do things that I might not necessarily wanna do but will benefit me. I (joined) the insurance jeopardy team last year. They had been asking me to do that for like two years, and I finally did that and we won. So that was good. They always are constantly pushing me but they always are checking up on me (too).

Sometimes the push his faculty have given him have led to conflicts. However, Roger feels comfortable saying no to them when he needs to. “(We had) conflict when they really
wanted me to continue being an executive member of their organization. I don’t have time to do it, so I just say I don’t have time.”

The faculty members have opened other doors to make the relationship Roger has with them more personal. Roger has cell phone numbers for both faculty members, so he can text message them when he has a question. They do the same. In fact, he said he has gotten text messages from them as late as midnight to ask him a question.

Roger feels his faculty have similar relationships with many students in his program. One reason Roger’s faculty may be more personally involved with students is because the concentration is small. He said there are only 40 to 50 students in the major specialization and his classes are around 11 to 40 people. Regardless of how close they are, Roger said he still likes to keep his relationships with the faculty members focused on work. They know about some things about his personal life, but he says if “they know too much” it might be “blasted” in class.

**Role of Race in Relationship Development**

Roger indicated race has been a factor in the relationships he has developed at Southern State. While he actively seeks support from various people, he acknowledged that it was important for him to find Black faculty members and advisors to support him. When Roger learned that his academic advisor was a Black female his freshman year, he was motivated to meet with her faithfully each month. His explained why this was important to him:

If you’re a Black student, you should look to find people who look like you. I’m not saying that those should be your only mentors…but you should seek them out because eventually you want to accomplish what they’ve accomplished…Typically a
White person hasn’t been through some of the same issues or the same challenges as a Black person. So, there is only so much that a White faculty member can provide and support.

Roger has not limited himself by the race of a person. He said you “have to have a mix, you want to be diversified.” He would have gone to an HBCU if he wanted to “get the same old same old.” Despite being open to diversity, White faculty members still have to win his trust. He said many of his relationships with White faculty members “never actually become a relationship,” but are more transactional. Since the interaction is superficial, he does not consider himself as having a relationship with these people. Therefore, Roger acknowledged race impacted his interactions with White faculty, but at the same time did not feel it impacted his relationships with the White faculty members in his program.

One of the reasons Roger has build a positive relationship with both of the White faculty members in his major is “because it was never built on race or like ‘I see you as an African-American student.’” He said they simply saw him as a “student that could benefit from our program and our program could benefit from you.”

**Using Theory to Understand Roger’s Story**

Roger seems to primarily define himself by his academic and professional achievements. His decisions to become more outgoing and to pursue a career in insurance were driven by his desire to attain success. Race, however, does play a secondary role in Roger’s identity. I contend that Roger’s behaviors in relation to race align most with immersion, the first part of Cross’s (1991) immersion-emersion stage of identity development. During immersion, Blacks engross themselves in “the world of Blackness” in an effort to construct a new, more Black self-concept (Cross, 1991, p. 203). It is typically
characterized by a very intense period of outward expressions of Black pride. Since Roger does not primarily identify himself by race, his behaviors are not extreme. However, his motives and beliefs are similar to other Blacks moving through immersion.

Although Roger seems to focus more on his achievement, his racial salience is high (Sellers et al., 1998). He is aware that Blacks experience unique obstacles when striving to reach their professional goals. As a result, he actively seeks wisdom from Black faculty and advisors on campus. Roger will reach out to non-Black faculty and advisors if they can help him excel, but he does so with boundaries and skepticism. He said he does not trust most instructors because they have “attitudes” and keeps most relationships with them transactional. While he did not explicitly say these instructors were White, it is implied. He said Black students “need to find that Black faculty member” to mentor them. If any of these instructors had been Black, I believe he would have provided an example of reaching out to them and then discovering they were not helpful.

Since Roger’s behaviors are not extreme and he does not overtly criticize White culture, some might argue he is still in the encounter stage of Cross’s (1991) model. Yet, encounter does not seem to fully capture Roger’s behaviors in relation to race. Encounter is marked dissonance and questioning, whereas immersion is marked by a proactive attempt to engage the Black identity (Cross, 1991).

Roger’s pursuit of Black role models did not prevent him from developing strong relationships with the two White faculty members in his major. These faculty members actively won his trust by reaching out and offering him opportunities to enrich his professional background. As a result, Roger has regular contact with the faculty members,
which is based on mutual dependency. Murphy and Ensher (1997) describe relationships such as this as reaching maturation. This phase of their cross-cultural mentoring model consists of mentors and protégés offering each other “true reciprocal support” (p. 227).

The reciprocity of the relationship between Roger and the faculty members is evident in the way that they communicate about program-related activities. They text message each other at all hours of the day because they need and want feedback from one another. This communication style is extremely casual and would be atypical for find in student-faculty relationships that are superficial. However, the following statement by Roger about the faculty members offers the strongest evidence that they intentionally support each other. He said, “If you show interest, they’ll show 110% interest back.” In other words, the faculty members reached out to Roger and he took an interest in them. They responded to his interest by offering more support, and he decided to support their endeavors more because he knew they cared about him.

Case Nine: Shaun

Personal Profile

Shaun is a 21 year-old senior in the College of Business. He is an in-state student who entered Southern State as an undeclared freshman. However, he always planned to declare a business major because he thought it offered good job prospects. Shaun applied to three colleges, but was not admitted to his first choice institution. His two other options were Southern State and an in-state HBCU. He chose Southern State because he wanted to live and study in a more “diverse environment.”
Shaun completed a summer bridge program at the university six weeks prior to the start of his freshman year. This is one of the support programs run by Southern State’s Office of Multicultural Academic Affairs, which targets underrepresented students on campus. He was not excited about participating in the program at that time, but looking back Shaun said, “it’s definitely a program that (got) me where I am now.” One reason the bridge program was helpful to Shaun is because it was the contact point for his support system at the university. Students at Southern State were not as open to building relationships with people of different races as he expected. “I came here for diversity, but I was like ‘No, no the only people that have shown up (to events I attend) are African-American people.’” He said “I didn’t want to be here, even after the program because I didn’t feel like I had a niche. I was contemplating leaving school.”

Instead of leaving, Shaun pledged a historically Black fraternity that some of his friends from the summer bridge program had joined. He said that being part of this organization motivated him to stay and now he believes “being here is the best decision I ever made.”

I am really happy to have my fraternity…they are the biggest support system that I have…without them I don’t think I would have been doing as well now at this school...At times it might be hard, (but) when I see my older frat brothers, it’s like ‘Oh, they can do this, so I can do this.’

Although Shaun’s fraternity is primarily comprised of Black men, he has been involved in campus-wide Greek Life because he serves as president of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), which is the governing body for nine historically Black fraternities. This role allows him to interact with multiple members of other Greek
organizations. His Greek affiliation has helped him meet “other people that are not of my race, and that actually helped me get to where I really wanted diversity-wise.” NPHC, however, has not been immune to what Shaun views as preference for White Greek organizations on campus. He said “other (Greek) councils get more input and say than I do.”

**Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships**

Shaun said supportive faculty members and advisors are “glad to meet with me. They won’t give me the runaround.” They are people “who will actually answer my questions.” Shaun does not expect faculty members to “talk about life, or anything like that.” He likes to keep his relationships with most faculty members focused on academics. Shaun has not developed many supportive relationships with faculty members. Instead, he approaches these relationships like a transaction. He said, “It’s like ‘OK, you teach me. I learn. If I have questions, I ask you. To me, that’s as far as it goes.”

He does not think College of Business faculty as very supportive because “you barely see anybody try to help you out in any form or fashion.” He said faculty in his college are formal, strict, and do not give students many “breaks,” such as extra-credit to help them improve their course grades. He has found some professors “willing to help, but you actually have to (put) that foot forward.” Shaun feels completely comfortable initiating conversations with faculty and when he finds White professors that are receptive to his questions, he seeks opportunities to interact with them frequently.

The most supportive White person with whom Shaun has built a relationship is not in his college, but instead works in Student Life as the advisor to Greek organizations. Shaun and the Greek advisor have had repeated, positive interactions. Therefore Shaun said his
advisor and he are “best friends” and he can “talk to him about everything.” Shaun respects his Greek advisor because he is dependable and always willing to help.

**Role of Race in Relationship Development**

Shaun believes race is an issue in White and Black relationships even if “people don’t want to talk about it.” He grew up going to schools where he was one of only a few Black students. His parents warned him “you can’t act a fool (or) everybody is going to put you in that (Black male) stereotype.” He often feels “underestimated” or unheard by White people on campus because he is Black. He described one professor at Southern State who insinuated that a business major might not appropriate for him when he went to ask her questions. He said “she might have just said that to everybody, but sometimes it’s like ‘Hold up, wait. If somebody that wasn’t my color asked that, would (he) have got the same response?’“

Experiences like this caused Shaun to be skeptical when a White male was hired to advise Southern State’s NPHC. Shaun said, “At first it was kind of awkward…you had this White guy advising nine historically Black organizations….you could tell everybody was like… ‘You don’t understand the stuff that we do.”’ However, Shaun was able to build a relationship with the Greek advisor because they regularly interacted in the student organizations office.

Shaun would go to the office to spend time with a friend and the advisor would stop to speak with them. The advisor repeatedly told Shaun he was available to support NPHC. Shaun quickly saw the advisor was true to his word. He said, “Literally, everything I’ve needed help in, he’s always been there to help me.” This continued and Shaun began going to see the Greek advisor to discuss “real life” outside of school. His advisor also shared stories
about his life outside of the university. Shaun indicated the regular contact and his advisor’s supportive approach helped him learn to trust him.

**Using Theory to Understand Shaun’s Story**

Shaun’s racial salience could be classified as high. He gave multiple examples of how race influenced his experiences at Southern State. His racial identity development may provide some explanation for why he sees race as a factor in building relationships with White people. Prior to college, Shaun received messages from his family that society would judge him for being a Black male. He came to Southern State expecting to build relationships with people of different racial groups, but found students often segregated themselves. These events make up the various encounters Shaun has faced, which seem to have encouraged him to seek membership in a historically Black fraternity and develop skepticism toward the dominant culture. Cross (1991) classifies these types of behavior as a part of the immersion-emersion stage.

During immersion-emersion Blacks may display distrust for Whites (Cross, 1991). While he was not overtly opposed to a White Greek advisor leading NPHC, he said he was skeptical that the advisor would be helpful. He only developed a relationship with the advisor when he saw that the advisor genuinely desired to support the Black fraternities and followed through with what he said he would do. As Black people move through immersion-emersion, they usually move from rejecting all things outside of Black culture to a more sophisticated view of race. This is often facilitated by Blacks seeing that “role models or heroes operate from a more advanced state of identity” (Cross, 1991, p. 207). This seems to
describe Shaun because he often looked toward his older Black fraternity brothers for direction.

Given Shaun’s initial cynicism toward his White Greek advisor, it is somewhat surprising that he now calls him “best friend.” However, Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) cross-national mentoring theory provides a framework for understanding how their relationship grew. It appears that the Greek advisor knew he needed to win the trust of NPHC officers, so intentionally reached out to them and offered them the help they needed. This behavior encouraged Shaun to open himself to a relationship with the advisor, despite their racial differences. They began to interact more frequently, discussing both organizational and life issues. As a result, they became friends and are a regular part of each other’s lives.

Murphy and Ensher (1997) describe this level of intimacy as maturation. Maturation is similar to growth, however, it is marked by a more “routinized” relationship (p. 226). Shaun and his advisors regularly interact in the Greek Life office, meaning they have become a normal part of each other’s lives or routine. Maturation is also characterized by stability. Shaun had to overcome some significantly negative feelings about the advisor before they could become friends. Once Shaun determined that his advisor was unwaveringly committed to supporting him, Shaun was able to relax and trust that they would continue to have positive interactions with one another.
Case Ten: Stefan

Personal Profile

Stefan is a 21 year-old graduating senior, enrolled in the College of Health. He is an in-state student, but did not know that Southern State existed until his junior year of high school. Stefan chose to enroll at the university without even visiting campus because “it just felt like this is where I needed to be.” His major has competitive admission, so Stefan entered Southern State as a pre-major. He was one of only 16 students admitted to the program his junior year.

Stefan was born into a military family and lived on an Air Force base until he was in the third grade. His father passed away at this time, so his mother decided to move their family into the civilian community where the base was located. Stefan attended public schools and graduated from one of the last all-Black high schools in the region. The school offered Stefan a family-like community, which was good, but could get “crazy.” Yet, overall he characterized high school as a good experience.

Stefan is a talented student, but being successful in his major is still challenging. Some of his classmates struggle to stay positive under all the pressure, but Stefan does not let it get to him. He said, “There are times when it sucks, but I choose not to dwell on the negative and just try to get through it.” Stefan is less optimistic when it comes to White faculty on campus. He is concerned that they may hold negative stereotypes about him because he is a Black male.

One way Stefan overcomes false beliefs and stereotypes that may be directed toward him is by performing well academically. He is a member of Southern State’s honors
program and said, “I felt that gave me a leg up…it was like a qualifier…I felt like it kind of changed (faculty members’) views of me and I didn’t have to battle some of the same stereotypes I’ve noticed that other Black males on campus have to.”

This is important to Stefan because he worries that being stereotyped would “hold me back from where I want to go.” Stefan has very ambitious career goals. He hopes to work in national league athletics one day. It is very competitive to earn the type of position he seeks, but Stefan is committed to the work it will take to get him there.

**Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships**

Stefan offered a detailed description of how he defines supportive faculty and advisors.

They are willing to go the extra mile to help you and take a vested interest in your education, as well as your personal well-being…You can pretty much tell if they care because they’ll try to dive deeper than just your standard academic stuff and try to get to know you as a person and see where things are in your life as well.

Stefan finds the faculty in the College of Health to be very supportive.

The faculty is outstanding and wonderful across the board. They are just there to help you and they don’t mind staying after class and answering your questions or inviting you to their office hours and speaking with you one-on-one…they actually care about your progress.

He visits faculty in his major to get advice for his clinical courses and information about graduate school. Some faculty members have written him recommendation letters. Shaun said the speed at which they delivered the letters to him was a “tell-tale sign…that they really cared and they believed” in him.

Stefan indicated that he feels like he needs to earn support from faculty and advisors. He developed a positive impression of his White chemistry professor because “knew my
name.” Yet Stefan did not think the professor acknowledged or supported him simply because he was a student. Instead he said the faculty member “was very supportive because I didn’t sit in the back (of the room) and just goof off.” He also spoke about his membership in the university’s honors program and how this helped him gain credibility among White faculty so “they didn’t see me as your typical Black male.”

Stefan’s strongest relationship on campus is with a White program director who oversees Southern State’s mentoring program for students on academic probation. Stephan served as a mentor for the program and immediately felt comfortable with the director when he met her. Their relationship started to grow through required weekly meetings, but eventually Stefan would just drop by to talk to her about school and things going on in his life. Stefan said he does not share personal information with someone unless he feels like he has developed a “genuine connection” with them. Therefore, his openness with the program director demonstrates he regarded her with a high level of trust.

**Role of Race in Relationship Development**

Stefan’s responses to certain interview questions reveal that race plays a role in some of his relationships with White faculty members and advisors. I asked him how race and culture influence his relationships with White faculty and he said:

> I always pride myself on not being part of the mainstream of what people get when they see Black culture, with the saggy pants and the unkept hair, and a bunch of tattoos. I just always want to be different…people see one thing, that first impression, (and) they’ve already sort of built what they think you are…I just don’t want that to hold me back from where I want to go.

This shows that Stefan tries to set himself apart from other Black males on campus to avoid being stereotyped, or losing opportunities.
Stefan attributes his reputation for being academically successful as the reason faculty members in his academic program have supported him. He initially said faculty members “just look at performance and how eager you are to learn and how diligent you do your job.” However, he followed up this thought by saying, if you do this “color doesn’t really matter” to them. He also said “my work ethic speaks louder than my skin color” which demonstrates his belief that faculty consider his race when interacting with him.

Stefan further revealed his belief that race can affect relationships between White faculty and Black students when he emphasized how important it is for both parties to abandon stereotypes. He mentioned specific stereotypes he feels are common among White faculty.

I feel that if people come in with a blank slate and (are) just willing to see where the relationship develops with the person…that helps everything…, as opposed to coming in with preconceived notions (such as) “Oh, they’re a Black male so they’re just lucky to be here, or they probably aren’t going to be here after a year because they’ll drop out.” That disrupts the process (of relationship building).

While Stefan indicated that race is an issue in relationships with White faculty, race did not come up when he spoke about his relationship with the White director of the mentoring program. Stefan shared details about their relationship that could explain why race is not an issue for them. From the moment they met, Stefan said the mentoring director was “eager to get to know” him. He was required to meet with her weekly and this helped their relationship flourish. As a result of their consistent, positive interaction, Stefan feels comfortable sharing information with her that he would not share with other people on campus. Stefan continued to visit the director, even after he left the program. “I kept going back to the office…popping in and she was saying how glad she was to see me. I just felt
welcome and that was just a relationship that I didn’t want to go away…she felt the same way.”

**Using Theory to Understand Stefan’s Story**

Stefan’s expressed the conviction that he has to overcome stereotypes about Black males can be attributed to his racial identity development. Cross (1991) indicates one of the manifestations of pre-encounter is a “need to defend oneself against Blackness-as-a-stigma” (Cross, 1991, p. 191). This stage appears to align with Stefan’s story. Stefan attended an all-Black high school and then enrolled at a PWI, where he is confronted daily with concerns that Whites could be stereotyping him since he is a Black male. Rather than question if these stereotypes are fair, he seems to have separated himself from things that may be associated with Blackness. He focuses on his identity as an intelligent, committed student in the hopes that he can win the respect of White faculty members and advisors. Since Stefan appears to expend energy to battle racial stereotypes, I classify his racial salience as high.

Stefan’s relationship with the peer mentoring program director, however, is different. She intentionally behaves in a manner that communicates to Stefan that she accepts him as he is. As a result, Stefan did not give examples of how he won her support as he did with his Chemistry professor. This may also explain why he only discussed academic topics with his White faculty members but feels like he could talk about personal things with the White director.

Stefan’s relationship with the mentoring program director can be understood through Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) growth phase of cross-cultural mentoring. The program director demonstrated attraction for Stefan when she was excited to interact with him. As a
result, Stefan became more encouraged to meet with her. Through their continued interaction, Stefan saw that his perception of the advisor as warm and friendly was accurate, so he decided he wanted to maintain the relationship after he left his mentoring position with the program. She is the only professional staff on campus with whom he is willing to share personal information, showing that he has developed a level of trust commonly seen in the growth phase. Stefan did not provide evidence that the program director and he share the high level of reciprocity seen in maturation. However, the two do enjoy seeing each other and meeting informally to discuss what is going on in Stefan’s life.

Case Eleven: Terrence

Personal Profile

Terrence is 24 years-old and enrolled at Southern State as a second degree student. He is originally from the North, but moved to the state in high school. His first degree is from an in-state HBCU. He chose the HBCU because it was one of the few in-state institutions that also had a graduate program in law. Terrance earned a degree in political science from the HBCU, then took a year off from school. He is now enrolled at Southern State in a different major offered by the College of Arts and Sciences to further prepare for law school. He has been at Southern State for less than a year, but will be eligible to graduate at the end of this semester.

Terrence knew he would return to school for a second degree after he graduated from the HBCU. He “had a lot going on, outside influences that really affected (him) academically” and did not feel his graduating grade point average “was an accurate representation of (his) academic potential.” An increased grade point average will improve
his chances of being admitted to law school. Terrence chose to enroll at Southern State because he is originally from the city in which the institution is located. He also has a three-year old son who lives in the city, so they can spend more time together now. Terrence also said it is important to him to earn a degree from a PWI.

I didn’t want people to think that I couldn’t compete on the same level as anyone else by going to an HBCU. Sometimes it gets the perception of being an easier school. So…by coming to (Southern State) I could say “Hey, I can get a good GPA at a predominately White university to counteract my poor GPA at a mostly Black institution.”

He feels like graduating from a PWI will put him on “equal footing” with Whites. This appears to come from his impression the Black students who choose HBCUs may not be as academically talented as those who choose PWIs.

Why (choose) an HBCU?…Is it because you…feel more comfortable in an all-Black environment…or is it because you can’t perform well enough to get into an all-White school?…If you’re just (as) intelligent as anyone else, why choose (an HBCU)?

Terrence has enjoyed his experience at Southern State and has wondered “what may have happened had I gone here originally.” One reason he feels this way is because he is concerned about the perceptions Whites have of him because he is a Black male. He said, “I’ve always been competitive and I never wanted to have an asterisk (by my name) where it’s like ‘He’s intelligent or successful for a Black guy.” He has not directly encountered racism at Southern State but wonders how negative portrayals of Black males in the media may impact how Whites feel about him.

Sometimes I wonder how I am seen if I’m walking around on campus…late at night and someone else is coming in the opposite direction…How do they feel towards (me)? Does this person feel uncomfortable with me walking by?…I’ve never noticed where it’s ever been overt, but I do wonder sometimes.
Terrence has also worried that his age may negatively influence the way faculty and advisors view him. He thinks faculty members might feel it is easier to “connect” with a younger student who is “still moldable” versus an older student who is like “the old saying, (you) can’t teach a dog new tricks.”

**Defining and Developing Supportive Relationships**

Terrence feels supported when faculty members and advisors are willing to give helpful advice. His White faculty advisor has provided him with this type of advice, so Terrence has built a positive relationship with him and sees him on a regular basis. Terrence said the advisor has given him “real, thoughtful help” about what he needs to do to be admitted to law school. His advisor is not just doing his job; Terrence believes the advisor really wants to help him reach his goals. This is different from Terrence’s experiences with other advisors who gave him vague advice, such as do well on the LSAT and get good grades. Terrence said his faculty advisor has gone “above and beyond” to support him.

Terrence finds it easier to develop trust with White faculty members when they are willing to open up about who they are. One of the White faculty members Terrence is most comfortable approaching for assistance is an instructor in his major department. During the first few weeks of class, the faculty member openly shared that he is gay. This openness motivated Terrence to share more about himself in course discussions.

I felt like him being open to us about his experience (as a gay man), about his personal life…and that’s something that some people really don’t care to share…it may give me the opportunity to be like “If he’s open like that, then he’s giving everyone else here an opportunity to be open as well.”
He said, “It just made me feel like he’s different, just like everyone else in here.” Terrence has only had the professor for one class, but believes they have gotten to know each other well. As a result of their interactions, he asked the professor to write a letter of reference for him.

**Role of Race in Relationship Development**

Terrence did not give specific examples of how race has impacted his personal relationships with White faculty members, but alluded to various situations in which race influences student-faculty relationships on the whole. Terrence expressed a general concern for how Whites view him as a Black male. This may explain why he thinks it is important for White faculty to build rapport with Black males who may not be “open” about themselves. White faculty members should “be natural” and try not to be “artificial” in their attempts to make conversation. Terrence thinks the best way for a White faculty member to be “natural” is to try to find things they have in common with the Black males with whom they interact.

Terrence also stressed the importance of White faculty members understanding the unique obstacles faced by Black males from lower-socioeconomic groups. He says these students may not have money for books, so they may seek out and need resources that other students do not need. Black males from lower-income families may have parents who did not attend college and, as a result, may need more guidance.

Black males are less likely to have college educated parents. So if they’re struggling through a course, (they aren’t) able to call up Mom. “Well hi, Mom-who’s-never-been-to-college-before, I’m not doing so well in this course. What do you think I should do?” (She’s) not going be able to really tell them what they should do.
Terrence feels the best way for faculty members and advisors to help Black males overcome these obstacles is to help them develop an individualized plan for reaching their personal and career goals. He said this type of planning should help students understand “what you’re gonna do when you’re in school” and “what you need to do when you’re outside of school.”

**Using Theory to Understand Terrence’s Story**

Terrence expressed a variety of negative feelings toward Blackness that appear to connect with Cross’s (1991) pre-encounter stage of Black identity development. He did not understand the pride that many Blacks feel about attending and graduating from HBCUs. Instead, he described HBCUs as institutions where Black students who may not be capable of high academic achievement attend school. He belittled his own degree from an HBCU, and thinks earning a degree from a PWI will improve how others view him. Cross (1991) defined these types of thoughts as anti-black attitudes. Terrence appears to have bought into “racist stereotypes” about Blacks, while hold “positive stereotypes of White people and White culture” (p. 191).

Terrence also expressed sensitivity to the opinions Whites have of him. He wonders if White people feel uncomfortable when he passes them after dark. Cross (1991) describes this as a form of racial anxiety, where individuals in pre-encounter look for “negative portrayals of Blacks” (p. 195). Terrence’s anti-black attitudes and racial anxiety can help one understand why it is so important to him that White faculty members and advisors reach out and open themselves up to Black students. It appears he has a low self-perception as a result of his race, and he therefore, may need more affirmation from members of the dominant
culture. In fact, Terrence may feel closest with the White faculty member who is gay because he perceives him as having to overcome negative stereotypes as well. When one considers the multiple ways that Terrence said race impacts his life, it seems appropriate to conclude that his racial salience in high (Sellers et al., 1998).

It appears that Terrence’s insecurities influence the relational depth he has developed with faculty members and advisors at Southern State. Terrence’s relationship with his academic advisor aligns with Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) contracting phase. The two have moved through their basic attraction based on Terrence’s desire to make wise academic choices and his advisor’s desire to help. They are now contracting, which means they are interacting based on expectations they have set for each other. Terrence trusts the advisor to provide him with useful information and the advisor trusts Terrence to be engaged in the advising process. Terrence gave no indication that he depends on his advisor for additional support or shares personal information with him. Therefore, the relationship is not progressing to the growth phase.

Terrence’s relationship with the White faculty member in his major can also be understood through Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) contracting phase. The instructor shared personally sensitive information in class, which made Terrence more open and interested in developing a relationship with him. Terrence indicated that he sought the faculty member out for a reference letter and he agreed to write it. This indicates that Terrence had the impression that the faculty member would support him. By writing the letter, the faculty member demonstrated that Terrence had met his expectations of student performance at some
level. Since contracting is based on two people fulfilling each other’s expectations, this is evidence that the relationship reached this level.

Although it appears some personal information was shared by Terrence and the professor in class, their relationship did not reach the growth phase of Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) theory. This is because the sharing served as a point of attraction and not as a means to help the relationship evolve. Terrence gave no indication that the faculty member and he shared more personal stories in a one-on-one setting to help grow their relationship.

Chapter Summary

This chapter offers higher education administrators and other readers a chance to explore the unique experiences of individual Black male students at a PWI (Stake, 2006). It provides a case description for each of the 11 students who participated in the study. In order to create the case descriptions, I analyzed each participant’s interview transcript independently. I then developed a profile story that represents each of their unique experiences as a Black man completing a college degree at Southern State University. To close each case, I included an analysis of the student’s experience in relation to Cross’s (1991) Model of Black Identity development and Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) Cross-National Mentoring Theory.

Upon reading the collection of cases, readers should notice similarities and differences in student expectations, goals, experiences, and opportunities. Both the similarities and differences serve as a foundation for the next phase of the study. In Chapter 6, I examine the cases as part of a collection, or what Stake calls a “quintain” (Stake, 2006, p. 34). The purpose this cross-case analysis to provide a responses to the research questions
posed in this study. It is through the cross-case analysis that I will be able to identify the implications this research has on theory and practice.
CHAPTER 5: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study is to describe how supportive relationships develop between Black male students and White faculty members at a PWI. A multiple-case study method was selected to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Black male students define support in relationships with faculty and advisors?

2. What personal characteristics of White faculty members or advisors cause Black males students to seek increased interaction with them?

3. What events promote relational growth between Black male students and White faculty members and advisors?

4. How does race impact relationship development for Black male students?

The multiple-case study method was used for this project. It was fitting for this study for two key reasons. First, case studies seek to explore phenomena that are inseparable from their context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The relationships Black males described in this study cannot be separated from the institution in which they attend and the departmental culture of the faculty and advisors with whom they relate. Second, multiple-case studies provide more comprehensive findings that more easily allow for generalization (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1994). Much could be learned by speaking with a single Black male student about a relationship he has developed with a White faculty member. However, interviewing multiple Black males to identify patterns in their experiences can offer higher education administrators a richer set of findings to apply to their institutional settings (Stake, 2006).
Chapter 4 provided individual case reports for each of the 11 Black males who participated in the study. This chapter analyzes the cases as a collection to identify themes and patterns (Stake, 2006). Stake (2006) indicates that multiple-case studies are challenging to conduct because researchers are faced with the “case-quintain dilemma” (p. 34). A case is defined as an individual unit of analysis (Yin, 1994). A quintain is a larger phenomenon within a group to be understood (Stake, 2006). Stake (2006) says “we study what is similar and different about the cases in order to understand the quintain” (p. 5). Therein lies the dilemma. Does the researcher provide a better understanding of the quintain by exploring similarities among cases or the differences (Stake, 2006)?

Merriam (1998) suggests that understanding similarities between cases is the most important job of a researcher because it is what the audience expects. Stake (2006) prefers to consider differences. Since researchers choose to emphasize different characteristics during cross-case analysis, findings and assertions will differ among researchers (Stake, 2006). Therefore, I believe it is important for me to discuss the approach I have taken with the cross-case analysis presented in this chapter.

I decided to adopt Merriam’s (1998) approach to cross-case analysis which emphasizes similarities between cases. I chose this approach because a primary outcome I wish to achieve is to educate White faculty and administrators about ways to better support Black males in college. I am targeting findings that could be used to develop trainings or programs that have maximum impact. There is no magic bullet that will meet all students’ needs, but I do believe it is possible to design trainings and programming that reach a majority of students’ needs. In order to support the largest number of students, one must
understand what is most common about their experiences. This is not to say that differences between cases are not addressed. I do offer alternative interpretations and responses to topics when it was difficult to identify a unifying theme for specific questions. I, by no means, want to oversimplify student experiences by insinuating a pattern if one does not exist.

This chapter is divided into four sections that correspond with each of the research questions listed above. Each section includes two to six themes that emerged while analyzing data in light of the research questions. Direct quotes from student interviews are used to illustrate the themes and create a thick, rich description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While the themes were generated by studying similarities between cases, differences between cases are discussed when applicable. The first section of this chapter explores how students define support from faculty members and advisors.

**Defining Support**

The primary concept explored in this study is support. Before discussing how Black male students describe support, we must define this concept. From a constructivist viewpoint, I felt it was important to give the individual’s experiencing the phenomenon the power to define it. Therefore, the first formal research question presented in this study is *how do Black male students define support in relationships with faculty and advisors?* Six themes emerged during cross-case analysis. The themes were generated by analyzing participants’ descriptions of support and stories of feeling supported or unsupported.

**Providing Direction**

All study participants indicated that a White faculty member or advisor’s willingness to direct them through the process of setting and reaching their academic or personal goals
made them feel supported. The method used by faculty members and advisors to direct
students took various forms. However, several participants used the analogy of a supportive
person helping them along their desired academic or career path.

In many instances, direction manifested itself as faculty members or advisors
providing some form of leadership that influenced the students’ directional path. This is
evident in Calvin’s definition of support. He says support is “guiding someone to a particular
resource that could help them reach their goal or their ambition.”

Terrence said this is particularly important for Black males whose parents have not
attended college. These Black males cannot call up “Mom-who’s-never-been-to-college-
before” and ask “what do you think I should do” because she may not have the experience to
help. Terrence thinks these Black males are especially in need of a supportive faculty
member or advisor to lead them through the process of making a personal plan for getting
through college. He gave an example of what this might look like.

The support that (Black males) would really need is…someone (who) can sit down
and say,…“Let’s move it up here. Let’s talk about exactly what you wanna do. This
is your first year…How about this summer you work? Next summer you (could) take
these classes…how about summer school?...instead of going home…how about
staying here? You’ll get ahead. How about taking an internship here? It’ll be a way
to get money.

Terrence jumped between many thoughts during this description, but it appears the
key point that he wanted to make is that some Black males need and appreciate it when an
advisor leads discussions on topics that they may not be able to have with their families.

Other students experienced support through direction when faculty members walked
them through a process. This is similar to a faculty member or advisor leading a student, but
with one subtle difference. I considered a faculty member to be walking alongside a student when the goal of the interaction was to achieve mutual understanding of an issue. In other words, the goal was reaching common ground, rather than leading a student toward a future end point.

This came up when Jerrod described going to his White faculty advisor to dispute a grade.

He gave me a C. I didn’t really want to talk after that, but…I went to talk to him (and) he broke it down…and walked me through how the grade was fair and…why he didn’t change or budge on it. So with that there was a little bit more respect (I) gained for him.

Another way that faculty members guided students was by preventing them from diverting their course. Jay said someone supports you when they “keep you on track towards your goal.” This type of support prevented some students from experiencing detours.

However, Kenny alludes to the fact that no one runs a perfect course. He said one of the ways a faculty member or advisor can help you maintain your course is to “pick you up when you’re down” A supportive faculty member or advisor is not OK with “letting you fail.”

Finally, some participants said faculty and advisors directed them by challenging them to move forward. By “pushing” and “motivating,” faculty encouraged students to take action or make decision that would keep them on course. Kenny said that a supportive person is someone who will “push you even harder than you’re pushing yourself…to just get you to the point of success.” This insinuates that the target is already out there and the supportive faculty member is coming behind the student to encourage him to reach the end point.
Roger gave a specific example of being pushed by the two White faculty members from his major concentration.

(They) pushed me to do things that I might not necessarily wanna do, but will benefit me. I did the insurance jeopardy team last year. They’d been asking me to do that for like two years and I finally did that and we won…they always are constantly pushing me.

In this situation, being part of the insurance jeopardy team was not the end goal. It was an experience that could help Roger build skills or accumulate honors to better prepare him for future opportunities.

Given the common description among participants of guidance someone along a path, it was fitting that Fredrick used the analogy of a running shoe. He said, “You could say (support) is like a good running shoe. To give you that support as you’re running the path that you’re going on.”

**Sharing Information and Resources**

Another theme that emerged in the participants’ definitions of support was sharing information and resources. This involved faculty and advisors introducing students to facts or details about a myriad of topics, including academic requirements, career options, how to navigate the college system, and how to prepare for their future professional and personal lives. It also included referring them to campus or professional resources that could help them achieve their goals.

The most basic way that faculty members shared information was by educating students about academic programs. The White engineering faculty member who helped
Bruno determine that a business major was a better fit for him than engineering is a prime example of this.

(My engineering advisor) was the one who actually told me about the (business) major we have here…and he’s an engineering teacher. So that gave me validation to switch my major…I believe he was a big factor in getting me where I am now.

Bruno was able to develop a clearer understanding of the similarities and differences between his original engineering major and his current business major because this faculty member provided him with information about the two programs. The faculty member’s non-biased presentation of the two options meant a lot to Bruno and made him feel supported.

In some instances, supportive faculty members shared information about a graduate program or how to apply to the program. Stefan found the faculty in the College of Health very helpful as he learned about the graduate school application process. Therefore, he sought out a number of them for information.

(Faculty member A) is our program head and I go to her for anything (program) related...she was very helpful in the grad school process and keeping me on my deadlines...And (faculty member B) is another faculty member and he was also helpful in the grad school process. I would go and talk to him and he...pretty much gave me a heads up on different programs I was applying to and what I could expect from them.

By meeting with these faculty members on multiple occasions, Stefan was able to become better familiar with the steps he needed to take to apply to graduate school programs. He also was able to learn about programs at different universities, which helped him see how they differed from one another. This information supported him as he moved forward in his academic career.
Faculty members also offered information and resources in the form of supplemental course support. Some of the White faculty members who supported study participants did so by teaching them skills that would help them succeed in specific courses. Donavon said support occurs when people are “willing to help you in their class as far as…teaching you how to write a paper or maybe teaching you how to cite (references).” Kenny gave a specific example of how his health communications professor taught him how to better prepare for exams.

I kept making C’s on her tests…so she’s like, “Come to my office. Show me how you study. Bring your study tools with you, and I can show you what questions you’re missing”…For her to just take a couple minutes out of her day to actually help me out was really big for me.

Kenny also took note when another faculty member assisted his classmates.

Some people were still having problems with writing skills…she was able to reach out to them and say “Hey, stop by my office. I can teach you some reading methods, some writing skills, and stuff like that”…She was trying to groom you to succeed.

It appears that the faculty members Donavon and Kenny described understand that students do not always come to Southern State equipped with the skills they need to succeed in college-level courses. Therefore, their willingness to teach course content and course success strategies cause many students to perceive them as supportive.

**Giving Advice**

The third theme, giving advice, is similar to sharing information and resources because it involves enlightening a student about something they did not previously know. There are a few aspects of this theme, however, that differentiate it from the former. First, information and resources refer to concrete items. For example, information might be about
classes that are required for a degree. Advice, on the other hand, comes from someone’s experience or personal preferences. It also could involve a faculty member or advisor evaluating a student’s specific situation and offering suggestions on how to navigate the terrain.

While giving advice has been distinguished from sharing information as a means of supporting students, it should be noted that the two often go hand in hand. When Bruno consulted with his White engineering advisor to learn how the two majors were similar and different, he also got “good advice from the advisor about what he should do.” One reason advice giving might be instrumental in supporting students is that they often have basic information about a program or career. What they desire is someone who can help them use the information to plan or make wise choices.

Terrence’s experience with his English advisor illustrates that students often want more than basic information from the faculty and advisors with whom they interact. In this instance, Terrence appreciated his English advisor because he went beyond the basic information Terrence needed to get into law school and focused on what he should do, should not do, and why.

I had one point (when I thought) maybe I should minor in American Studies. (My English advisor said), “At this point, focus on your GPA. You’re going to law school. Nobody really pays attention to the American Studies minor…so you know what? Don’t even—it’s a waste of your time. Just focus on these two classes. Take your internship and focus on just having your GPA as high as you can. (A minor) is extra work you don’t need.” That was really…something I could count on, while (my law advisor) was more along the lines of “Just get this turned in, focus on your LSAT…we’ll see what your scores look like.” And (I) was like, alright, then what do I do academically?
Terrence knew he needed to submit forms and successfully complete the LSAT to be admitted to law school. What he wanted was more insightful advice from his advisors. He felt his English advisor provided him with better support because he gave him advice about what academic credentials he needed to focus upon most and why.

Participants also received advice from White faculty and advisors that helped them manage their personal and private lives. Calvin considered his Residential Director (RD) to be a mentor because he has provided advice that has helped him “balance being involved on campus, the (Residential Advisor) job, and…schoolwork.” Calvin valued the advice he received from the RD so he sought out interaction with him more often.

(I) have a sense of comfort, being around and talking to him, then just inquiring about something I might not know that he might have already experienced and then the conversation just takes off from there…I would say the more conversation you have the more and more comfortable you get talking.

Calvin’s story shows that when students begin to see that faculty and advisors provide them with good advice, they will seek them out frequently. This increases the opportunities faculty members and advisors have to deepen their relationships with students.

While advice helped students feel supported, lack of advice often had the opposite effect. Shaun explained how a faculty member withholding advice can cause students to feel unsupported and as if the faculty member does not care.

I’m not trying to get an easy A out of class. I’m just trying to understand and make sure that I do (well) in class…I know professors say, “I don’t give out A’s”…I’m like, “I never asked you that…I’m willing to put in the work. I can do the extra work, just tell me what I can do…Could you legitimately help me figure out what it is?”

Shaun is not looking for the easy way out. He is willing to work hard and prefers it when faculty members are willing to take the time to help him understand how he should invest his
effort in their classes. His defensive tone in the preceding quote indicates that he does not feel supported when faculty members withhold advice.

**Reaching Out and Taking Initiative**

Participants felt supported when faculty members and advisors initiated relationships with them or reached out to offer assistance. The term “reach out” or “reaching out” was used multiple times by the majority of participants, which is why it surfaced as a theme for support. Reaching out was important because it communicated to students that the faculty members were sincere when they invited students to visit them during office hours and recognized that they were serious students.

Roger indicated that his relationship with the two White faculty members in his major concentration began because “they were always open. Even if I didn’t…reach out to them, they always reached out to me.” As a result, Roger established relationships with them before he ever had them as instructors in the classroom. Students who primarily interacted with faculty members in class felt like they were supported when the faculty noticed they were having academic difficulty. Donavon appreciated it when faculty members reached out by “pulling you to the side and saying, ‘Hey, I noticed you’re kind of slipping off here…do you want to meet after class?’” Kenny said that when his history professor “reached out” and invited students to her office hours, it made him believe she was trying to prime them for success.

Fredrick said reaching out to Black males is important because some of them may not have a strong trust for White faculty members.
A lot of my counterparts won’t have the same level of trust (I do) intuitively, so I’d recommend (White faculty) would have to be a little more assertive. Not overboard, but it won’t be enough just to say it in class…It would be encouraging (students) to come talk to them. Letting them know that the door’s open and encouraging them to step through.

Jerrod echoed Fredrick’s belief that reaching out to Black males specifically is important because they may not feel an instructor accepts them or believes in their abilities.

I think one of the main things (to ask) is how can faculty members make themselves seem more approachable or more accepting to Black male students?...From the start, the professor could make…some type of outreach to the students, preferably to the Black ones, even if it was as simple as an email…not singling them out, but something to make it seem like, “Alright, I recognize you and yeah, you’re a serious student.”

Jerrod said the purpose of the outreach was to communicate to students that the instructor sees that they are academically capable. A number of other participants indicated they had concerns about how seriously instructors took them because they were Black. Others expressed a desire for validation. Therefore, reaching out may be a good way for faculty members to express their belief that a Black student is capable of success at the beginning of their academic encounter with them.

**Getting Personal**

The fifth theme that emerged during the cross-case analysis of how participants defined support has been labeled getting personal. This encompasses two types of behaviors that make students feel as though faculty members and advisors are personally invested in them and their success. The first behavior is moving beyond academic topics and professional issues to get more involved in students’ personal lives. The second behavior is taking action or verbalizing something that makes students feel personally encouraged,
recognized, or acknowledged. This could be in academic or personal areas. The key is that faculty member or advisor invested themselves in something that was unique to the student.

It should be noted that two participants explicitly stated that they did not wish to divulge information about their personal lives to campus personnel or to seek recognition. For example, Roger did not want to be known by too many faculty members out of fear that their expectations of him would go up. However, the majority of participants indicated that faculty and advisor involvement in non-school related issues was an important part of being supported, so it was classified as a theme.

Stefan described the value of faculty members getting involved in students’ personal lives by saying it shows students that they care.

They…take a vested interest in your education as well as your personal well-being. And you can pretty much tell if they really care because they’ll try to dive deeper than your standard academic stuff and try to get to know you as a person and see where things are at in your personal life.

This statement was made in the context of how Stefan defined support. Therefore, support for him meant a faculty member or advisor should get to know him.

Participants gave different reasons for why faculty members and advisors getting to know them personally made them feel supported. For Shaun, talking about personal things with his White Greek Advisor allowed him to remove himself from the stresses of school and just be himself. He said, “I guess I can’t really stand my school life sometimes…so I wanted to escape from school. (With my Greek Advisor) I had someone to talk to about regularly life.” Shaun said these types of conversations contributed to him becoming good friends with his advisor.
In Jerrod’s case, getting personal was one of the ways his White faculty advisor deepened their relationship.

Every time I came through (his office) he was up on where I was academically, but...he also was asking how everything else was going. He took that next step and became more of a mentor. Not just academic but a personal...type mentor...He asked me how things were going outside of school, how were relationships with individuals in school. He took it over and beyond, so I respect him for that.

Jerrod infers that his White faculty advisor was already a mentor. However, by asking about his personal life, the advisor earned more of Jerrod’s esteem.

Study participants also communicated the importance of faculty and advisors getting involved in their personal lives by describing some of the negative scenarios that result from them not knowing about student problems. For example, Jay was concerned that one of his White freshman faculty members might assume he was skipping class because the professor was not familiar with an issue in Jay’s personal life. Jay’s girlfriend has cancer and he has been actively involved in helping her arrange and travel to chemotherapy appointments. He would like to explain to his professor why he has missed or been late to class, but has not felt like he has the “right timing.”

I’ve been thinking about a way to approach (faculty member name)...because there’s been a few times where I haven’t been in class...and it’s not because I want to skip or I’m sleeping late...I’m either dealing with her, trying to help her with the sickness, doing the chemo thing, or trying to make an appointment...I’ve actually been thinking of a way to talk to him about that, so he knows that I’m not just not coming late.

Jay says the issue is timing, but it seems his hesitation to open up could be related to the superficial connection he has with this faculty member. Although Jay looks up to the White
faculty member because he is like a parental figure, he has not received the type of support from him that would encourage him to open up.

The second way participants felt they were personally supported by White faculty members and advisors was through encouragement and recognition. These gestures were typically very small. Stefan included his White chemistry professor in the category of people who supported him, primarily because the faculty member knew his name even though they had not spoken directly. He said, “I was amazed…when I did go talk to him for the first time, he actually remembered my name.” Although these gestures were small, in some instances, they had a huge impact on the student. Consider Jay’s experience with a White faculty member that is nationally-recognized in the field of architecture.

(Faculty member name) spoke to me when I was doing interviews for people coming into the school…I Had never spoken to any of the professors (about my work) before. He was telling me…how good my drawings were. He (said), “I want you to do work like this all the time…you’re really good…If…you were on time with everything and you pushed, you could be up there with the young best.” That was the biggest help that I’ve had in my entire scholastic career. From being in kindergarten to now, I can say that was one of the happiest times I’ve had in school, having…him actually acknowledge me.

Jay described this as just a “five-minute conversation” but it influenced his perception of the how much this faculty member believed in and supported him.

**Going Above and Beyond**

The final theme that emerged during cross-case analysis was the idea of going above and beyond for students. This concept is unique in that it describes the resulting perception of a faculty member or advisor’s actions, not an act in and of itself. For example, by reaching out to a student, a faculty member may be seen as going above and beyond. The
actually phrase “above and beyond” was used by five participants when they described the behavior of White faculty members and advisors that supported them.

Bruno said, “I like people that go above and beyond.” He said he chooses to build relationships with people that are “going out of (their) way to help me.” Some of the things White faculty members and advisors did that made him feel like they were going above and beyond were being available, sharing opportunities with him and encouraging him to get involved, and making sure the information they provided him was accurate so that he could stay on track academically.

Kenny noted a number of actions his communications instructor took that made him feel as though she was going above and beyond.

She’s phenomenal. The way she teaches, the way she tries to engage students…any time I needed help, I was able to go to her office. Even outside of her office hours she was able to help me. Also I applied for the (academic program) this March and she actually wrote me a letter of recommendation. I feel like she does a lot for students. She goes above and beyond for students.

Kenny’s experience shows that students may observe multiple ways in which faculty interact with students to develop an overall impression of their willingness to support them.

Terrence said his faculty advisor “made it feel like he was going above and beyond” by sitting down with him and having a detailed discussion about how his credit hours from his previous degree could transfer into his new degree. The faculty member offered suggestions of how he could use certain credits to fulfill degree requirements he might not have noticed on his own. As a result, Terrence said he did “not simply (say), ‘Oh, I’m just doing this because I have to’…(he) just made me feel like he’s really trying to…help further me.”
Faculty Characteristics that Influence Relationship Growth

The second research question presented in this study asks what personal characteristics of White faculty members or advisors cause Black males students to seek increased interaction with them? This question is important to answer because individuals that interact more frequently have greater opportunities to develop deep, quality relationships (LeVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). By understanding what characteristics encourage Black male students to interact with White faculty and advisors, we have insight into how to promote supportive relationship development. A cross-case analysis generated five themes that describe what White faculty and advisor characteristics were attractive to participants.

Open and Vulnerable

The characteristics that participants described as most appealing in faculty members and advisors were openness and vulnerability. Faculty members were perceived as being open when they shared information about their personal lives with students. They were perceived as being vulnerable when the stories they shared revealed their weaknesses or put them at risk for social criticism. While they are somewhat different concepts, they have been presented together because it is difficult to separate them. In order to be vulnerable, a faculty member or advisor also needs to be open.

Being open and being vulnerable were important to relationship growth because they helped participants see that faculty members and advisors were real people, just like them. Kenny appreciated the help his history professor provided students outside of class more when he learned that she faced stress and problems like everybody else. He said,
She has a lot of stuff on her plate too…she actually told me she had a couple of family problems…for her to be that comfortable with just saying stuff around me, just knowing that…she has emotion and she’s a real person. She’s not trying to put on a front, she’s just really being real.

Jerrod was able to better connect with his White faculty advisor when he opened up about his past challenges.

You walk in (to his office)…and see the certificates and posters of what he did…and just all the knowledge that he has, (but) he told me about his earlier setbacks, and I don’t want to say failures, but subpar performances and I’ve seen some of the same things in the way that I started.

Jerrod no longer saw his advisor as a successful professor who could not understand his struggles. The advisor was someone who could mentor him through his ups and downs because his advisor had experienced them too.

Seeing that faculty members were real people also helped some participants develop a deeper trust and respect for them. Calvin said, “I put a high premium on people that are themselves (and)…know who they are…that’s attractive for me…(getting) to know people, and building trust with them and gaining respect for them.” Given that trust and respect are important parts of healthy relationships, it makes sense that students described these qualities as contributing to relationship growth.

After trust and respect grew in their relationships, a number of participants said they were willing to reveal more about themselves to White faculty members and advisors.

Donavon said:

Teachers who are willing to be open and maybe tell somebody their life stories or struggles they’ve been through, some of the things they’ve tried in life, (whether) they failed or worked. I feel like if you can be open to me, then…I can be open to you. I would say this is probably the main thing.
Terrence gave a specific example about how faculty member vulnerability increased his willingness to share stories about his life. He had the following reaction to one of his White professors sharing that he was gay during the first few weeks of class:

I felt that because he was openly gay, (and) open to us about his experience,…and that’s something that some people really don’t care to share,…it (gave) me the opportunity to be like, “If he’s open like that, then he’s giving everyone else here an opportunity to be open as well.”

White faculty members and advisors do not need to feel pressure to open up about everything. In fact, too much sharing could interfere with appropriate boundaries in student-faculty and student-advisor relationships. However, as Donavon said, the information does not need to be “too personal,” but should help students “see that they’re still human.”

**Personable**

Another characteristic that study participants found attractive was being personable. This is defined as faculty and advisors directing warmth and interest toward students that communicated they wanted to interact with the students. One of the ways White faculty and advisors demonstrated that they were personable was by welcoming students into discussion or their work space. Fredrick felt the White faculty members in the College of Business have done a good job of establishing a culture that shows they are interested in meeting with students.

I would rate them highly…they have set office hours; they’re always going to be there. Even if you can’t meet (then), they are flexible to schedule something outside of that. They definitely communicate that, and let us know they are open and they seem genuine about it.
Fredrick’s experience reveals that it is the combination of White faculty members verbalizing and acting out their willingness to meet with students that truly demonstrates they are personable.

Stefan gave a more specific example of how a White advisor displayed her interest in him. He was able to develop a strong relationship with the White director of a mentoring program because of the way she responded to him when they met and as they continued to interact.

I met (program director) at my interview and she was just wonderful…and she just seemed very energetic and eager to get to know me. So, once I got the job…then our relationship started to build because we had one-on-one meetings…This year, even though I was no longer a peer mentor, I kept going back to the office…she was saying how glad she was to see me. I just felt welcome…I didn’t want the relationship to go away because I was no longer working there, and she felt the same way.

The director expressed an interest in Stefan when he was her employee and after he left the position. Stefan was encouraged to continue growing the relationship because she continued to make him feel welcome every time he chose to visit her.

One reason participants prefer White faculty and advisors who are personable is that this quality conveyed to them that the faculty and advisors were genuine when they invited students to see them during office hours or ask questions. Calvin described how his advertising promotion professor’s behavior indicated he was open to out of class discussions.

Just observing his demeanor in class and…how he’s a really carefree type of person, very humorous,…really laid back. I would say this was the initial thing…he didn’t necessarily encourage people to come (after class), but he always communicated that he was available if anybody wanted to talk…the fact that he was personable made it much easier to go and have conversations with him.
Calvin makes the point that it is not necessarily what faculty members say, but the way that they interact with students that communicates if they are open to developing a deeper relationship with a student.

**Intelligent and Knowledgeable**

The third set of characteristics that emerged regarding faculty characteristics that promote relationship growth was intelligence and knowledge. Various participants indicated that they became more interested in growing relationships with faculty members and advisors when they possessed expertise about a topic, typically related to academics or careers. These two characteristics have been grouped together because, just like openness and vulnerability, they go together. An intelligent faculty member or advisor is usually very knowledgeable about topics that affect students.

When asked what criteria he used to determine whether or not he would seek support from a faculty member, Bruno said:

I would definitely say experience in the field. And just seeking certain teachers, how intelligent they are…That gives me a better feel of, do I want to get to know this person better? Do I want to receive advice from them?

Using this criterion, Bruno identified two White faculty members with whom he wanted to establish a stronger relationship. The first was a faculty member employed in the College of Engineering, where Bruno began his academic career at Southern State. Bruno said, “He gave me some good advice…(about) companies, and good locations to go, good automotive companies. He was the one who actually told me about the (business) major we have here.” The other was a professor in his current major. “He works with (company name),” Bruno
said. “Once I found out he worked there, I knew right then and there that I needed to be getting advice from him for my major.

Roger also prioritizes knowledge when deciding which faculty and advisors to meet with regularly. He indicated this was important because it helped him determine how to achieve the future he wants.

(I am supported) when somebody is able to guide me to a path that’s productive for my future. If you were where I want to be, I talk to you. Even if you weren’t where I wanted to be I talked to you, because maybe you have something that you wish you could have done differently to get me where I wanna be.

Roger has developed a close relationship with two White faculty members in his major department. This is not the primary reason he has become close to them, but does attribute their experience and expertise in the field as helping him find internships and connect with other experiences that will help him professionally.

Jay was one of the participants who talked about the importance of intelligence and knowledge the most. He does not have a close relationship with faculty members in his program, but wished he could develop a stronger ties with a young architecture faculty member, primarily because of his intelligence.

There are two younger professors…one of them is (professor name). They say they are no architectural prodigies, but he’s like an architectural prodigy. If (professor name) came up to me and (said), “I want to be your mentor,” I would be the happiest man in the entire world...because he was so (recently) a student, and because of his intellect in the field.

Jay’s desire to connect with intelligent faculty could be tied to how he thought they could support him. When asked what White faculty members have supported him at Southern State he began by talking about an architecture faculty member who has a national
reputation in the field. It is apparent they do not have a close association, but his intelligence could provide Jay support in reaching his goals.

He’s taught all around—Harvard, Columbia, Yale, Princeton, MIT, everywhere…He’s like the smartest man that I know. You can ask him any question and he’ll give you the history of drywall, or fabric dye…I don’t get to speak with him that much, but I look up to him a lot. The couple of times that he’s actually spoken to me have been very encouraging.

Commonalities with Participant

A number of participants indicated that when they had something in common with a White faculty member or advisor it increased their interest in building a relationship with them. Therefore, commonalities between participants and faculty members or advisors was the third theme found during cross-case analysis. These commonalities were typically in personality and approach to work and life. Jerrod said, “The (faculty) I do talk to, they all have the same thing. It’s like an arrogance and sense of humor, sarcastic. I have all those qualities. (My faculty advisor) has all those same qualities.” Jerrod’s faculty advisor has become his mentor, and their similarities have contributed to the growth in their relationship.

Donavon gave a similar account.

The first two characteristics…I’ve noticed from teachers that I have gotten close with is being eccentric and being very energetic, out there kind of mentally…The second trait I would say would probably be not taking everything so serious…Everything is not so uptight, just loose. I’m very much like that, so our personalities will very much connect.

Commonalities played a role in Calvin building a relationship with his White Residential Director (RD). He said:

We would have staff meetings…and somebody would say something…We would kind of react in a similar way, whether it was a joke, or whether we were both appalled…So once that happened…we started laughing about it.
As Calvin got to know the RD better, he found out they were both members of Greek organizations. This additional similarity gave them a foundation on which to grow a stronger relationship.

Once I learned (he was in a Greek organization) it kind of helped strengthen it a little bit more because when I would talk about circumstances associated with Greek Life, he was able to relate it back to his own experience, which is always a good thing when you can relate two things that seem uncommon and find common ground.

Commonalities between students and faculty members are not something that can be controlled. Instead they are something that naturally exists or does not exist. Therefore, the actual faculty characteristic that created a connection between faculty members and advisors, and students was different. However, what is common among the cases is that the participants and faculty members had some type of interaction that helped the students determine if the faculty member or advisor’s personality resembled their own. It also encouraged these students to seek out the faculty members or advisors for a richer relationship.

Available

The final characteristic of White faculty and advisors that encouraged Black male students to build closer relationships with them was their availability or perceived availability. Participants defined availability in two ways. The first was the actual time that a faculty member or advisor was available to them. The second was how available a faculty member or advisor made him or herself to support a student. The former is different from the latter in that it was not about being accessible at a specific time to a student, but being perceived as generally available to offer help.
Bruno emphasized the importance of faculty and advisors being available during the times that students wished to access them. He described his math professor as supportive because she allowed students to contact her by phone at any time.

She allowed us to call her house phone. So that right there was heartwarming…It made me feel better as far as the class, if I ever needed anything, help on homework, any questions…we could…call her at her home.

Bruno said he never called her at home, but just knowing that he could improved his impression of her and their relationship. Roger also had personal phone numbers for the two White faculty members in his major concentration, “so if I have a question, I can text them.” Roger indicated that sharing cell phone numbers has increased the frequency in which his faculty members and he interact. This has contributed to the depth of their relationships.

Bruno also described how the actual availability of College of Engineering advisors made him feel supported. He said, “(Engineering) allowed you to just pop-in and talk to your advisor…just to ask a quick question when you needed it…being available…means a lot.”

Shaun, on the other hand, described how the willingness of his White Greek advisor to support his organization with anything helped him overcome his skepticism.

He was a member of a fraternity, but not one of the historically Black ones, (so) it’s like, “You don’t understand the stuff that we do.”…When he would come around (the Greek office), I would be there. He was like, “If you need anything, I’m here to help.” Literally, everything I’ve needed help in, he’s always been there to help me. If I ask one question, he knows the right answer, or at least tries to figure it out for me.

Whatever help Shaun needed, his Greek advisor was there to assist. Both his advisor’s willingness and availability to help him achieve his goals caused Shaun overcome his belief that a White advisor could not be an asset to historically Black Greek organizations.
Events that Influence Relationship Growth

For this study, I have defined an event as an activity or occurrence that either facilitates growth in relationships between participants and their faculty members and advisors, or causes a participant to feel as though they are closer to a faculty member or advisor. Two primary events were identified. The first was a one-on-one interaction, or series of this type of interactions, that allowed participants to deepen their connection to a White faculty member or advisor. The second event was a class interaction that moved beyond traditional lecture to discussion that promoted sharing between students and faculty.

One-On-One Meetings

Almost all participants indicated that single or multiple one-on-one interactions with a faculty member or advisor, outside of a formal classroom or advising setting, helped them develop a deeper relationship with that person. I classify this as an event because a one-on-one meeting is an occurrence in time that impacted participants’ abilities to connect with faculty members and advisors. They were events that facilitated the strengthening of a relationship.

Jerrod’s multiple one-on-one meetings with his faculty advisor played an important role in their ability to develop a deeper relationship. However, it took a pivotal first one-on-one meeting to open the door for the two to connect. Jerrod scheduled a time to meet with his faculty advisor after he failed an exam. Prior to this meeting, Jerrod saw the professor as “the beast in the classroom.” The one-on-one meeting gave Jerrod and the instructor an opportunity to discuss his course options in detail. As a result, Jerrod said,
I remember that was the first positive experience I had (with) him. I saw…the supportive faculty member outside of the classroom…meeting with him one-on-one, he was the supportive figure that gave you encouragement.

Connecting with faculty members outside of the classroom made Stefan feel more supported in the College of Health. One reason these interactions were so valuable is because his faculty members often initiated them.

I feel the faculty (in the College of Health) is outstanding and wonderful across the board. They are just there to help you and they don’t mind staying after class and answering your questions or inviting you to their office hours and speaking with you one-on-one…It’s nice to know the faculty doesn’t teach you for an hour and fifteen minutes and then throw you on your way. They actually care about your progress.

Shaun, on the other hand, had to take the initiative to strengthen his relationships with faculty members in his college. He did this primarily by seeking them out during their pre-established office hours. Shaun knew his classes were large and this was the best way for him to get to know and be known by his faculty members.

I went by and asked some questions, and it was a repetitive thing. Every other week, I’ll be by asking questions, saying, “hey” or just (to ask) simple stuff… So it really took effort for me to build relationships with the (professors) I know.

The manner in which students connected with faculty members and advisors outside of the classroom varied. However, most participants indicated that these interactions let them speak with faculty members or advisors individually, which improved their impression of or relationship with them.

**Interactive Course Discussions**

While events that promoted one-on-one contact were the most popular for generating a connection between participants and faculty members or advisors, a number of participants said relationships can still grow in the classroom. Weekly classroom interaction turned into a
connecting event for participants when faculty members designed class periods around interactive discussions.

Calvin said his advertising professor took a more “laid-back” discussion approach to his class. Instead of focusing on formal exams, the faculty member led students through in-class case studies and discussions about business topics to facilitate their learning. Calvin explained that this format helped him build a better relationship with the professor because it seemed more like a casual discussion than a lecture.

It felt like we were just having a regular conversation…like we weren’t even in class. We were just talking about business and the ways corporations work…It enriched the relationship in class because it felt like…we could have this same conversation just on the couch, watching TV.

Calvin went on to say:

Even if it was a lecture, and we’re taking notes…if he had the same personality, I think I would still be open to developing a relationship with him. But I think the discussions and the interactiveness of class…helped develop that relationship.

Calvin felt like this professor was personable, so he said he would have tried to build a relationship with him even if the course was not interactive. However, by leading conversational discussions, the faculty member helped Calvin feel more connected with him in a group setting.

Interactive discussions promoted relationship growth between faculty members and participants because it helped the two get to know each other at a deeper level. Terrence described how in-class discussion between one of his major faculty members and the class enhanced their relationship.

My professor…had an opportunity to get to know me better because it was an open style class. It was a small class size, but the style that he taught was very round
I asked him to write me a letter of recommendation, (and) that’s one of the reasons why. I felt like in his teaching style I had a chance for him to really get to know me as a person…(then) all of his assignments were papers, so he got a chance to see me academically as well.

Terrence is aware that faculty members only get to see one side of students when they are grading their coursework. He felt like his instructor had a better understand of who he was because they had built a relationship in class.

Kenny also alluded to the value of class discussion in relationship building, even though he has never experienced this firsthand. He has not developed strong relationships with faculty members in his major, but is confident that he will when he takes more-interactive courses as an upperclassman.

I think I will probably be able to build more relationships in upper division (because) the classes become more of a discussion…So you’re really involved and engaged with your professor instead of just listening to them talk and talk and talk to you. They’re interacting with you. There is more of a discussion…and I would be able to develop more relationships with my professors with more open dialogues.

**The Role of Race in Cross-Cultural Relationships**

The central concept explored in this study is the impact of race on relationship development. Therefore, the final research question, *how does race impact relationships between Black male students and faculty or advisors*, is a pivotal one to answer. It is also the most complex question to answer. Various factors influence the role race plays in this study. Therefore, it is not enough to simply identify themes that emerged from cross-case analysis. The factors that are known to influence the answer to this research question must be described as well. As a result, this section is divided into two sub-sections.
The first sub-section explains how social context, racial identity, and level of relationship development influence how race impacts this study. These are not the only factors that could impact participant relationships with White faculty members and advisors, however, they are the ones considered by the study’s research approach and theoretical framework. The second sub-section outlines the two themes that emerged during the cross-case analysis.

Although the focus of this study is cross-cultural relationships, some participants described the influence of race in their interactions with Black faculty members and advisors. These examples have been included in this chapter because it enhances our understanding of the role of race in relationships. They offer stories of participant experiences which can be compared and contrasted with the core experiences studied in this project. They also help to provide a broader picture of how faculty and advisors at PWIs offer support to Black male students.

**Factors that Influence How Race Impacts Relationship Development**

**Social Context.**

The first factor the influences how race impacts relationship develop in this study is social context. Chapter 3 describes the social context of Southern State, the research site. It is a large, public research institution that is predominately White and located in an urban area in the South. These institutional features influence social norms at Southern State. Social norms shape how Black male students and White faculty members and advisors interact with one another. No other institution is expected to have the exact social context as this PWI. Therefore, social context impacts the themes that emerged during cross-case analysis. The
case study approach to qualitative research was chosen for this project because participants’ relationships exist within the bounded system that is Southern State (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1988; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003).

**Racial Identity Development.**

A second factor that influenced the role of race in relationships between Black male students and White faculty members and advisors is racial identity development (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1993). A person’s stage of identity development affects both their view of self and perception of others (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1993). It is important to consider racial identity in this study because it provides insight into why a person thinks, acts, and feels a certain way. It also demonstrates that individuals can have similar thoughts, behaviors, and feelings, but arrive at them for different reasons.

For example, a Black male student may demonstrate thoughts and behaviors that align with Cross’s (1991) pre-encounter stage. During pre-encounter, Blacks often evaluate themselves by Eurocentric standards (Cross, 1991). Another student may be in Cross’s (1991) internalization stage, which is characterized by Blacks adopting a Black identity that is authentic to their sense of self. Both of these students may hold high levels of trust for White faculty members, which might cause them to say that race has little or no influence on their relationships with Whites. However, their reasons for dismissing race would be different. The student in pre-encounter may not consciously consider race because he is unaware of the authority he gives to White faculty member due the faculty member’s racial standing. The student who has internalized his identity may not view race as an issue.
because he is confident he can gain support and advice from people of different ethnicities while maintaining his personal integrity.

The behaviors of faculty members may also be influenced by racial identity development. A White faculty member may be in the contact position of Helms’s (1993) Model of White Identity. This position is characterized by Whites using their cultural standard to evaluate Blacks (Helms, 1993). This faculty member may support a Black male student because he views him as fitting in with White cultural values. Another White faculty member who has reached Helms’ (1993) autonomy position, characterized by Whites rejecting racism, may behave the same toward the student. However, her behavior is driven by her rejection of racism instead of her perpetuation of it. Since White faculty members and advisors were not interviewed for this study, exploring the influence of their racial identity on participants is outside the scope of the study. It is worth mentioning, nonetheless, because it might influence Black male perceptions of them.

It should also be noted that salience of race plays a role in relationship development. Sellers et al. (1998) describe racial salience as the significance a person places on his or her race at a specific time and within a given context. If a Black male has low racial salience in a situation, it is possible that race will have minimal or no influence on his relationships with a White faculty member. However, if a Black male’s racial salience is high there is greater possibility that race could influence relational development. It is difficult to know if the high salience would have a positive or negative impact on the relationship. This may be dictated by how a White faculty member or advisor responds to the significance the Black male
places on race and whether or not they are able to establish trust which transcends negative emotions.

**Level of Relational Development.**

A final factor impacting how race influences relationships between Black male students and White faculty or advisors is the depth of their interactions. This study uses Ensher and Murphy’s (1997) theory of cross-national mentoring relationships to examine the level of intimacy that exists between participants and the individuals whom they describe. The model indicates that growing relationships move from initial attraction between two people toward a mature, interdependent relationship. Higher levels of trust and mutual respect are expected in relationships that have matriculated to advanced stages of the model. Race and culture play a lesser role in relationships where high levels of trust and respect exist because these relationships are founded on similarities, reciprocity, and members having their expectations and needs met (Murphy & Ensher, 1997).

This sub-section explained how social context, racial identity, and level of relationship development influence student perceptions of race in their relationships with White faculty members and advisors. It should be understood, however, that the impact of each varies between students. The next sub-section addressed the themes that emerged during cross-case analysis. The analysis takes into account the influence of the factors presented in this section.

**Themes: How Race Impacts Relationships Development**

Each case study was analyzed to identify instances when participants described race as playing a role in their interactions with faculty and advisors. These instances were
compared and contrasted with each other and two themes materialize from the data. First, race impacted the initial impressions participants had of faculty and advisors, as well as the impressions they believed these faculty and advisors had of them. Second, race influenced the ability of students to reach deeper levels of connection with faculty members and advisors. As previously mentioned, participant relationships with White and Black faculty members and advisors are included so that similarities and differences can be examined.

**Race and Initial Impressions.**

Study participants indicated that race influences their initial impressions of faculty members and advisors. For the purpose of this study, initial impressions are defined as perceptions or assumptions the member of one ethnic group holds for members of another ethnic group before they have a meaningful, personal interaction. Participants who demonstrated thoughts and behaviors that corresponded with Cross’s (1991) earlier developmental states were more likely to describe their initial impressions as negative or cautious. Participants appeared to have a more internalized identity were less likely to say that race influenced their initial perceptions.

Stefan, who exhibited thoughts similar to Cross’s (1991) pre-encounter stage, indicated that stereotypes that Whites have of Blacks may cause White faculty members to hold a negative first impression of Black males. He is concerned that White faculty may enter into an interaction with a Black student thinking, “Oh, they’re a Black male so they’re just lucky to be here, or they probably aren’t going to be here after a year because they’ll drop out.” Stefan did not describe any experiences that led him to conclude that White faculty members felt this way about Black males. However, he expressed anxiety around
how Whites view him. Therefore, it is not surprising that he assumes White faculty members
can judge Black males when they first meet them.

Donavon described experiences with racism, which reflected Cross’s (1991) encounter stage. His first-hand knowledge of racism influences what he believes White faculty members expect of him.

You can pick up on certain (White) faculty who, maybe not consciously, kind of expect more from me or maybe expect less because I am part African-American. They expect me to either slack off or they push me harder because they expect me to think I’m going to fail…If I’m late they kind of take it out on me more than other students. If I turn in an assignment late,…it’s because of race. (They think), “He must be like of them.”

Donavon believes that some White faculty members treat him differently than his White peers. Since he has not yet established an internalized Black identity, he has not taken action to counter what he deems as unequal treatment.

Shaun also described what he perceived as a White faculty member having different expectations for him as a Black male than she had for other students. His high racial salience and awareness of the inequity that the Black community faces appears to have led him to some deeper reflection on the experience.

One professor…maybe she was just being a bitter woman, but I would ask questions every other day. She would give me this face like, “Why are you asking questions right now? Why don’t you understand this?” So other people would ask the questions and she’d be just fine with it…One day I went by and asked her, “Can you help me?” She told me, “Are you sure this is the right major for you?”…At the time I really didn’t take offense to it, but when I look back…it’s like, “Hold up, wait. If somebody that wasn’t my color asked that, would you have (given) the same response?”

Donavon and Shaun both believed White faculty members had negative initial impressions of them. It appeared that Donovan recognized it, but he offered no examples of
how he processed it. Shaun, however, is at a more advanced stage of development which is likely why he “didn’t take offense,” but took time to process the fairness of the action.

Stereotypes and negative impressions work both ways. Bruno shared feelings Black males might hold toward White faculty and advisors before they get to know them.

I would definitely say (Black males) have that initial (negative) impression of White faculty, but once they get to know (them), and see that (they) are there to help them, then that’s when…it builds a better relationship for the two.

Bruno said race has not influenced his relationships with White faculty members, and did not indicate this was his feeling toward the faculty. This is not surprising since Bruno exhibited beliefs that are common among men in Cross’s (1991) pre-encounter stage. He continues to abide by the belief that “everybody’s equal now,” which he developed during his youth.

Bruno has not had an experience as a young adult that has caused him to test this belief.

Stefan, Shaun, Donavon, and Bruno all explained how race can play a role in initial impressions White faculty members and Black male students have of one another. None of their examples involved faculty members with whom they had developed a close relationship. This does not mean that negative first impressions prevent these pairs from moving through Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) theory of cross-cultural mentoring relationship.

Jerrod has a very strong relationship with his White faculty advisor. However, he believes this advisor’s first impressions of him may have been negative because he is Black.

I imagine that…before I ever came and talked to him, he probably would have looked at it just like, “This is somebody who is just sitting in on class, could really care less about their grade, (is) probably here just because financial aid pays or for a paycheck.”
Jerrod did not explicitly mention race in this quotation, but this is the context in which it was given. This demonstrates that negative first impressions can be overcome when Black male students and White faculty members and advisors find other points of connection. In fact, Shaun and Stefan had other relationships with White faculty members that had advanced to Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) growth and maturation stages. This is further evidence that negative impressions are not necessarily universally assumed and can be overcome with they are encountered.

Stefan explained how Black male students and White faculty and advisors can improve their initial interactions.

I think the key for those relationships to really…develop is for both parties not to come in with preconceived stereotypes…as to what they can expect either being the Black male working with a White faculty member or advisor, or the White faculty who are dealing with a Black male…Most of the time, those stereotypes don’t apply to either individual. I feel that if people come in with a blank slate…that helps everything overall.

Jay was the only participant who discussed how race impacted how he thought a Black faculty member initially perceived him. I include his experience in this section because it demonstrates that race is not exclusively an issue between students and faculty members of different races. Jay shared the following story:

Does the race of the professor dictate things like how you act in class?...It doesn’t necessarily matter, but they again, I’ve only had maybe two Black professors. One is in my major….It’s weird. It’s different…because on one side, I feel weird coming in late (to class). Well, I feel weird coming in late in any class, but I feel weird coming in late to his class because I’m one of four Black people in the class, two Black males… I know that he probably doesn’t (do this), but I almost feel like he looks at me more as a young Black man. There aren’t many of them in this thing because Black males count for less than one percent of architects. So I feel weird for like a split-second, but then of course, I correct myself.
Jay worried that an older Black male would judge him more critically than a non-Black professor would because the Black professor would be concerned with how Jay represents their gender-ethnic group within their chosen profession. It appears that Black males were concerned that White faculty members would judge them more harshly for being Black, while Black faculty members would judge them more harshly for not meeting certain standards.

One of the ways that race impacted the way Black male students and White faculty members and advisors was through initial impressions. Based on participant accounts, it appeared that stereotypes Whites hold of Blacks and vice versa may have caused students and faculty members to make assumptions that were not based on facts. Furthermore, race is an issue for some Black males when they interact with same-race faculty members. They may fear judgment from Black faculty members when they do not meet faculty expectations.

**Race and Connecting.**

Race also played a role in the how readily and easily study participants made deeper connections with faculty members and advisors. A number of participants felt they had to overcome stereotyping or false assumptions made by White faculty members or advisors. Therefore, it was important to some participants that the two groups find ways to overcome the dilemma.

Donavon appears to be moving through Cross’s (1991) encounter stage. This means he is managing emotions and thoughts about how the existence of racism impacts his Black identity. He did not give a specific example of how he has been able to increase the connection he has with White faculty members and advisor. This is likely due to the fact that
he only achieved Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) attraction phase. Donavon was, however, optimistic that Black students and White faculty members and advisors can connect if they can move past their views on race.

When it comes to relationships where I’ve had conflict, I think the most important thing is building that relationship past the race issue…just showing them that you can get to know me and I’m just like you. There is no Black thing or White thing, it’s really just people.

Jerrod offered insight into one way that White faculty and advisors can build deeper relationships with Black students. He developed a strong relationship with his White faculty advisors and said that one of the reasons their relationship grew into true mentoring was because his advisor demonstrated multicultural competence.

When I was talking to him, he understood my shyness or reserved thoughts…just from seeing it from previous students…of ethnicity begin standoffish or afraid or hesitant to come approach professors. So, I think just that, and then my initiative to come and talk to him probably changed his mindset or influenced him to help me out.

Multicultural competence is “the awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to work with others who are culturally different from self in meaningful, relevant, and productive ways” (Pope, Reynolds, Mueller, & Cheatham, 2004; p. 13). Jerrod believed his White faculty advisor demonstrated this type of competence in a few ways. First, he noticed that Jerrod exhibited behaviors similar to other minorities who might be intimidated in a predominately White environment. Next, he used what he learned to ensure that the manner in which he engaged Jerrod in conversation encouraged him to interact with him. If the White advisor did not use this competence, Jerrod and he may not have discovered their mature mentoring relationship.
Race was less of an issue in Black-White relationships for Calvin. His story gave indications that he may have internalized his identity (Cross, 1991). One of the characteristics of internalization is security in one’s Blackness. This helped Calvin feel confident as he interacted with people from many different racial groups on campus. As a result, he did not speak about race in the same manner as other participants. He talked about how he could look beyond racial and other differences to focus on things that people have in common. He said, “We might be from different backgrounds, but intelligence, that’s universal. Everybody can related to that.” Calvin’s comment demonstrates that he has an awareness of racial and cultural differences, but does not allow this to be the primary factor he sees when interacting with people.

A number of participants illustrated the importance of race to connecting by describing the benefits of Black students building relationships with same-race faculty. Roger explained two benefits Black students experience from these relationships. First, he said that Black faculty members were in a better position to serve as role models for Black students.

If you’re a Black student, you should look to find people who look like you. I’m not saying that those should be your only mentors or your only support system, but you should seek them out because eventually you want to accomplish what they’ve accomplished because…they’ve gotten a college degree.

Roger seems to infer that the process of obtaining a college degree is different for a Black person. Therefore, he said Black faculty members and advisors are good supporters to help Black students accomplish their goal of earning a degree.
Second, Roger indicates that same-race relationships between students and faculty members are important because Black faculty members are in a better position to understand the challenges that are unique to the Black student experience in college.

Nothing against White counterparts, but typically a White person hasn’t been through some of the same issues or had the same challenges as a Black person. So there’s only so much a White faculty member can provide and support…You need to find that Black faculty member. There aren’t that many, but they are there and you have to go digging for them…they can give you that support where the White faculty members can’t.

Roger put his beliefs into practice by actively building a relationship with his Black academic advisor.

As soon as I found out I had an African-American (advisor), I decided I was going to see her every month. A lot of students don’t go see their academic advisor but once, but I saw mine every single month faithfully.

Fredrick also indicated that his relationships with same-race faculty have benefitted him at Southern State. He felt one of his Black faculty members reached out to him in a unique way because they shared the same racial background.

(Black faculty)...show even more passion…I mean they are a little more assertive,…as far as (saying) “Hey, come talk to me after class.” I had that once as far as one professor. I made an announcement in class for something that was going on and he said, “Come talk to me sometime.” So (he) was a little more assertive as opposed to (White) ones…Instead of someone saying, “Hey, the door is open,” and you’re not sure what could come from it or if they’d be able to help you. You assume when someone beckons you to come that they actually see some way they can benefit you or help you.

By comparing Roger and Fredrick’s experiences, it becomes apparent that two different types of factors caused participants to pursue stronger connections with Black faculty members and advisors than with White ones. The first is student perceptions of how well a faculty member or advisor can be an effective role model and understand their
experience. The other is how well a faculty member communicates their willingness to support a student. White faculty members and advisors may not be able to control student assumptions about how well they can understand Black student experiences. However, they may be able to adopt certain behaviors that help them establish credibility with Black male students.

Participants offered multiple examples of how race influenced the way in which they and other Black males connect with White faculty members and advisors. Some also offered stories that explained why they sometimes seek more opportunities to connect with same-race faculty members. It seems that a participant’s place in racial identity development may influence his desire or belief that he could connect with a faculty member. For example, Roger purposely sought out Black mentors, which aligns with his identification in Cross’s (1991) immersion stage. Blacks in this stage of development have high interest in engrossing themselves in Black culture, which includes finding Black mentors. Calvin, on the other hand, cared more about universal similarities such as intelligence, which give clues that his identity could be more internalized (Cross, 1991).

Racial identity did not, however, influence whether or not participants achieved mature relationships with White faculty members and advisors. One reason for this is that White faculty could have behaved in a manner that helped students in earlier stages of Cross’s (1991) Black identity model feel supported. Jerrod, who is in the encounter stage, expressed feeling alienated by some White faculty members because of the way they treated him in class. However, his White faculty advisor applied knowledge and skills that encouraged Jerrod to open up in a way he might not have otherwise done.
Summary

This chapter offered a cross-case analysis of the cases presented in Chapter 4. It identified themes that emerged as each of the study’s research questions was examined. The first research question asked how Black male students defined support in relationships with faculty members and advisors. Participants indicated they felt supported when these individuals provided direction, shared information, offered advice, reached out to them, and demonstrated they were personable. These types of behaviors caused various participants to say these White faculty members and advisors were going “above and beyond” to support them.

The second research question asked participants what characteristics do White faculty members and advisors possess that motivated them to seek more opportunities to interact with them. The traits that were mentioned most were being personable and willing to be open and vulnerable about who they are. Participants were also drawn to White faculty members and advisors who demonstrated intelligence and knowledge in their academic discipline or life, shared similar personality traits and behaviors with participants, and were readily available to assist them.

The third research question sought to identify events that helped participants connect with White faculty members and advisors. When participants had a positive one-on-one interaction with a White faculty member or advisor, they often sought further meetings with him or her. Participants also indicated that when faculty members turned their classrooms into places for rich discussion and sharing, it made them want to interact with the faculty
members more. This was true even if the participant and faculty member did not interact outside of the classroom.

Finally, the last research question explored how race influences relationships between White faculty members and White advisors. For most participants, race did play a role. It caused many to be somewhat skeptical as they began interacting with White faculty members and advisors because they were concerned that they may be judged by stereotypes Whites hold for Blacks. Participants acknowledged that this, in turn, may cause them to judge White faculty and advisors. Race also influenced the ability of students to build deeper connections with faculty members and advisors. Participants’ racial identity influenced who they sought relationships with and how intimate they desired the relationships to be. However, their experiences could be enhanced when they interacted with a faculty member who reached out to them. This was evident in some of the more positive impressions participants had of Black faculty members.

The final chapter of this dissertation will examine how the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 relate to existing theory and practice, and might shape each in the future. Suggestions for future research will be given as well. The conclusions made in the final chapter can be used by administrators and faculty members at PWIs to identify ways to improve the experience for Black male students. Ultimately, my hope is such improvements would increase the college retention and graduation rates of these students.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Black males have the lowest degree attainment rate of all gender-ethnic groups in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This is a concern for American society because degree attainment is associated with higher wages, greater career options, and a better quality of life (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Therefore, increasing Black male graduation rates is a priority for many members of the higher education community (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2006a; Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997; Lee, 1999; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Palmer & Young, 2008). There are a number of obstacles that make accomplishing this goal a challenge. Black males are less likely than other students to be academically prepared for college, which causes many of them to abandon advanced education altogether (Garibaldi, 2007). They are also more likely to come from low-income families and have parents without college degrees (Horn & Carroll, 1998; Strayhorn, 2008a).

Predominately White colleges and universities (PWIs), educate a relatively high percentage of the Black males who do attend college (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b). Various administrators and faculty members at these institutions are trying to identify ways to increase the retention and graduation rates of Black men on their campuses. One factor that has been found to influence retention in college is social integration (Tinto, 1993). PWIs have been less successful than historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in developing an environment that socially integrates and supports Black males, which can hurt retention (Baker, 2007; Hirt, Amelink, McFeeters, & Strayhorn, 2008; Tinto, 1993).
One of the ways PWIs have sought to enhance the social environment for Black men on campus is by connecting them with mentors (LeVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). Mentoring has been defined in many ways, but typically involved connecting a younger member of a community with a more seasoned person for support in reaching their personal and professional or academic goals (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1983). This practice can support students by helping them build meaningful connections with faculty members and advisors, which, in turn, can lead to greater learning outcomes, higher levels of academic satisfaction, and ultimately higher levels of persistence (Hazler & Carley, 1993; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Strayhorn, 2008).

Mentoring, however, can be challenging to facilitate. The lack of a clear definition and guidelines for effective practice make it difficult to design structured mentoring programs (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Many institutions wish to develop formal mentoring programs, but do not have the financial resources to do so (LeVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). As a result, some institutions rely on informal mentoring. This type of mentoring occurs organically, based on connections students make naturally with faculty members and advisors on campus (LeVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). This creates another set of challenges for higher education administrators.

Black students typically perceive same-race faculty and advisors as being more responsive to their needs during one-on-one interactions (Baker, 2007; Guiffrida, 2005). Research has also found that same-race mentoring often yields greater benefits for protégés (Bowman, Kite, Branscombe, & Williams, 1999; Moore & Toliver, 2010; Thomas, 1990). However, less than 10% of university faculty members are Black (U. S. Department of
Education, 2011d). The low representation of Blacks in faculty ranks decreases opportunities for Black males to interact with same-race faculty members. This means colleges and universities are more dependent on White faculty and advisors, who make up a large portion of professional staff, to build supportive, mentoring-like relationships with Black males (Gasman et al., 2009; Lee, 1999; U. S. Department of Education, 2011d).

Fortunately, effective informal mentoring relationships can be cultivated between Black male students and White faculty members and advisors at PWIs. When these relationships grow, they can offer the same benefits as formal mentoring programs and same-race relationships (Baker, 2007; Lee, 1999; LeVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). The goal of this study was to examine these types of relationships between Black male students and White faculty members and advisors at a PWI in the Southeastern United States. By conducting this study, I hope to provide administrators and faculty members at PWIs with information to help them develop policies, faculty and staff trainings, and programs to better support Black men in college. To achieve this outcome, four core research questions were explored:

1. How do Black male students define support in relationships with faculty and advisors?
2. What personal characteristics of White faculty members or advisors cause Black males students to seek increased interaction with them?
3. What events promote relational growth between Black male students and White faculty members and advisors?
4. How does race impact relationship development for Black male students?
A multiple-case study approach was used to provide qualitative answers to these questions. Eleven Black male students who are enrolled at a large PWI in the southern United States and have positive relationships with at least one White faculty member or advisor were interviewed for this study. Individual cases were created for each participant and were reported in Chapter 4. A cross-case analysis was conducting using Cross’s (1991) Black Identity Model, Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) Cross-National Mentoring Theory and Sellers et al.’s (1998) concept of racial salience. The findings were reported in Chapter 5.

This chapter summarizes the findings of this project as they relate to the study questions, existing literature, racial identity theory, and cross-cultural mentoring theory. It also offers implications for practice that can help faculty and administrators at PWIs enhance relationships between White faculty members and advisors and the Black males enrolled at their institutions. Finally, suggestions for future research are presented to encourage continued scholarly studies on cross-cultural relationships between Black male students and White faculty and advisors.

**Summary of Findings**

Chapter 5 discussed the major themes that emerged in response to the four research questions presented in this study. This chapter examines the findings as a whole, within the context of literature and theory. The subheadings used in this section summarize the big ideas or lessons learned from the data analysis. This summary provides information that can help administrators and faculty consider what actions and circumstances might encourage Black male students to develop mentoring-like relationships with White faculty members or advisors. Four key messages derived from the study findings are presented in this section.
Acts of Giving Promote Relational Growth

White faculty members and advisors performed a number of acts that led participants to describe them as supportive or to increase the frequency in which they interacted with them. A majority of these activities could be described as acts of giving. Participants described faculty as supportive when they provided direction, shared information, and offered advice. Each of these verbs implies that the White faculty members or advisors were in possession of something that was then transmitted to the study participants. These findings align with Jacobi (1991) and Crisp and Cruz’s (2009) descriptions of what constitutes mentoring. Both of their literature reviews on mentoring surmised that the practice involves a mentor giving psychological, psychosocial, emotional, or some other type of support to protégés. They also concluded that mentoring fosters protégé achievement, which may be done by providing information or advice (Jacobi, 1991; Crisp and Cruz, 2009).

Acts of giving are often discussed separately in the literature. For example, a discussion of sharing information with protégés may take place independent of a discussion on providing emotional support. This is beneficial because it helps administrators and faculty members clearly identify behaviors that can enhance their interactions with students. However, a single act of giving may not be enough to encourage a Black male to develop a stronger relationship with a White faculty member or advisor. A number of participants indicated that an act of giving enhanced their perception of White faculty members and advisors, but repeated acts of giving were typically necessary to promote relationship growth. Since giving usually needs to occur multiple times and in different ways, it is useful to describe these acts as a unit.
Some researchers have developed catchphrases to describe what it means to actively reach out and give to students. Guiffrida (2005) used the phrase “going above and beyond.” In her conclusions, she wrote, “One way in which faculty…went ‘above and beyond’ was by providing comprehensive advising regarding career guidance, academic issues, and personal problems” (p. 708). Each of these forms of giving was described in this project’s findings. Moore and Toliver (2010) used the expression “go the extra mile” to describe how Black faculty mentored Black students. While these phrases offer a way to categorize behaviors, they do not clearly define what faculty members and advisors actually need to do. It is not enough to ask a university professional to go “above and beyond” or “go the extra mile” for students. Administrators should use words or phrases that better define the actions faculty and advisors should take. Therefore, communicating to White faculty members and advisors that giving behaviors can enhance their relationship with Black males could be a more effective message for trainings. I will discuss this idea more in the Implications for Practice section.

Commonalities Can Be Leveraged for Relationship Growth

Study participants indicated that they were more inclined to initiate interaction with White faculty members and advisors who were intelligent and knowledgeable about topics that interested them. They also felt it was easier to connect with White faculty members and advisors who shared their personality traits. These similar interests and personality traits have been defined as commonalities between students and campus personnel. White faculty and advisors can leverage the attraction that Black male students have to commonalities to cultivate better relationships with them.
Intelligence, knowledge, and personality are characteristics that a person possesses, rather than actions a person chooses. They are each unique among individuals. For example, one faculty member may be very knowledgeable about marketing practices while another is more knowledgeable about counseling methods. One advisor may be blunt while another is more nurturing with their feedback. Therefore, it should be noted that students respond differently to White faculty members or advisors’ intelligence, knowledge and personality based on their own preferences. As a result, university professionals will not attract all students. However, they will attract students with common interests or dispositions. This is the group of students with whom they can have influence.

Research supports the idea that similarities and shared interests promote relationship growth between mentors and protégés. Thomas (1990) found that same-race pairs were more likely to develop closer bonds due to similarities in experiences and preferences (Thomas, 1990). Although, Thomas (1990) focused on race as the similarity, I argue that race merely facilitate the true connectors, which were similar experiences and tastes. Lee’s (1999) study of African American students in a college transition program supports my argument. He found that students preferred mentors who share their career interests, regardless of their ethnic heritage. Schlosser et al. (2010) proposed that advisors and students who share any type of similarities along a wide spectrum of issues are more likely to form stronger connections.

This study affirms that Black males also consider similarities and common interests between themselves and White faculty and advisors when deciding whether or not to develop a stronger relationship with them. However, helping both parties recognize these
commonalities not easy. Discrimination and prejudice are prevalent in American society because members of different ethnic groups often become fixated on their differences (Bonvilla-Silva, 1997). This becomes even more complicated because Whites and Blacks have different levels of power and privilege in the United States (Bonvilla-Silva, 1997; Bonvilla-Silva, 2006; McIntosh, 1999; Weber, 2010). Whites may consciously or unconsciously make behavioral choices to maintain their social dominance over Blacks, while Blacks may feel that Whites cannot be trusted due to their historical role in oppression and discrimination (Bonvilla-Silva, 1997; Weber, 2010).

Research in higher education demonstrates how race can interfere with students and faculty members or advisors coming to understand their similarities. Grant-Thompson and Atkinson’s (1997) found that Black students with lower levels of cultural trust assumed that White mentors were less credible and culturally sensitive. Gonslaves (2002) determined that White faculty fears of being perceived as racist prevented them from engaging with Black students on class related issues. While these issues create obstacles for Black male and White faculty or advisor relationships, they are not insurmountable. The next major finding illustrates some ways that these groups can come to find the commonalities that promote relationship growth.

**Negative Impressions and Assumptions Can Be Overcome**

Multiple participants said they had negative first impressions of White faculty members and advisors. Others described negative impressions they believed White faculty members or advisor had of them because they were Black. While these initial assumptions
prevented some participants from developing meaningful connections with White university professionals, a number of students were able to overcome these impressions.

Participants identified a number of behaviors White faculty and advisors displayed that both increased their attraction toward and interaction with them. Among them were reaching out to students, being personable, openly sharing information about themselves and their vulnerabilities, and actively seeking ways to get to know a student on a more personal level. When White faculty members and advisors consistently demonstrated these behaviors it led even some of the most skeptical students to adopt a more positive view of them.

One cause for skepticism among study participants was their racial identity. Cross’s (1991) Black Identity Model was the primary theory used in this study to understand racial identity development. Some participants expressed anti-Black views or a preference for Eurocentric values, which is often associated with Cross’s (1991) pre-encounter stage. These participants were more likely to try winning approval of White faculty members and advisors by performing well academically or rejecting clothing or hairstyles that were associated with Black men. Participants who appeared to be exploring their Black identities, but had not yet internalized these identities were more likely to discount White faculty members and advisors all together.

Both groups of students needed White faculty and advisors to take actions to counter their negative assumptions. The behaviors that study participants described as helping them overcome bad first impressions to develop better relationships with White professionals on campus are consist with existing research. Cox and Orehovec (2007) found that students who interacted with faculty members that were willing to discuss personal matters achieved
deeper levels of relational connection with them. Both Guiffrida (2005) and Moore and Toliver’s (2010) studies demonstrate that taking initiative with students, or reaching out, can enhance relationship development. Other research highlights the valuable of faculty members being personable. Komarraju, Musulkin, and Bhattacharya (2010) tied personable behaviors, such as being sociable, approachable, and available to increased student motivation and confidence in their academic skills. These student feelings are associated with retention (Komarraju, Musulkin, and Bhattacharya, 2010). This is important to mention because the ultimate goal of this study was to connect supportive relationships back to Black male retention.

Knowing how to effectively demonstrate the behaviors described above will require White faculty and advisors to increase their multicultural competence (Pope, Reynolds, Mueller, & Cheatham, 2004). One of the participants in this study explicitly said it was his advisors knowledge of how to engage minority students that helped them develop a mentoring relationship. This correlates with Schlosser et al.’s (2010) hypothesis that faculty advisors with higher multi-cultural competence would attract students of different cultural backgrounds more than faculty advisors who were less culturally competent. Therefore, it should be noted the behaviors themselves may be effective. However, a White faculty member or advisor who is culturally sensitive may be able to bring them together in a more effective manner.

The Classroom Experience Matters

Participants who were described as having reached Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) growth and maturation stages in their relationships with White faculty and advisors did so
through one-on-one interaction. However, the classroom served as the gateway by which many participants began relationships with these university personnel. Therefore, the final major finding in this study is that the classroom experience plays an important role in relationship development.

The classroom experience connected study participants to faculty members in a number of ways. First it was a place where students could learn about an instructor’s intelligence and knowledge. Multiple study participants decided to visit faculty members during their office hours or after class because of the expertise they demonstrated in class. The classroom was also a place where faculty members revealed their approachability or reached out to students. These behaviors also prompted a number of students to meet with faculty members outside of class. Some faculty members used discussion-based teaching methods which created a more informal classroom environment. The open exchange of ideas made some participants feel like they were developing more personal relationships with faculty members. As a result, they described these faculty members as supportive.

Finally, the classroom was a place where faculty members could show their vulnerabilities with students. This was a somewhat unexpected finding to me since personal sharing is most often associated with one-on-one interaction. However, one faculty member described in the study used classroom discussion as a forum to share information about his sexual orientation. His disclosure of personal information caused the study participant in his class to trust and respect him more.

It may be assumed that instructors of small classes have an easier time building relationships with students because they have more opportunities to engage students in small
group discussions. However, discussion and interactive teaching methods were only one component of what study participants valued in the classroom. Large course instructors who can demonstrate that they are personable, willing to share some of their vulnerabilities, and willing to reach out to students may find they are equally successful in attracting Black male students to see them during office hours or after class.

Significance of Findings for Black Males at PWIs

It is possible that the findings of this study could describe good practices among multiple minority groups in a PWI setting. I believe all students can benefit from faculty and advisors who give, strive to better connect with students, and design interactive courses and programs. However, I argue that these findings have a distinct significance for Black male students because of the unique challenges they face at in American society.

Black males and females alike experience discrimination in the United States (Weber, 2010). For Black males, however, prejudice often runs deeper because they are often vilified and perceived as dangerous by the media (Guinier, 2010). Furthermore, high incarceration and unemployment rates promote the “positioning of Black males at the lower rungs of society and their experiencing underachievement in all aspects of life” (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010; Jenkins, 2006, p. 127; Petit & Western, 2004). Whites on PWI campuses often act upon negative stereotypes of Black men, which creates a chilly social climate and can lead Black males to experience emotional distress (Davis et al., 2004; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007).

Given the exceptional experience of Black males at PWIs and in the larger societal context, I feel it is appropriate to assert that the findings outlined above are essential for
cross-cultural relationship development with them. Black males are offered less power and privilege in the United State, which makes acts of giving by White faculty and advisors a valuable extension of respect and support (Weber, 2010). Black males have more stereotypes to overcome which could cause them to develop more negative impressions of and less trust for Whites. Therefore, efforts made by White faculty members and advisors to counter these negative impressions may be more valuable to Black men than other groups for cross-cultural relationships development. It is important for faculty and administrators and PWIs to acknowledge that the more negative experiences of Black men in American society warrant special attention to their needs on campus.

**Implications**

Scholarly research provides insights that can be used to inform theory development and professional practice. In this section, I reflect on ways that Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) Cross-National Mentoring Theory, Cross’s (1991) Model of Black identity, and Sellers et al.’s (1998) concept of racial salience inform the study findings. I also examine how these finding could impact practices adopted by professionals at PWIs.

**Implications for Theory**

**Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) Theory.**

Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) Cross-National Mentoring Theory was developed from studies that were conducted on cross-cultural relationships in the workplace. I chose to use their model in this study because I believed cross-cultural relationship development in the business world was likely to mirror this type of relationship building in higher education. I
could find no examples of this theory being applied in higher education research. Therefore, I had an opportunity to examine an existing theory in a new context.

It appears that the basic phases of the model aligned with relationship development between Black male students and White faculty members or advisors at Southern State. Each participant identified a factor that initiated his attraction to a faculty member or advisor, which mirrors the first phase of the model. Murphy and Ensher (1997) stress that “initial attraction plays an even larger role in informal mentoring relationships” than formal relationships because the decision to interact is based on choice (p. 217). The preferences and actions of participants in this study support Murphy and Ensher’s claim. Participants had relationships with faculty members and advisors for whom they found no attraction. However, they did not describe these relationships as supportive, nor did they actively attempt to grow these relationships. Murphy and Ensher (1997) also said similarity between mentors and protégés was a factor that influenced attraction. Commonality and similarity between study participants and White faculty members and advisors was found to play a role in attraction in this study as well.

The remaining phases of the theory also seem to align with the experiences of participants in this study. Constructs of Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) theory such as having one’s expectations met, finding the other person to be trustworthy, and establishing relational stability all deepened the relationships that Black male students were able to establish with White faculty members and advisors. There was, however, was one element of Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) theory that was not found in this study. Murphy and Ensher (1997) indicate that cross-cultural pairs often continue to face challenges related to cultural difference in
advanced stages of relationship development. For example, during the growth phase, Murphy and Ensher (1997) note that it is common for mentors and protégés to encounter challenges resulting from communication differences. During growth, pairs communicate more frequently and about more intimate issues. As a result, they must address differences in communication styles and expectations that were not an issue when the pair interacted at a more superficial level.

Participants in this study did not indicate that they negotiated new cultural challenges as they developed stronger relationships with White faculty members and advisors. Participants who had reached the growth or maturity phase of Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) theory told positive stories about their more intimate interaction with White personnel. The only conflicts mentioned by participants who had achieved advanced stages of relationship were attributed to grade disputes or disagreements in how the students should invest their time. This is not to say that culture did not have any influence in advanced relational stages. It could mean that once the students established a positive relationship with White faculty and advisors they were less aware of or concerned by cultural conflict.

Negotiating cultural differences may have also played less of a role for students because many did not indicate that race played a primary role in their interactions with White faculty members and advisors. Participants were more focused on the actions of the faculty and advisors they described in the study. This could be attributed to the students who chose to participate in the study. Students self-selected to participate in the study if they had positive experiences with White faculty members or advisors. It is possible these students
had positive experiences because race, in general, plays a lesser role in this point of their lives or within the PWI setting.

The study findings indicate that Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) theory can provide insight into cross-cultural relationship development in higher education. The basic phases mentors and protégés navigate in the workplace are descriptive of how students and their faculty or advisors navigate relationships. More information is needed to determine if students are, in fact, less likely to encounter cultural conflict in advanced stages of relationship development or if this was less prevalent in this study due to racial salience.

**Racial Identity Models and Concepts.**

Cross’s (1991) Black Identity Model and Sellers et al.’s (1998) concept of racial salience were also used in this study. Cross’s theory was developed from research that was conducted in a university setting (Cross, 1991). It is one of the primary racial identity theories used in student affairs practice (Evans, Forney, Guido, & Patton, 2010). A majority of the studies I found that applied Cross’s (1991) model were focused in education settings. However, his work has been applied in general studies in the field of psychology (Constantine, Watt, Gainor, & Warren, 2005; Jones, Cross, & DeFour, 2007).

Cross’s (1991) theory presented a general framework for analyzing beliefs and actions described by the participants. However, it was cautiously applied to this study. The primary data source for the study was single interviews conducted in one-hour blocks with each study participant. This did not generate enough data about participant attitudes, values, and behaviors to use Cross’s (1991) developmental model to identify student racial development. I do not mean to insinuate that with more data a study participant could be
categorized into a specific stage of Cross’s (1991) model. Instead I am acknowledging that with limited data, it is more challenging and less responsible for me as a researcher to claim in-depth insight into the way participant’s use race to define themselves.

Despite these limits, I did find that Cross’s (1991) model could be used to understand how students develop their initial impressions of White faculty and advisors. Students who appeared to have more internalized identities or who adopted more Eurocentric values described less skepticism during their first encounters with White faculty members and advisors. Participants who held what Cross (1991) termed as “anti-Black” attitudes or who were experiences higher levels of Black pride were more likely to be aware of or sensitive to judgments White faculty members or advisors may hold toward them.

While I found Cross’s (1991) theory to be helpful in understanding the initial attitudes Black males had when interacting with White faculty members and advisors, it does not seem to be useful in helping one understand cross-cultural relationship development. Study findings illustrated that faculty members who adopted student-centered behaviors and demonstrated multi-cultural competence could influence students to become attracted to and ultimate trust them. This was true, even if the student’s initial impressions of them were negative. This is good news because it demonstrates that White faculty members and advisors can still develop supportive relationships with Black males, even if their stage of racial identity development discourages them from trusting or liking them. However, this means Cross’s (1991) model may not inform advanced stages of relationship development.

Sellers et al. (1998) Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity has also been applied to college students. It has been used as a framework to study Black student attitudes,
perceptions, and issues such as self-esteem (Schermund, Sellers, Mueller, and Crosby, 2001; Sellers et al, 1998; Shelton & Sellers, 2000). These studies, however, have not focused on Sellers et al. (1998) concept of racial salience. Instead they emphasized the concepts of racial centrality and regard. Therefore, this study offered what appears to be a unique application of the MMRI theory in a higher education setting.

Racial salience considers the importance a person places on their race within a given context or point in time. Since this study examined Black male experiences at a given place and time, I felt it was appropriate to apply the concept of racial salience to the stories shared by study participants. Racial salience played a secondary role, however, in the theoretical framework for this study. As a result, I think the biggest implication this study has on the concept is that it should be applied further.

One of the major findings of this study was that Black males could get over negative first impressions of White faculty members and advisors. When Black males got to know more student-centered White professionals, they focused less on race and more on commonalities and mutual trust. I believe this could be attributed in part to participants experiencing lower racial salience in the context of a caring relationship. A general low racial salience among students who chose to participate in this study might also explain why students were able to develop strong relationships with White faculty members and advisors. The interview protocol did not focus on questions related to racial salience. That means it would be inappropriate to draw conclusions about how influential racial salience was to relationship development in this study. However, this would be worth examining in a future research.
Implications for Practice

Research indicates that White faculty members and advisors are often uncomfortable or unsure about managing issues that may arise around racial issues with students (Gonsalves, 2002; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Sue et al., 2009). When this confusion and discomfort goes unaddressed, it can contribute to the isolation, invisibility, and villainization of Black males by majority members of a predominately White campuses (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano, 2009; Watkins, Green, Goodson, & Guidry, 2007). Therefore, the findings of this study could be used by higher education administrators and faculty at PWIs to develop practices and policies that improve cross-cultural relationships between Black male students and White university personnel. These relationships could, in turn, support Black male retention. I would like to offer specific suggestions based on the study findings.

First, White faculty members and advisors must choose to move beyond their fears and initiate interaction with Black males. Participants indicated that they were more likely to seek opportunities to grow a relationship with a White faculty member or advisor who reached out to them or encouraged them to seek them out one-on-one. When faculty members and advisors initiated contact with students, it communicated that they cared. It appeared that knowing a White faculty member or advisor cared helped students overcome negative first impressions and overlook or forgive shortcomings. This is important for White faculty members and advisors to realize because they may be tempted to withdraw from Black students out of fear of saying or doing the wrong thing (Gonsalves, 2002). These
findings suggest that it may actually be more harmful for White personnel to become distant than to show care but make a social misstep.

A second recommendation is that faculty members should pay attention to their course design in addition to their course content. Participants often built positive impressions of White faculty members when they were able to engage in interactive course discussions with them. This course format allowed students to learn more about their professors’ interests, vulnerabilities, and personal lives. In turn, participants were able to identify commonalities with faculty members which often increased their attraction to them. Interactive courses also demonstrated to students that faculty members cared about their opinions and ideas, which made them feel valued.

It can be challenging for White faculty members and advisors to adopt these two recommended behaviors if there are no incentives to do so and they have no guidance. For this reason, PWI administrators must develop programs and policies that promote these and other positive actions by White faculty members and advisors. A worthwhile place to start is with training programs. Administrators should identify forums to educate White faculty and advisors about the unique issues that Black males face at their institution. This could be done through campus-wide diversity initiatives, existing college faculty and staff meetings, and new faculty or advisor training programs.

These types of trainings can raise awareness among White faculty members and advisors that Black males experience the classroom and social settings on campus differently than majority students. This study focuses specifically on Black males, but I recommend these trainings discuss issues relevant to other minority populations as well. This could
increase the overall sensitivity White personnel have for minorities and would allow trainers to address the unique issues that arise when gender, race, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation intersect (Weber, 2010). As mentioned in the literature review, Black males are a heterogeneous group, so these intersections can help illustrate their inner-group diversity (Harper & Nichols, 2008).

This study supports the idea that the next level of training should focus on multi-cultural competence. Pope, Reynolds, Mueller, and Cheatham (2004) emphasize that this capability is critical for Whites to interact with minority students in “meaningful, relevant, and productive ways” (p. 13). While awareness may help White faculty members and advisors better understand the needs of Black males, multi-cultural competence may help them better meet these needs. Multi-cultural competence training can include strategies for engaging minority students in conversations, providing guidance without imposing Eurocentric values or preferences, and appropriately managing racially charged issues in classroom or extra-curricular settings. I recommend that such trainings involve hands-on activities such as role plays and case studies. This will push White faculty members and advisors to practice thinking and acting in more culturally sensitive ways.

These trainings could also include what this study identified as acts of giving. The purpose of multi-cultural competence training is to help White faculty and advisors behave in ways that helps them connect with students of different cultures better. Since acts of giving such as guiding and assisting helped students in this study feel supported by White faculty and advisors, it seems appropriate to recommend this be a component of multi-cultural competence trainings.
A final area that this study can inform is policy formation at PWIs. Study findings indicate that there are behaviors and relational approaches that White faculty and advisors can adopt that help Black males feel supported. While these may be effective strategies for relationship development, it would be unrealistic to believe administrators could require this approach to student relationships. This does not mean, however, that university policies cannot promote supportive relationship development. Administrators can enhance the likelihood that White faculty and advisors will choose student-centered practices by incentivizing them.

Faculty members and advisors could receive institutional benefits for participating in the trainings that have been recommended in this section. Administrators could also develop university-wide mentoring awards that recognize faculty and advisor service to underrepresented groups. These actions in and of themselves may not sway timid or culturally unaware faculty members and advisors to adopt behaviors connected to student support. However, they do play a role in shaping institutional culture. Programs and policies that support positive relationships between White faculty members and advisors and Black male students communicate that this is how an institution does business. Creating such a supportive culture is especially important because research has demonstrated that when students feel affirmed and valued on their campuses, retention and graduation rates increase (Kuh, 2001). By focusing on how campus culture can foster supportive relationships for Black males, administrators have an opportunity to positively affect individual faculty member and advisor behavior.
Recommendations for Future Research

The current study only presents a partial answer to the question of how supportive relationships develop between Black male students and White faculty members. Study participants were able to share their perceptions of the faculty and advisors with whom they developed relationships, but faculty views were not presented. Conducting a project in which pairs of Black male students and White faculty members or advisors are interviewed about their relationship would generate a richer understanding of this phenomenon.

Further attention should also be given to what Murphy and Ensher (1997) define as mature mentoring relationships. This study gave participants the full authority to define supportive relationships. While I believe this was an important part of empowering Black male students and defining support based on their perceptions, it limited the study. Perceptions of students who were attracted to a White faculty member or advisor were combined with perceptions of students who were in a mature, reciprocal relationship. It is possible that these two experiences will yield different impressions of what makes a relationship work. Therefore, it would be useful for a future study to identify participants who meet Murphy and Ensher’s (1997) definition of a mature relationship and focus on the way these students describe their experiences.

There is an additional opportunity for future research to explore how racial identity impacts mentoring relationship development. This study used Cross’s (1991) Model of Black Identity and the concept of racial salience from Sellers et al.’s (1998) Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity to build a theoretical framework. They both offered helpful constructs for exploring the perspective participants may have brought into
their relationships. However, it was difficult to apply the theories to student experiences because the primary data for the study was single interviews with participants. None of the questions in the interview protocol directly addressed racial identity. Future studies could be designed that engage students in discussions about their racial identity. Follow-up interviews could be conducted and observations could be used to develop a richer understanding of the influence of racial identity.

**Conclusions**

This research project examined how Black male students develop supportive relationships with White faculty members and advisors at a predominately White institution. The findings suggest that administrators and faculty members at PWIs can enhance the quality of relationships that Black male students build with White university personnel by adopting various behaviors and strategies. This was true regardless of any initial skepticism or distrust a participant may have felt as a result of racial differences.

Black males felt most supported when White faculty members and advisors provided direction, gave advice and information, initiated contact, made themselves available, and invited an exchange of more personal information. All of these are behaviors that White faculty members and advisors could be taught to do better or more frequently. Therefore, it was recommended that PWI administrators develop training programs to help personnel master these types of behaviors.

The findings also suggest that White faculty and advisor characteristics could be leveraged to enhance relationship development. For example, individuals and groups can find ways to connect Black males with White mentors who are involved in academic and
professional pursuits that interest them or who share similar personality traits with them. This could be done organically as White faculty and advisors meet students, or formally through an organized institutional mentoring program.

I believe one of the most encouraging findings of this study is that racial identity influences cross-cultural relationships, but does not necessarily dictate them. Racial identity and past experiences with racism caused some study participants to have negative first impressions of White faculty members and advisors. However, participants indicated they were able to overcome these impressions when White faculty members and advisors adopted the behaviors described above and demonstrated they were open to relationships.

Retention of Black males in college is a complex issue (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2006a). Improving the relationships Black males build with White faculty members and advisors is only one piece of the retention puzzle. However, understanding how to grow more supportive relationships between these two groups is important. First, student-faculty and student-advisor relationships can promote social integration, which is positively correlated with student retention (Tinto, 1993). Second, supportive relationships are characterized by more intimate information sharing. This could create more opportunities for White faculty members and advisors to identify Black males who are considering leaving college before they make their decision. If campus personnel had such advanced notice, it could increase the likelihood that a Black male could be connected with resources that could make staying in college a more feasible or desirable option. My hope is that these study findings inspire administrators and faculty to take actions to support Black males and give them concrete ideas about how to target their efforts.
REFERENCES


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http://nsse.iub.edu/html/about.cfm


APPENDICES
Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letters

From: Carol Mickelson, IRB Coordinator  
North Carolina State University  
Institutional Review Board

Date: February 3, 2012

Title: How Do Mentoring Relationships Develop Between Black Male College Students and White Faculty Members at a Predominately White Institution?

IRB#: 2407

Dear Ms. Franco,

The project listed above has been reviewed by the NC State Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research, and is approved for one year. This protocol will expire on February 2, 2013 and will need continuing review before that date.

NOTE:

1. You must use the attached consent forms which have the approval and expiration dates of your study.

2. This board complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429.

3. Any changes to the protocol and supporting documents must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

4. If any unanticipated problems occur, they must be reported to the IRB office within 5 business days by completing and submitting the unanticipated problem form on the IRB website.

5. Your approval for this study lasts for one year from the review date. If your study extends beyond that time, including data analysis, you must obtain continuing review from the IRB.

Sincerely,

Carol Mickelson  
NC State IRB
Iowa City, IA 52242-1090
(319) 335-2090
www.uiowa.edu/iir

Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research with Human Subjects
Certificate of Approval

Protocol #: 12-02-26
Protocol Type: Expedited

Title: How Do Mentoring Relationships Develop Between Black Male College Students and White Faculty Members at a Predominantly White Institution?

Initial Approval: 3/5/2012

Investigator: Ms. Karina Franco
North Carolina State University

Co-Investigator: Dr. Jay Gaston-Gayles
North Carolina State University

After careful review, the protocol listed above was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research with Human Subjects. This approval will expire one year from the date of this letter. In order to continue conducting research under this protocol after one year, the "Annual Protocol Renewal Form” must be submitted to the IRB. This form can be obtained from the Office of Research Compliance web page http://research.unc.edu/compliance-ethics/human-subjects.

Please note that it is the investigator’s responsibility to promptly inform the committee of any changes in the proposed research prior to implementing the changes and of any adverse events or unexpected risks to subjects or others. Amendment and Event Reporting Forms are available on our web page at http://www.research.unc.edu/Compliance-ethics.

M. M. L. 3/1/12
Dr. M. Lyn Layman, IRB Chair  Date

The UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA at CHARLOTTE
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FOR RESEARCH

Project Title
How Do Mentoring Relationships Develop Between Black Male College Students and White Faculty Members at a Predominately White Institution

Primary Investigator
Karina Franco; E.d.D. candidate in Higher Education Administration, North Carolina State University and Director of Academic Support Services, Freshman Advising, and Recruitment in the Lee College of Engineering at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Email address: kefranco@uncc.edu
Phone: 704-649-5126

Supervising Faculty: Joy Gaston-Gayles, North Carolina State University
Email address: joy_gayles@uncc.edu

Information About Research Studies
The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. 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. 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.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to describe how Black male students build supportive relationships with White faculty members a university that enrolls more White students than minority students. A supportive relationship is one that helps a Black male like a faculty member values him as a person and is willing to help him reach his goal of earning a college degree.

This is an important research topic because schools Black students often say they feel isolated or discriminated against when they are ethnic minorities on a college campus. This may be one of the reasons Black males graduate from college at lower rates than White males and Black females. The Primary Investigator will use the stories told by interview participants to help white faculty members and university administrators learn how to better support Black males in college.

Eligibility
Student participants must be males who describe themselves as Black, African-American, African, Caribbean, or Caribbean American. They must be 18-24 years old and have a 2.0 cumulative grade point average or higher UNC Charlotte.
Students may not participate in if do not consider themselves Black, African-American, African, Caribbean, or Caribbean American. They also cannot participate if they are younger than 18, older than 24, or have a cumulative grade point average less than 2.0 at UNC Charlotte.

Time Commitment
You will be asked to participate in a 45-60 minute interview with the Primary Investigator. You will also have a chance to read the interview transcript, once it is transcribed to add more information or delete comments that you decide you don’t want to share. This will take 15-30 more minutes and is optional.

Description of Participation
During the interview, you will be asked questions about the relationship you have with a White faculty member. This interview is private, which means only the Primary Investigator will be in the room. Your responses are confidential. You may choose not to answer certain questions if they make you feel uncomfortable. There are no consequences for choosing to skip questions.

You will receive an email with a copy of the written transcript when it becomes available. You will be invited to read it and make any changes you feel necessary. You are not required to participate in this review. If you choose to make revisions, you have one week from the day it is emailed to you to reply with changes.

Potential Benefits
You will have a chance to tell a story about their college experience that others might not know about.

Potential Risks
Sharing stories, especially ones that ask you to talk relationships and your ethnicity, is personal. This might be uncomfortable for you. To minimize this risk, you may choose not to answer certain questions or leave the study at any time.

The study is focused on positive experiences black male students and white faculty members share. However, the interviews could remind you of negative experiences as well. If you need emotional support or assistance reporting an issue, please contact the University Counseling Center at 704-687-0311 or the Dean of Students Office at 704-687-0345.

The project may involve other risks that are not currently known.

Volunteer Statement
You are a volunteer. The decision to participate in this study is completely up to you. If you decide to be in the study, you may stop at any time. You will not be treated any differently if you decide not to participate in the study or if you stop once you have started.

Confidentiality
The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely on the Primary Investigator’s personal laptop computer, which is password protected. 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. Any information about your participation, including your identity, is completely confidential. You will be assigned an alias to ensure that no one knows who you are. The alias will be used to label your interview and in place of your name in all written reports.

**Compensation**
You will not receive anything for participating.

**Questions about the Study**
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the Primary Investigator, Karina Franco, at 9201 University City Blvd., Smith Hall 228, Charlotte, NC 28223, or 704-687-3271.

**Fair Treatment and Respect**
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) or the UNC Charlotte Research Compliance Office (704-687-3309).

**Approval Date**
This form was approved for use on Month, Day, Year for use for one year.

**Consent to Participate**
I have read the information in this consent form. I have had the chance to ask questions about this study, and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am at least 18 years of age, and I agree to participate in this research project. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form after it has been signed by me and the principal investigator of this research study.

________________________
Participant’s Name (PRINT)

________________________
Participant’s Signature

________________________
Investigator’s Signature

________________________
Date
Appendix C: Student Interview Protocol

A private, semi-structured interview was conducted with each study participant. The following interview protocol was used for the student interviews, which were conducted in a private location of the Southern State University library.

1. The focus of this study is supportive relationships between students and faculty. What do you believe are the characteristics of these types of relationships?
2. You indicate that you are in a supportive relationship with a White faculty member. How did you meet him/her?
3. What is your relationship to the White faculty member who has supported you? For example, is he/she your academic advisor, work supervisor, course instructor, or something else?
4. Please describe how this faculty member has supported you.
5. What events took place that helped you move from an acquaintanceship to a deeper relationship?
6. What characteristics or personality traits does this person possess that you appreciate?
7. What characteristics or personality traits do you think this faculty member most appreciates about you?
8. What challenges or conflicts did you encounter as you began to develop a closer relationship with this faculty member?
9. What role does trust play in your relationship?
10. What topics do you feel comfortable discussing with this person?
11. What topics would you prefer to discuss with other friends or mentors?
12. What role, if any, does culture or race play in your relationship with him/her?

13. Most relationship will encounter conflict at one time or another. What differences between this faculty member and you have resulted in conflict, even if it’s minor?

14. What makes this relationship “work?”

15. Is there anything else I should know that I did not ask?