# FOUR AFRICAN AMERICAN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AND TWO WHITE PROFESSORS: REFLECTIONS OF A DIFFICULT DIALOGUE PROGRAM AT A PREDOMINATELY WHITE UNIVERSITY

A Dissertation

by

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# ABSTRACT

This qualitative, phenomenological study examined the experiences of four African American undergraduate students and two White professors, all current or former affiliates of a predominantly White university (PWI) in the Midwest. The objective was to gain an understanding of whether their experiences were ones that have been addressed in the past and recent research surrounding why African American undergraduates leave college before graduating and to determine if any changes in practices of beliefs occurred since their participation in the Difficult Dialogue.

The data were collected using the evaluations from the Difficult Dialogue event and in-depth interviews. The data were then analyzed using a narrative analysis where recurring themes were highlighted and used to find dominant themes. The study confirmed findings that students feel isolated while attending a predominantly White college. New findings in the professor-student engagement include: 1) lack of student self-advocacy in the student-professor relationship 2) lack of professor awareness of students' feelings of exclusion and isolation, 3) professor discomfort in reaching out to African American undergraduate students, and 4) an overall lack of awareness of one another's feelings. The most salient conclusions from these encounters with African American undergraduates and professors was that an opportunity to communicate in a purposeful dialogue or the process of "thinking together" collectively allowed group participants to examine their preconceptions and prejudices, as well as explore the creation of new ideas.

# DEDICATION

*"For I know the plans that I have for you, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11*

First, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who was with me throughout this journey. This work is dedicated to all of the people who had a hand in me walking this journey. I wish to dedicate this work to my best friend and husband, Rev Maurice Green III, who loved me unconditionally, who walked with me, dried my tears, drove me to the library, researched, read and convinced me that I could finish. Thank you for the lifetime warranty. To my son, Maurice Green, IV who held me accountable, ensured that I kept the expectations that I had imposed upon him, and who met every challenge with tremendous courage. You are already a great attorney. To Victoria C. Green, the junior editor who always made me laugh. Thanks for always noticing what I do. God will honor you. Your knowledge and hands will heal many in medicine. To Alexandria M. Green whose sassiness always challenged me and whose personality always inspired me. Thanks for always speaking your mind. Marine Biology will be changed by your intellect. I dedicate this work to my mother, Susie Neblett, who sacrificed and lived through many struggles so that I could pursue an advanced degree. Thanks for putting aside your career so that I could have mine. To my late father, Albert A. Neblett, son of a sharecropper, I dedicate this work. You always provided more than enough so that I could experience the opportunities that you could not. I know that you are looking down on me with pride and more great expectations.

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In looking back over my journey, I am grateful to be called into the most noble profession of all.

*"To give a man fish, he will eat for a day. To teach a man to fish, he will eat for a lifetime."*

Chinese Proverb

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

Although there is evidence of an increased amount of African American students enrolling in predominantly institutions (PWIs) (Nettles, et al, 1986; Townes 2007, NCES 2008), their voices have been absent from the research. Such evidence has shed light on the need to improve the dismal retention rates of African American students dating back to the 1960's (Fleming, 1981, Nettles, 1998, Mow & Nettles, 1990; Allen, 1992). The research does prove the need to develop relationships between African American students and faculty, however, research focuses, specifically, on what strategies have been effective in developing those relationships. To address this societal problem, there is a need for a closer look at the barriers between African American students and White faculty. This study will emphasize how difficult dialogues affect two White professors and four African American students on a predominantly White university campus.

It is critical to study the experiences of African American students and their White professors at predominantly White universities, as their retention is half of their White peers. The experiences of the students and professors in this study are unique in that they all participated in a dialogue aimed at understanding some of the problems that occur. In understanding the encounters between African Americans and Whites it is important to understand the history in the United States.

For the purpose of this study, the African American undergraduate student was one who was born in the United States, who identifies as African American, and was

pursuing an undergraduate degree at a predominantly White university. The terms African American and Black(s) will be used interchangeably. In addition, the dialogues refer to a structured format that occurred on the university. However, throughout the study, conversations have been highlighted to further the study and the need for new research.

## Statement of the Problem

In the twenty-first century, African American students will continue to enroll in predominantly institutions (PWIs) at greater rates than students enrolling at historically colleges and universities (HBCUs); yet, if this current trend continues, over half of students at PWIs will fail to persist and graduate (Allen, 1992). Predominantly White colleges have experimented with various programs and services targeted at retaining those students with little success. While many critics of predominantly institutions report the benefit of African American and students interacting with faculty, most agree that White faculty who interact with African American students more frequently seem to represent part of the retention solution (Astin & Oseguera, 2005, Nettles, 1988). Though the literature supports the notion that the relationship between faculty and students is crucial to student success, a small percentage of the literature focuses on the specific needs of African American students attending predominantly institutions and their relationship to White faculty.

*Problem Statement One* - Discrimination and Barriers to Effective Communication

Since the very beginnings of African Americans in this country, the educational system had embedded discrimination and barriers that perpetuate differences in access, achievement and outcomes. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009) wrote that Blackness and everything associated with Blackness would be opposed.

*Problem Statement Two* - Absence of Research Targeting African American Undergraduates and White Professors.

While many have studied topics surrounding the difficulties that African Americans face while attending predominantly universities, none were found that focused on the strain between the two races in the roles of undergraduate African American student and White professor. For example, studies currently highlight the reflections of faculty on students (Gaff, 1973), student faculty interactions (Endo and Harpel, 1982), support for African American students (Allen et al, 1991), and the overwhelming topic of the retention of African American students attending predominantly universities.

## Background of the Study

The topic of the education of African Americans in the United States remains a controversial issue that traces back to their very beginnings in this country. In 1966, the Coleman report surveyed 645,000 students, assessing the equity of educational opportunities of students of color compared to their peers (Eysenck, 1971). The report was in response to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The President requested a survey to be conducted regarding the availability of educational opportunities for individuals by

reason of race, color, religion, and national origin in public school institutions at all levels in the United States. The purpose of the survey was to (1) describe certain aspects of our educational system and (2) find out how the aspects of our system are related to achievement.

Though the report is not considered an intelligence test, the results became a landmark during an era of intelligence testing, which was sometimes used to steer African Americans into lower educational tracts (Coleman, 1966). The survey concluded that achievement of students of color had more to do with socioeconomic status and background rather than race. He (Coleman, 1966) suggested that Blacks needed to attend a majority school to increase achievement. Coleman coined the term " White flight," which is referred to as a large number of Whites removing their children from a school that increased its minority population. The results of the study had significant policy implications, such as bussing and new integration laws. The policy implications mark the start of more African Americans attending predominantly White institutions.

Our society is permeated by discrepancies between Whites and Blacks educationally, socially, and economically. Today, about 44% of African American males will graduate compared to 54% of White males. An African American male with no criminal history has less of a chance to get a job than a White male with a felony conviction. For every dollar of per capita income, African Americans had fifty cents in 1968 and only fifty-seven cents in 2001 (Jensen, 2005). In 2000, 24.9 percent of Blacks lived in poverty compared to 9.1 percent of Whites (U.S Census Bureau).

Jensen (2005) details how these discrepancies between Blacks and Whites exist for the perceived benefits. Jensen also exposes the idea that dialogues about these discrepancies and benefits for Whites have been omitted in the research because of the perceived "loss of privileges". Powell et al (2005) states that, in the United States, privileged groups such as Whites, men, Christians, heterosexuals, enjoy the benefits of a hierarchal social system that their African American, female, non-Christian and homosexual counterparts do not.

A documentary shown on Primetime (1991), using a hidden camera, showed two men who were alike in most every respect- (age, education, background, work history)- except race. The experiment captured a pattern of disparate treatment (Jensen, 2005). For example, the White participant was shown an apartment, while the Black man was told there were no vacancies. When both men asked about job openings, the White man was addressed pleasantly, while the Black man was lectured about laziness. While looking for a job at a local dry cleaner's, the employer informs the White man of the job openings, while telling the Black man they don't know anything about jobs. These blatant differences highlight a reoccurring program observed in many instances that can be easily observed on college campuses around the country.

The most highly publicized racial incidents, ranging from verbal harassment to violent beatings, occurred at some of the most elite institutions in the country (Farrell & Jones, 1988). More recently in 2008, a documentary premiered on Cable Network News (CNN) that highlighted continued struggles in America. The documentary showcased the experiences of African Americans being innocently detained shopping, in

relationships, and in health conditions affecting African Americans. The documentary states that seventy percent of White students graduate from high school in four years compared to fifty percent for African American students. This documentary furthered the notion that the problems between Whites and Blacks in society and the classroom continue to be problematic.

In re-evaluating the historical development of African Americans in this country, and the problems within the educational systems for them, this study will emphasize a need for improvement. By analyzing the phenomenon of a dialogue between White Professors and African American undergraduate students, the lived and learned experiences exposed will further solidify the need for new research.

## Conception of the Study: A Personal Story

This study originated from my own experiences as an African American student attending a predominantly White institution. My experience is a direct result of my time spent as one of two African American female students within the Interdisciplinary Studies – Generic Special Education department. My entire admittance into the university was predicated on a conversation with one of the leading university administrators about the local African American perception of isolation from the university. Some error occurred during my admissions process where the department of my specialization had admitted me, but the university admissions office had not. When I attempted to appeal the decision, the director of admissions reviewed my file and, in a face-to-face conversation, told me that I should consider attending a trade school

because the university was not the place for students like me. I was insulted and devastated. Floored by the incident, a family member and I set about to visit with someone at the university with higher ranking. At that time the president was out of town so we met with the vice president. During this conversation, we explained to him what happened during my admission process. We further explained that the common understanding in the African American community was that we (African Americans) were not welcome at the university. The decision from that meeting was that I could be admitted to the university for one semester. If I passed the courses, I could stay. But, if I failed, I would be kicked out.

As I started my pursuit at this predominantly White institution, I was met with many roadblocks. Other first generation college students may have encountered the roadblocks, but in conjunction with the isolation that I experienced, they sometimes seemed insurmountable. My first encounter was with my academic advisor. She registered me for several courses with very heavy reading assignments. I didn't advocate for myself about whether the classes would be too difficult to take at the same time. With my conditional admittance, I did not protest. I really did not know that advocating for myself was even an option. I simply hoped that I would be successful. Other African Americans shared that perception about the university and as a result, African American staff and family members employed by the university secretly stepped in to help me navigate the system to ensure my success. For example, one African American woman had heard about the restrictions that were placed on my enrollment, and she called me to her office and changed all of my courses to reflect a more "doable" course load. She

instructed me on what to do to be successful. She insisted that I prove that I disserved to be at the university like every other student. She glared at me as she spoke the words "other students" to assure that I knew that "other students" meant students. Periodically, she checked on me to see how I was doing in my classes.

One of the courses that I was enrolled in was class in Cultural Diversity. The professor who taught the class was an African American female. Though I thought the class was intriguing, I rarely spoke a word during class time. One day after class, the professor approached me. As we spoke, I felt comfortable enough to explain the circumstances around my conditional admittance to the university. The professor explained that I was very capable of success at the university and that I must not quit regardless to the encounters that I might face. This was another example of African American educators teaching me about the unwritten rules of the system.

Another example of my lack of knowledge in navigating a predominantly White system was an encounter with one of my colleagues. She wanted us to exchange a paper that we were required to write for one of our classes. I became defensive about exchanging papers because I had been accustomed to working alone on my assignments. After I went along with her idea to review one another's papers, she informed me that she and several other students in our class hung out at the professor's house and got direct assistance from the professor. While I occasionally communicated with my colleagues, I had no knowledge of special invitations or opportunities to build relationships with the professors. When students formed private circles within the class, typically I was not invited. Neither did I take initiative to become a part of that circle.

During several class discussions, I became the spokesperson for all African Americans. Students followed any topics or questions about African Americans with a quick look at me to assess my response. In one class specifically, I remember a very heated debate over whether differences were more about a person's class and not race. The concept was difficult to process, as my everyday experience as the university seemed to be about my race.

Later on in life, during my two-year employment at a university in the Midwest, I worked as an Education Specialist in the Office of Multicultural Affairs. This office is responsible for developing and maintaining programs and services to ensure the successful recruitment, retention, and graduation of underrepresented students. There were several programs that were annual staples of the office, which were held with minimal changes to them. A scholarship program was used to recruit and retain students of color, but only six students were awarded scholarships per year. Wondering whether programs that assisted so few students were beneficial, I started various conversations with other staff, faculty, and students about the experiences of students of color at the university.

One day, a professor approached me and asked if I would be willing to come to her class to tell the students about the services offered by the Office of Multicultural Affairs. The professor admitted she was unsure of how to talk to students of color without making them feel uncomfortable. She feared she might bring them unwanted attention. I asked why she was uncomfortable talking to her students. She (the professor) shared a past experience that she had with another African American woman.

The professor stated she had not seen the African American woman for a while and asked her a question about her hair. The African American woman responded angrily about being questioned about this. That single response had a crippling effect on how the professor dealt with African Americans. Assuming this particular professor was not an isolated experience with African Americans relations, I posed the following two questions: "How can colleges retain students of color (specifically African American students like me), if they are uncomfortable talking to them?"

I set about researching the problem of retention of African American students, not only because of my experience as an African American but also because those were the students who typically frequented our office. First I looked at the retention of African American students at the university where I was employed. Then I looked at the retention of African Americans at the university's peer institutions. Based on the data, it appeared that all of the peer universities had the same problem with retaining their African American students. My curiosity led me to research from where this problem stemmed and how vast this problem was. (Back ground Ch 1) During the research one particular article stuck out, "The experiences of African-American Ph.D. students at a predominately Carnegie Research I Institution." As I read the article, I noticed that I shared those same experiences as an undergraduate student. This observation led me to my second question, were those experiences on predominantly campuses here at this university? These guiding questions led to the following research.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the experiences of four African American undergraduate students and two White professors in a difficult dialogue, structured to understand specific relations between Whites and Blacks in the college classroom. The study will further examine the historical social position of African Americans in this country and how that social position has systematically created assumptions and practices that lead to retention problems.

## Data Sources

### *Student Demographics*

The subject population for this study included four undergraduate African American students and two professors attending a predominantly institution in the Midwest. With a student body of 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students, the University's focus on students is its top strategic goal. The student population is a diverse mix of full and part-time students, and traditional and non-traditional age enrollees. Students come from all walks of life, from business professionals to international students. Almost 10,000 of the university's enrollment are from within its state. The student to teacher ratio is 18 to 1. For the 2008-09 academic years, the freshman class was 1,764 students; bring the school total population to 14, 998 students. The ethnic make-up of the university was eighty-one percent, five percent, three percent Hispanic, three percent Asian, six percent Alien Non Residence, and less than one person Native American.

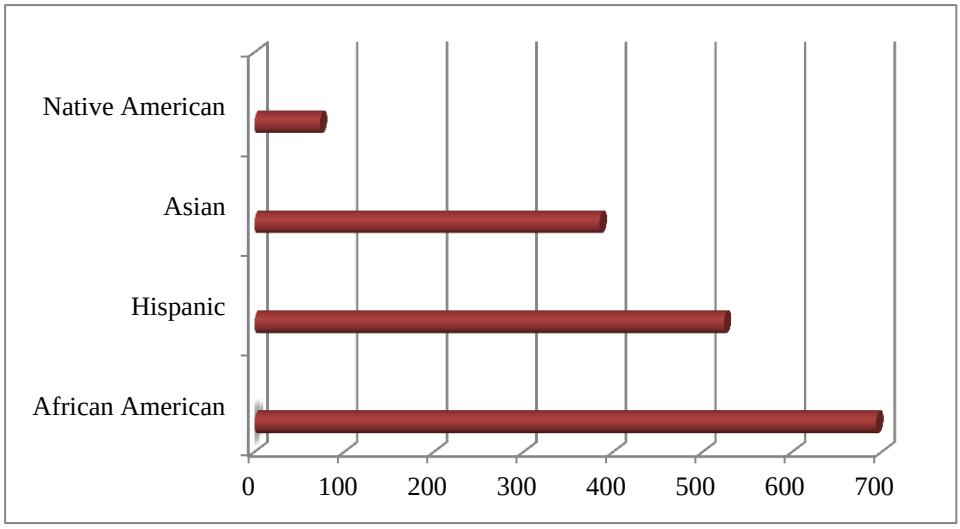
*University Demographics*

The University offered certificates in more than 120 baccalaureate degree programs and over 50 masters and doctoral degree programs. Undergraduate degree programs were offered in the colleges of Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education, Communication, Fine Arts & Media, Information Science and Technology, Public Affairs and Community Service, and Division of Continuing Studies Programs. Courses were also offered in the College of Human Resources and Family Sciences, the College of Engineering and Technology, the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the College of Architecture, which were administered by a different university within the state system. Both University system colleges administer the College of Public Affairs and Community Service.

The university was about fifty percent equally male and female make-up. Sixty–seven percent of the students were full-time students. Almost fifty percent of the students were in one of four departments, Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education, and Communication, Fine Arts, and Media. Roughly fifty percent of the students fell between the ages of 20 and 24. The ethnic make up was seventy percent White, six percent African American, five percent Hispanic, two percent Asian, four percent Alien Non Resident, one percent two or more races, less than one percent Native American, four percent No Response. (See Figure 1.1. University Students of Color) Eighty-two percent of the students were female. Sixty-four percent of the students were enrolled full-time.

Figure 1.1

University Students of Color




*Faculty Demographics*

The university had almost 500 faculty. The student teacher ratio was not disclosed but maintained a consistent average ratio of about 18 to 1.

## Method

While the extensive literature shed light on several important aspects of the Black college experience, conspicuously absent were the voices of African American students themselves. Most studies, with the exception of Steele's laboratory experiments, used structured questionnaires to measure variables preselected by researchers. As Echols (1998) noted upon concluding her meta-analysis of 27 years of studies: "This field is ripe for phenomenological and other types of qualitative inquiry where intense,

depthful exchange and evaluation of ideas can be achieved, adding texture and color to the portraits the numbers are helping us to paint" (p. 164).

For this phenomenological study, participants were identified through a difficult dialogue held at the chosen university. Interviews included individual interviews. The identified White professors and African American students were interviewed. A qualitative thematic strategy of data analysis was used to draw on, categorize, and make judgments about the interpretation of the data.

*Research Questions*

The following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the similarities and differences between African American undergraduate students and White professors in a difficult dialogue?
2. What changes in behavior or thinking on four African American students and two White professors have occurred since their participation in difficult dialogues?

## Limitations of the Study

Though the benefits of this particular study were significant, there were still certain limitations. Unfortunately, the dismal conditions of the retention in higher education programs plague many minorities. One limitation of this restudy is that it focused specifically on the experiences of African American students attending predominantly institutions. Though the focus did not include the experiences of other ethnicities, it is hopeful that the study will segue into specific research for other groups

of color. There were several limitations to the chosen methodology, including interpretation of the responses, opening of new information not previously considered, and human inconsistencies by the interviewer. In addition, research that addresses other environments, such as private universities should be initiated. Lastly, a major limitation of the study is that other factors shown to increase student retention, such as campus involvement and socioeconomic status were not reviewed in conjunction with the experiences between faculty and students across ethnic backgrounds. These and other limitations will be reviewed in more detail in later chapters.

Six chapters are presented in this dissertation. Chapter I is an overview of the retention problems of African American students attending predominantly White institutions. Chapter II provides a review of the literature on the history of African American in this country and a review of the current literature of surrounding African Americans attending predominantly White institutions. Chapter III provides an in-depth understanding of the history of dialogues, and the use of dialogues in the context of this study. Chapter IV describes the research design, methodology, and descriptions of the participants. Chapter V presents the findings of the research and the analysis of the study. Chapter VI includes the summary of the findings and recommendations for future research.

## Definition of Terms

*Academic integration*- the level at which a student becomes involved in the social and/or academic college community

*African American*- a person who identifies as being a member of the Negro race

*African American student* (AAs)-a student who self identifies as being a member of the Negro race

*Contact*- the times when a faculty member formally or informally talks, meets, or collaborates with a student

*Difficult Dialogue*- a structured dialogue aimed at creating open conversation about a difficult or controversial topic

*HBCU*- an acronym used to refer to one or all of the Historically Black colleges in the United States

*Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)* - a college where the majority of students serviced are White

*Retention*- the ability at which a college student is retained in school

*Student of color*- any student who is African American, Latino, Native American, and/or Asian American students

*Teacher*- the word teacher for the purpose of this study refers to professor or faculty member

# CHAPTER II

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of the literature consists of two parts. Part One of the study will look at the historical implications of the education of Blacks in this country. This review of literature was important to understand how the historical development of s pursuing education has presented barriers from the very start. Part One will also include the major shifts and changes that have impacted that development of African Americans (terms will reflect the era in which they were used), from the development of an American social system to Eugenics in teacher training programs. Part Two of the review of current literature will highlight African American students attending predominantly institutions. This study provides a basis for the research questions regarding the experiences of both African American students and faculty. These topics are important to this study because:

1) Understanding the history of relationships between African Americans and s in the broader context of race relations in this country is relevant to exploring the breakdown of communication in their experiences in education.

2) The slave system establishes a certain social hierarchy that has historically placed African Americans in a lower status than Whites, thereby creating a sense of power for one over the other that remains prevalent within the educational system.

3) Surveying what has been published surrounding the retention of African Americans attending White universities is essential to establishing a national problem that warrants further research.

## Problems

Many factors were examined surrounding the experiences of African American students attending predominantly White universities. Much of the literature examines student academic difficulties. Major findings reveal that African American undergraduate students experience higher attrition rates, lower cumulative grade point averages, and less persistence to graduation than do majority students (Nettles, 1998; Mow & Nettles, 1990; Allen, 1992). Some of the solutions to those challenges include creating an affirming culture, increasing African American faculty and administrators, and providing designated scholarships (Nagda et al, 1998; Jones, 2001, Wiley, 2001; Branch, 2001). Stewart (1991) wrote that while approximately half of White students were graduating six years after entering college, barely 25% of all successfully recruited minority students were doing the same (Graves, 2008). Much research has highlighted the problems surrounding African American students on predominantly White campuses. The problems of these students are many and are found across the spectrum: social and academic isolation, negotiating the college system, finding adequate financial aid, and a need for positive relationships with faculty (Nettles, 1998; Mow & Nettles, 1990; Allen, 1992). Authors Lewis, Ginseng, and Davies (2003) note that students'

perceptions of faculty-student relationships were one of the strongest predictors of progress.

Black student retention in institutions of higher education is an important 21st century issue. Thompson et al (2006) asserted that s are still under- represented in institutions of higher education and graduate at lower rates than s and Asians over a 5-year period. According to the American Council on Education, at the turn of the century only 40% of eligible students went to college, with only 46% graduating within 6 years. Additional studies focus on the social preparedness that African Americans possess for college. For example Tinto's model (Tinto, 1975) posits four variables: student family backgrounds, high school experiences, campus social interactions, and social personal attitudes, and hypothesizes that these variables influence academic outcomes (D'Augelli and Hershberger, 1993). When the concept of social support as a buffer against the adverse impact of stressors has been examined, it was generally related to adjustment retention and the progression of African American college students through school (Kimbrough et al, 1996). A limited amount of studies look specifically at suicide behavior among African Americans. The study examined the relationship between stressors, coping strategies and suicide ideation among African American students. They suggest that African American students on predominantly White campuses experience unique adjustments compared to those of other college students.

## Part One: History of Relationships Between African Americans and Whites

Another factor that contributes to experiences of White faculty and African American students at predominantly institutions is Black immigration to this country. The next several sections of this chapter will focus on areas that triggered racial tensions between African Americans and Whites in this country. Beginning with the history of slavery, this section will provide a sequential spectrum of how slavery has been used in society from the beginnings of the slave trade in West Africa. Following is a diminutive depiction of the Trans Atlantic slave trade since African Americans came to this country as individuals with no rights, to a perceived variety of diverse ideas about their abilities.

### *Economic Need for Slavery*

Although the origin of the settlements of North America is debatable by many geographers, it is a commonly held notion that it was a rural land with vast resources. The belief that gold and silver was in the Americas was a huge motivational force behind the westward expansion for nearly a century and a half. Some immigrants were told that the Garden of Eden lay in the center of the continent. A story printed in London in 1652 carried a preface that extolled the land and urged all who desired the "advancements of God's glory by the conversion of the Indians and the augmentation of the English Commonwealth in extending its liberties to consider the present benefits and future profits of settling the new territory" (Wright, 1848).

As Europeans heard of the resources available to them in the Americas, more immigrants came. Many did after reading newspapers about the wealth people were acquiring. William Byrd, founder of the Bryd dynasty, became rich by selling pots,

kettles, guns, and rum, in exchange for deerskins and fur. Sir William Berkeley, who ruled Virginia as Royal Governor and was also one of the Lord's Proprietors for Carolina, was suspected of allowing the devastation of Virginia farms to protect his vested interest in trading (Wright, 1848).

As trade opportunities increased, the development of international relationships emerged. After establishing relationships with Spain and Portugal, Europeans were introduced to many new ideas for the development of wealth. Tobacco, sugar, and slaves were among them. With blooming opportunities to increase wealth through production and trade, Europeans began to participate in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The business of purchasing slaves became the quickest way for Europeans to increase their production. They had vast rural lands and laborers from the slave trade to duplicate sugar plantations similar to those in more tropical areas. Much of the Americas, with semi-tropical weather, were beneficial for crops usually grown in warmer climates. The desire for wealth not only increased the need for more laborers, but it needed a system in place to maintain the larger labor force.

*Slave Trade*

Although the early slave trade to the Americas was primarily Portuguese and Spanish, the slave trade with Europeans quickly followed. This process became known as the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The importing and exporting of African slaves became an accepted and profitable part of the commerce (Earle, 2000). Slave trade was rather simple to create by setting rivalries of more than 200 small states and ethnicities in West and Central Africa against one another. Many states, kingdoms, and empires of West

Africa were flourishing, contrary to the notion of Africa as a place immersed with barbarism, wild animals, and dark jungles. The continent had a diverse group of ethnicities, religions, and languages. Individual groups were less important than that of the larger group or community.

Because there were few natural harbors on the coasts of the African continent, Africans took captured slaves out in the ocean in boats where most of the negotiating took place. Once sold, African slaves were packed in the slave ships, bound in chains, and transported to the New World. The voyage, taking several months, was plagued with limited nutrition and no sanitary provisions. Upon arrival, slaves were bought as chattel. Once sold into slavery, force was used to keep slaves from rebelling. According to the slave owners, slaves had no power. Some slave owners understood the importance of negotiating with slaves to keep them under their rule, but others used more physical force and created more tension. Many slave owners agreed that keeping information and education away from the slaves would keep them under submission. During the earliest of times, slavery was not associated with an ethnicity but rather if a person was Roman or not. The only time ethnicity was considered was when an owner believed certain groups to be stronger or more enduring than another group.

*Slavery in America*

Throughout much of the seventeenth century, African slaves were viewed as heathens rather than individuals. During the latter part of the decade, slaves were kept in bondage by specific laws established to keep them from rebellion or revolt. For example, in 1662, Virginia's House of Burgesses ruled, "all children born in this country shall

hold bond or be free only according to the condition of the mother." Slaves and their children were bequeathed for life. Slaves who arrived in the new world with rights were systemically stripped of them. Slaves were continually viewed as inferior to Whites. Words like African, heathen and slave became equally interchangeable (Carson, 2007). Even abolitionists referred to slaves as inferior.

Though seen as inferior to s, the treatment of slaves varied geographically. Varying regional climates created different relationships for those sold into slavery in the South versus the North. Because working on the field could happen year around in the South, slaves spent a significant amount of time isolated from the master's corridors, while northern slaves often maintained close relations with their owners. One Englishwoman traveling in Connecticut marveled that masters allowed slaves "to sit with them and put their hoof into the dish as freely as the hand" (Earle, 2000).

Sexual oppression was very commonplace, whether in the fields or the master's household. The rape of an enslaved woman was seen as the most destructive mean of control. In raping Black women, men asserted their control over Black men (Carson, 2007). Some White slave owners forced Black men to watch assaults on their wives, sisters, or daughters. Though Black men were accused of raping White women, more than not, White men raped or sexually assaulted Black women. Some of the relationships between White men and Black women were consensual, as Black women could possibly have benefits for themselves and their children.

## Part Two: Development of Plantations/Social Classes

A larger labor force led to the organization of a political system now termed as "plantations." Thompson (1935) defines a plantation as a political organization of the frontier existing for the purpose of securing cooperative and unified action among people of diverse races or cultures in the production of an agricultural staple, which was usually sold on a world-market. Using a broad organizational definition, the term plantation refers to any large agricultural unit (500 acres or more) that was owner-operated (rather than rented or tenant farmed) and heavily reliant on hired or enslaved labor. In the American South, the plantation form emerged by the early eighteenth century as "the basic unit of capitalist agriculture" (Elkins, 1974). Plantations usually begin with a farmer with access to undeveloped agricultural resources and a market with a recognized profit.

Slave intake was extremely harsh and brutal. Sir William Young, proprietor of several estates, highlights the unusual method of breaking a slave. Slaves were distributed among huts with the slaves under whose direction they were cared for, fed, trained to work, and taught to work. For the instruction and care, the slave was given no allowance except a knife, a calabash to eat from, and an iron boiling pot. Slaves used the young apprentices to maintain their personal garden.

Slaves were divided into various classes: head driver, house Negro, and field Negro – development of the caste system. The American caste system created various hierarchies that eventually articulated into tension between Blacks and Whites. The caste system was governed by customs and norms, which were reinforced by the larger

society (Durant and Knottnerus, 1999). The system developed over more than 200 centuries. By the late 1800s, the plantations and its system became institutionalized, defined by race and class with Whites, as the wealthy class and Blacks as the lower class. Durant and Knottnerus (1999) argue that plantations are the origin of race relations in this country, and origins affixed wealth with White and poverty with Black. With such a divide, tensions, in the form of revolts, rebellions, escapes, and sabotages between the two races were amplified.

## The Long Term Effects of a Slave Social System

Many effects are noted as a result of the transitions of Blacks to this country. This section will highlight the pervasive damage infringed upon Blackss that highlights the tensions between the Whites and Blacks in the classroom. Some of these controversial concepts include, superior White intelligence, negative self-image, White privilege, and Eugenics.

### *Negative Self Image*

As early as 1939, studies done using Black and White children and White dolls highlighted a certain privilege and preference for being White (Clark & Clark, 1939). Results revealed negative characteristics associated with Black dolls. The response pattern for the questions about self-identification resulted in young Black children interpreting themselves as being marked in some unfavorable way. In 2007, Kari Davis, a young high school student, produced a documentary, which duplicated the groundbreaking study done by Dr. Kenneth Clark (1965). His study played a key role in

the desegregation of schools in Brown vs. The Board of Education. Ms. Davis interviewed preschool aged Black children from a New York daycare and profoundly discovered that the image of being Black is still inauspicious decades after the initial study. Though Blacks have made considerable progress in this country, the idea that Blacks are equal to Whites is generally not accepted, many times not even by Blacks themselves.

*White Privilege*

A discussion on White privilege in this review might appear controversial because the focus is a dialogue involving their experiences with one another and how they affected White professors and Black students. This topic has been included because of how denial of the ideology of White privilege could pose a barrier to this process of breaking down unspoken historical barriers in Black - White relations.

Though White privilege is a fairly well known term, the literature on the topic is fairly limited. Similar terms include race privilege, Whiteness, supremacy, and some anti-racism. Privilege is the concept used to coin the idea of an invisible package of unearned assets that a person can count on cashing in each day (McIntosh 1990). Jensen (2005) refers to that privilege as an invisible knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks. In The Heart of Whiteness, Jensen exposes the difficult realities of his own personal experiences combined with theory and data when one is facing the truths about the depths of White privilege in the United States, especially within education.

## From Historically Black Colleges and Universities to Predominantly White Institutions

Historically, Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) initially were established to provide students of color a place to attend institutions of higher learning. More specifically though, the majority of HBCUs were created for two main reasons: the need to quickly establish institutions for the newly freed slaves and to appease the segregationists who opposed Blacks attending White schools and colleges. Until the early twentieth century, HBCUs carried the sole responsibility of educating Blacks at the college level. Many of them began as grade schools and then added collegiate programs, as students progressed.

There continues to be an ongoing conflict in historical annals pertaining to which college has the rightful title as the first HBCU. Cheyney University was founded in 1837, while Lincoln University was founded in 1854. Both institutions pride themselves as being the first institution of higher learning for African Americans. Cheyney University was established almost twenty years prior to Lincoln University, but its status as a college with college accreditation was not established until years later. To date, there has been no resolution noted as to which university holds the prestigious title of the first historically Black college. Though the first HBCU remains a mystery, it is a fact that Wilberforce University was founded in 1856 as the first private institution of higher learning for African American students.

Shortly after the formation of Cheyney, Lincoln, and Wilberforce Universities, the U.S. Freedman's Bureau was established in 1865 to assist newly freed slaves with food, medicine, jobs, contracts, legal matters, and education (Jackson, 2007). Though the

bureau intended to canvas many social issues, its greatest accomplishment was in the area of education. The bureau established and managed over 4,000 schools from elementary to college, including Howard, Hampton, St. Augustine, Atlanta U., Fisk, and Johnson C. Smith, all of which were established in the late 1800s.

In 1890, the Second Morrill Act was passed leading to the founding of many other historically, Black land-grant institutions. The statute designated public land to states based on their representation in Congress. Though the legislation does not mention equal educational opportunity, funds were given to states with the expectation that they would foster those opportunities for newly freed African Americans. In 1896, Plessey v. Ferguson's decision upheld that states hold the constitutional authority to provide "separate but equal" accommodations for African Americans, perpetuating the educational inequities of separate colleges for African American students. Despite funding by the government, most HBCUs were actually under-funded by federal and state sources (Wilson 1990) leaving the "separate but equal" declaration ineffective.

In 1944, Fredrick Patterson, president of Tuskegee Institute founded the United Negro Fund (UNCF) to improve the quality of education for historically colleges and universities. In addition, the fund was to provide scholarships for students, raise operating funds for the universities, and provide technical assistance for member institutions. Separate but equal education was considered appropriate until 1950, when the landmark case of McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education declared that states must treat students of color the same as White students. In 1964, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act was passed prohibiting discrimination on the basis of

race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal funding. Though the act was passed, there were still many states with schools that remained segregated.

In 1970, the National Association of the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund filed a suit claiming that the Department of Health Education and Welfare (HEW) was in violation of Title VI. The Judge ruled in favor of the suit and declared that segregated schools implement a plan to (1) desegregate schools and (2) to increase Black student enrollment. The plan became commonly known as the Adams plan, and its key features were to provide a broad definition of equality and educational access for Blacks. This mandate was the first step towards more African American students attending predominantly White universities. The mandate not only challenged universities to obtain a better racial mix of students but also focused on the retention of African American students without detriment to or at the expense of historically Black colleges.

During the same era, the Higher Education Act contributed to more African American students attending predominantly colleges. Under the Higher Education Act, the Basic Education Opportunity Grant was initiated. Renamed the Pell Grant after U.S. Senator Claiborne Pell, it awarded money to students based on a financial need formula determined by the U.S. Congress. Students applied for the Pell Grant through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA. Student Financial Aid legislation gave African American students more access to higher education. Though the equation for calculating Pell Grant amounts is standard (difference between family contribution and

financial need), universities were allowed to consider the cost of tuition and fees to make more attractive individual awards to students. Having access to financial aid opportunities broadened the pool of choices for African American students in the college choice decision making process, thereby increasing the number of African Americans attending predominantly White institutions.

Executive Order 11246 prohibited employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, and national origin by those organizations receiving federal contracts and subcontracts. Though issued in 1965, the effects of Executive Order 11246 were not implemented until the late 1970s. President Lyndon B. Johnson amended the order to include sex on the list of attributes. Executive Order 11246 also required federal contractors to take affirmative action to promote equal opportunity for women and minorities.

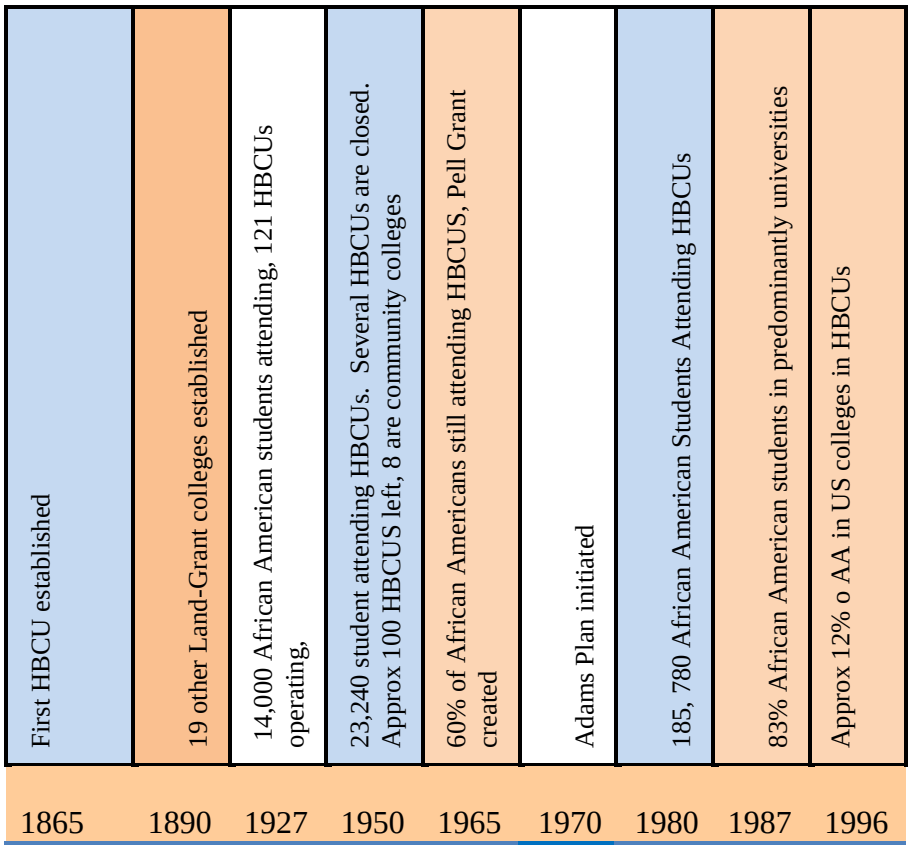
A more comprehensive interpretation of Affirmative Action is:

> Actions to eliminate discrimination, creation of adequate pools of talent, active searchers for talent wherever it exists, revision of policies and practices that permitted or abetted discrimination, development of expectation for a staff whose composition does not reflect discrimination, provision of judicial processes to hear complaints, and the making of decisions without proper regard to sex, race, or other origin. (Reed, 1983).

Despite the differences in the definition or interpretation of Affirmative Action, the implications for more African American students attending predominantly White colleges is obvious. (See Figure 2.1. Progression of African American Students) Affirmative Action sent clear messages that African Americans could have access to colleges where they were historically rejected.

Figure 2.1

Progression of African American Students




Information obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics

In a 1996 election in California under a Civil Rights Initiative, Proposition 209 effectively ended Affirmative Action in a 54-46 vote. The initiative was created by Ward Connerly in an effort to purge the nation of the idea that Blacks needed lower standards and was not smart enough to meet certain expectations without laws. Despite the reversal of Affirmative Action, universities across the nation beefed up their recruitment efforts and offered enhanced financial aid packets to increase the enrollment

of African American students. The study, "The Progress of Black Student Enrollment at the Nation's Highest-Ranked Universities," showed that the number of first year African American students for the 2005-2006 academic year at Ivy League schools increased by ten percent (Massey et al, 2007), and more Blacks were taking advanced courses and applying to top colleges and universities. The University of California enrolled 400 African American students for the fall of 2006 compared to 249 in 2005. This increase was the highest in ten years (Townes, 2007). Since that time, similar initiatives passed in Arizona, Michigan, and Nebraska. Though the initiative removed the use of preferential treatment based on race, gender, and sexual orientation, institutions managed to create avenues for a continued increase in their diversity.

More African American students are choosing to enroll in predominantly White universities due to the perceived declining reputation of Historically Black Universities and Colleges (HBCUs), which received negative media attention regarding their financial stability, academic quality, and the accreditation processes. Currently, there are a disproportionate number of HBCUs on the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) list of censured administrators. The AAUP organization, formed in 1915, develops and advances standards of academic practices governing the relationship between faculty and their institutions. The AAUP has been accepted and endorsed by over 180 societies, organizations, colleges, and universities. Its staff focuses their efforts on finding resolutions surrounding principles and standards. If a situation is unresolved, the AAUP may initiate a process that could result in an institution being censured. In 2004 and 2005, the Association censured the administration of three HBCUs (Meharry

Medical College, Philander Smith College, and Virginia State University) and condemned another institution that was already on the list (Benedict College).

The investigations of all these institutions found administrators who disregarded principles of shared governance and treated faculty as subjects to their unilateral decisions. Though the administration of a university can be censured, a process is in place for removal from the list. Currently, seven HBCUs are on the list, but others have been on the list and were removed. Considering that several HBCUs have had their very existence threatened, this sends a message that HBCUs do not have as high a standard as historically White colleges. Even if there is proof of improvements of HBCUs, the negative influence of such a list as the AAUP censored lists still remains in the minds of many.

Similar to the negative perceptions of HBCUs, there are some perceived positive benefits of attending predominantly White colleges. A study done by Patitu (2000) concludes that with the exception of Stewart and Post's (1990) study, one of the top issues for choosing a college is the reputation of the institution. With substantially larger budgets than HBCUs, PWIs have more resources for better advertisement and means of exposing the universities' names to more students (i.e., commercials and college athletic games). In addition to the level of exposure, large colleges have the means of addressing financial needs that African Americans face.

Aside from the difference in the reputations of HBCUs and PWIs, there are competitive athletic programs at PWIs that recruit the top African American athletes. The funding alone for many of these athletic programs far surpasses that of the HBCUs.

With programs such as these and strong alumni backing, it is no surprise that African American athletes are choosing PWIs, whose athletic games are more likely to be viewed via mass communication outlets. This provides an athlete the opportunity to enjoy maximum exposure. With more athletic program options, athletes have an opportunity for more exposure in that arena. This provides a better chance of a professional athletic career. Statistically, schools like The Universities of Oklahoma, Texas, Florida, and California at Los Angeles have consistently produced the most professional athletes.

Through various legislations, financial impact disparities among institutions, and perceived perceptions, more African American students are attending predominantly White institutions. Though initial actions were meant to create more diversity and equality for African American students, the negative consequences are widespread and continue to present problems integrating them into a White campus environment. This entire progression has presented our society with a problem of retention that has resulted in very limited success to date.

## The Eugenics Movement

Another reason that problems exist between White faculty and African American students is because of the concepts of Eugenics. Charles Darwin (1859) published Origin of the Species, which advances the theory of natural selection. In his book, Darwin uses analogies of plants and animals that will naturally change as a result of their environment. Note the following excerpt from Darwin's book (Chapter 4):

> In order to make it clear how, as I believe, natural selection acts, I must beg permission to give one or two imaginary illustrations. Let us take the case of a wolf, which preys on various animals, securing some by craft, some by strength, and some by fleetness; and let us suppose that the fleetest prey, a deer for instance, had from any change in the country increased in numbers, or that other prey had decreased in numbers, during that season of the year when the wolf is hardest pressed for food. I can under such circumstances see no reason to doubt that the swiftest and slimmest wolves would have the best chance of surviving, and so be preserved or selected, provided always that they retained strength to master their prey at this or at some other period of the year, when they might be compelled to prey on other animals. I can see no more reason to doubt this, than that man can improve the fleetness of his greyhounds by careful and methodical selection, or by that unconscious selection which results from each man trying to keep the best dogs without any thought of modifying the breed.

Darwin's illustration highlights the outcome of allowing the natural selection of reproduction of a species to occur. Later in the passage, he compares this selection to man's methodical selection, which refers to a man's selection for some definite object or specific traits in a definite object (blond hair or blue eyes). He furthers, when many men, without intending to alter the breed, have a nearly common standard of perfection, and when all try to get and breed from the best animals, improvement will follow. Darwin's theory became the cornerstone of modern biology.

As a result of the debate on natural selection, Frances Galton, cousin to Darwin, became interested in similar research on heredity. Galton's interests, established in a fellowship at the University College of London in 1904, led to the development of an ideal termed "stirpiculture" or "viticulture." Terms clearly analogous to agriculture, horticulture, and the art of cultivating good herbs and crops were later coined as Eugenics. Galton's theory posits cultivating better men and women. Eugenics was described as a scientifically based ideal, which could be used to guide policy and

practice over a wide range of problems in health and welfare (Farrell, 1978). Eugenics, sometimes referred to a species of social Darwinism, originated in Britain and was prevalent for nearly one third of the nineteenth century. The interest in eugenics transcended across disciplines, including historians, sociologists, psychologists, biologists, and statisticians. Kale Pearson, a protégé, of Galton, became a proponent of Eugenics. Together, they established Biometricka, a scientific journal covering theoretical statistics in 1901. Charles Davenport, an American geneticist, sat on the editorial committee of Biometricka and became a driving force behind Eugenics in America.

Conveniently for the times, science has been established as the most valuable knowledge and truth. Many looked for science to provide the answers to America's perceived complex social problems. In responding to observe changes in society, such as the advancement of African Americans, increased immigration, miscegenation, industrialization, and the containment of American Indians, science seemed to provide some justification. One interpretation of the Eugenics movements was that it was primarily a racist campaign based upon pseudoscience, while others argued that it was a humanitarian effort and part of the public health, hygiene, physical fitness, and social reform crusades. The worldwide movement varied depending on the country (Haller 1984). Others believe that Hitler, in his efforts to create a blond-haired, blued eyed society, can be linked to the Eugenics movement.

Some research notes that the movement initiative was to stop the move towards an integrated society. The eugenics movement, usually encapsulating the most educated

and professional in society, bought into the ideals of "creating a better human race." The principal purpose of eugenics was that the pinnacle of evolution was the White, heterosexual, middle and upper class male (Couturier 2005). In addition, the movement was instrumental in establishing hierarchy that classified groups that were most identical to the middle and upper class Whites down to the African Americans, the group that deviated most from the norm. The major concern of the eugenics movement was that groups in the lowest tier (i.e., African Americans) had higher birthrates, thereby putting the survival of higher tiered groups (i.e., Whites) at risk.

The funding of the eugenics movement was usually through private channels. One of the largest funders was the Pioneer Fund chartered in 1937 by Harry Laughlin. This foundation provided steady funding for research and publicity on topics related to heredity and eugenics, and the problems of race betterment (Lombardo, 2002). Together with Laughlin and Wickliffe Draper, books and journals used mass distribution to ensure the information was circulated. Arthur Jensen of Berkeley, a Stanford physicist, implied that Blacks might be genetically less intelligent than Whites; Jensen was obsessed with the presumed racial differences in intelligence and received over $1 million toward his studies as a grantee of Pioneer. Carlton Putnam, an influential advocate of racism, opposed the right to education and any other forms of equality for Blacks. He wrote Race and Reason, which was paid by the Pioneer fund. Over 60,000 copies of the book were circulated.

*Eugenics in Education*

There is a long line of important scholarship, which supports the idea that theories and social movements have been at the heart of educational policies and practices for nearly a century (Kamin, 1974; Gould, 1981; Kevles, 1985). Though the links to education may be viewed as indirect, the impact of the eugenics movement has been well documented. Extremely prominent eugenicists have had significant impact on education during its formative years. Among the individuals who were strongly supportive of eugenical ideals was Edward Thorndike, one of the founders of educational psychology (Apple and Kamin, 1999). Thorndike not only authored popular college textbooks that supported eugenics, but he is known as one the most significant changers of curriculum. Thorndike's investigators began looking at the kinds of reading and reading materials found in particular towns and cities in order to establish objectives for reading and the materials to be used in school reading curriculum.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the topic of eugenics and producing a better society infiltrated the news, newspapers, movies, journals, and every part of society. Without a doubt, eugenics views were included. In addition, Thorndike published "The National Education Agency Report of the Committee of Ten," which led the inclusion of science (infiltrated with eugenical ideals) as a proper subject for high school curriculum (Tyler, 1986).

John Dewey, another known eugenicist, had a huge impact on curriculum development. Dewey published a monograph in 1912 on effort and education. At Dewey's school, the University of Chicago, learning activities largely involved group

and individual projects. He reported that when students became interested in a particular project or lesson assigned, they put forth more effort and learned more than when the project of the lesson was not interesting (Tyler, 1987). As other teachers found similar results to Dewey, they were reported. Interestingly enough, the ideas of interest and effort were laced with the belief that only certain breeds of persons were worthy of an education (Apple & Kamin, 1999). During this time of scientific racism, African Americans were still only recognized by their physical abilities not their intellect. Topics that were considered "of interest" were for the most perceived elite breed of humans.

Franklin Bobbitt, a strong supporter of the eugenics movement established the forms of curriculum planning. Bobbitt believed that all workers should be given a defined production that led to various occupational, citizenship, family, and social roles (Bobbitt, 1909). The activities outlined for the defined production were the objectives of the curriculum. Since the above stated categories and roles were defined by one's class of education, African Americans were likely that of their dominant role in society, agricultural labor. Since this was during the time of "separate but equal education," the development of curriculum planning in the United States did not include the education of African Americans. The development was clearly written for those deemed fit and appropriate, citizens.

Leta Hollingworth, the founder of gifted education in America, was a well-known eugenicist. Hollingsworth wrote a chapter entitled "Provisions for Intellectually Superior Children." Infiltrated with eugenical terms, she focused on the biologically meritorious, identified as the nations top two percent (Selden, 2000). Hollingworth also

rejected the idea that differences in intellect were due to social inequalities. She believed that there was evidence in the background of very gifted individuals. (Professionals and business owners produced the most intelligent children.) She concluded that since America was a free-for-all economy, those who were successful were so because of their inherited ability. Hollingworth advocated for separate schools for the highly intelligent students. Though quite controversial by many educators, Hollingworth's work is still in many contemporary texts on giftedness today.

*Eugenics in Teacher Training*

Not only were key educators indentified as eugenicists, but the movement was also present in college textbooks. Heredity in Relation to Eugenics (1911) was one popular college textbook used. The author of the text supported eugenics since his days in the Eugenics Records Office. His book linked skin color to moral and mental qualities. It also included a list of legitimate and illegitimate traits taken from the physical, social, and moral realms (Davenport 1911). Another textbook, Applied Eugenics, emphasized the ways in which society could promote the reproduction of superior people and discourage inferiors. The authors, Popenoe and Johnson, (1918) taught that every child needed to pass through the educational system, so teachers could determine their ability.

The National Education Association was known for the presentation of popular topics. In 1916, Dr. Helen Putnam gave a report known as The New Ideal in Education; Better Parents of Better Children, which continued the popular eugenics movement to American educators. Putnam spoke to an audience of teachers and administrators and

declared that individualism and nationalism must conform to laws of racial beings (Putnam, 1916). These laws identified by Putnam included concepts such as, millions of Indians and half-castes may have qualities to conserve but their intrinsic worth was limited except as carriers of the qualities. Later Putnam, while serving on the National Education Association, pushed to include Eugenics in teacher education programs. She invited certain institutions that were training teachers for universities, colleges, and normal schools, to cooperate in studying the proposition that "The supreme object of education should be to make the next generation better than the living generations" (pg. 58). To aid this goal, a $250 honorarium was offered to graduate students who agreed to focus their studies on studies of "special excellence." Approximately one thousand men and women were engaged in the study (pg. 58). The reviewer committee included prominent eugenicists such as Charles Benedict Davenport. The period after 1909 also saw an active introduction and expansion of eugenics into the curriculum of top-tier universities. By 1914, Harvard, Columbia, Cornell, Wisconsin, Northwestern, and Clark all offered courses devoted to eugenics (Selden, 1988). The number of universities and colleges offering such courses increased from 44 in 1914, to 376 in 1928, when according to one estimate, some 20,000 students were enrolled (Cravens, 1978).

In 1921, college seniors studying to be teachers received the following challenge. "It is the duty of the educators to ensure through educational procedures that individuals shall be well born as they shall be well reared." Furthering the push for teachers to be well skilled in facilitating the ideals of eugenics, the Committee of Racial Well Being called for exemplary methods to "develop racial ideals across all grade levels that would

lessen life's blunders and life's failures (Putnam, 59). These eugenical ideals were used throughout the 1920s in teacher training programs.

Inheriting the Shame, The Story of Eugenics and Racism in America is a study that analyzes textbooks of the National Institute of Education Library. The study focused between the years of 1914 and 1948. Selden (1999) used a dual approach that included 1) a statistical analysis of the presence of eugenics in the textbooks and 2) a focus on how the texts influenced policy recommendations. The salient findings reveal that over 87% of the textbooks included eugenics as a topic, and more than 70% included eugenics as a legitimate science (Selden, 1999). The study discovered that 27% of the texts reported that traits ran in the family, while 22% believed that blood revealed the fitness of a person. Many of the familiar eugenicist names were mentioned at substantial rates. They include Davenport (34.1%), Galton (26.8%), Goddard (4.4%), Wiggam (17.1%), and Popenoe and Johnson (12.2%). The author points out that, "While the issues of race and ethnicity are never explicitly discussed, it was Davenport who wanted to burn all Jews and Paul Popenoe who wanted to send African Americans to war and die while saving their Anglo counterparts (pg. 68). It is apparent that such eugenicist authors transmitted their views very clearly.

One last very popular textbook commonly used at the highest levels of American society was The Passing of the Great Race by Madison Grant (1916), a man of significant social and political influence, who wrote on many racial and gender stereotypes. For example, Americans of African decent were framed as "willing followers who ask only to obey and to further the ideals and wishes of the master race"

(Grant, 1916). This text's influence was so large that it had four editions and six printings.

*Intelligence Testing/Racial Inferiority*

One prominent idea that spun out of the Eugenics movement was intelligence testing. Testing existed as long as the eugenics theory of Galton, as the first and most famous test of educational success was in 1908 (revised in 1916) known as the Binet-Simon Scale. According to Loehlin (1975) this test led the way to group testing. Widespread testing began during World War l (1914-1919). Testing was done for the selection of officers of enlisted men. The test revealed marked difference between White and Negro soldiers. The results were analyzed to show that Blacks were inferior to Whites. Critics of the intelligence testing sought no alternative hypothesis and overlooked variables such as the educational facilities by region. (i.e., Facilities in the south were generally poorer) (Eysenck, 1971). Though the results of the test are not considered seriously today, the idea started a well-known and well-circulated myth of racial inferiority.

*Intelligence Testing*

Though intelligence testing was widely accepted, there is much research that questioned the comparison of Black and White IQ scores (Clark, 1965; Kennedy et al, 1963; Eels et al, 1951; Havighurst and Breese, 1947; Reese et al, 1970). The body of literature suggests that the standardized tests are biased against the Black culture (Joseph, 1977).

Winant (1994) contends that people have come to believe that visual differences, like race, are linked to differences in "mental capabilities," and these innate hierarchical differences are measurable by cultural achievements of such populations (Montagu, 1997).

The existence of literature citing the deficiencies (inferiorities) of Blacks in higher mental capacities is apparent throughout history (Sunne, 1917; Cazden 1976, Ripley and Wolf 1947). The general ideals of deficiency and inferiority were generally accepted until the 1950s. During the mid-fifties, a refutation to the deficit model is noted (Valentine, 1971; Kephart, 1954; Shimberg, 1929). This body of literature questioned inferiority until 1969 when Arthur Jensen's "How much can we boost IQ and scholastic achievement?" was published in The Harvard Educational Review. Now commonly known as Jensenism, his views stressed the importance of inherited factors in the determination of individual differences. He asserted that scientific evidence proved Negros to be innately inferior to s intelligence; Negroes should receive a different type of education from Whites; and (by inference) segregation was an appropriate method of dealing with the racial problem in education (Eysenck 1971). This famous article pushed the beliefs of inferiority to the forefront of the social agenda.

Work on the measurement of intelligence was focused on African Americans. An early study conducted by Audrey Shuey surveyed preschool children between the ages of two and six (Shuey, 1942). Shuey concluded that on average the IQ of Black children was 12 points below that of White children. The difference in IQ between the two groups decreased when using children from the same basis of living in the same

neighborhood, attending the same schools and having fathers in the same occupational group.

Shuey continued to survey a significantly larger group of school-aged children. The data set included about 80,000 children over a timeframe of 45 years. The results revealed a 15-point discrepancy between the Caucasian students and the students of color. Shuey eventually concluded that the results were inconclusive because the socio-economic differences between the two races. Shuey argued that further steps towards the equality of opportunity would not eradicate the problem while the discrepancy in economics remained.

## Current Issues of the Retention of African American Students

This section will highlight the issues reviewed in the literature. As stated earlier, no research focuses specifically on the experiences between White professors and African American students in predominantly White colleges. However, much research has been done on the problems encountered by Africans Americans attending predominantly White institutions. The next several sections are a review of such literature.

### *Historical Development of Professor and Student Relationships*

A great deal of the literature suggests the relationship between faculty and students has a significant impact on the retention of students (Pascarella 1980, Kobrak 1992, Centra & Rock 1971,Volkwein, et al, 1986). Gaff (1973) emphasized the impact of faculty on students. His study highlighted that the relationship between faculty and

students not only depended on personal qualities of students and faculty, but also on the nature of the relationships, specifically, the length of time the two individuals knew one another and the context of their academic issues which formed the base of their relationships.

As early as the 1800s, a general mistrust between faculty and students persisted. Bush (1969) suggests that, as a general rule, there seemed to be fear on one side and suspicion on the other in the experiences between faculty members and students. The relationships between college officers and students in institutions were mainly of the governmental order. The prevailing idea of government was that of repression, rules and laws, force and the display of authority. An extreme period of religiosity characterized years of student rebellion and constant tension. Many incidents ended with bullets, stones, and ultimately hundreds of students expelled. Other incidents led to the threat of an entire university closing.

In the latter 1800s, German ideas influenced the relationship between faculty and student. These were mainly adopted from American leaders who had begun attending European universities. The tradition of the German university accented more intellectualism and impersonalism, with the professor more interested in his subject and his research than in his relations with his students, whom he treated in an impersonal manner (Bush 1969). American professors who studied abroad returned with similar attitudes focusing on research and scholarship and ignoring their students. Professors and students continued with a very distant relationship for many years. Most professors, under the influence of this system had no desire to change. With fewer rules, student

rebellions ceased, and they turned their energies toward forming extracurricular activities.

The new battleground between professors and students became the examination room. Though there were few open rebellions, the relations between faculty and students remained antagonistic. Relations between faculty and students were described in ways like "ten-foot-pole" between them and us, or a great gulf was fixed [in relations between faculty and students]. During this period, a social relationship between professor and student was unheard of. Even to linger after class to ask a question was bad form and considered as "boot licking or currying favor."

Another drastic change began to impact the way professors interacted with their students in the late nineteenth century. Despite the prevailing view of most faculties, a few professors did not agree with the prevailing relations and attitudes towards their students. Charles Townsend Copeland, at Harvard in 1892, held open house Wednesday evening until ten o'clock, and the students flocked to him because he liked them (Bush, 1969). Another professor, Noah Porter at Yale, was known to be every student's friend. Eventually, the professor's personality became the supreme force in higher education. This era was filled with long lines of students awaiting the sought after knowledge of the renowned professors and students idolizing their favorite ones. Some referred to the time as the laissez-faire period in professor-students relations.

Eventually, with a more scientific approach, the relationship between professor and student became more democratic. There was a shared interest in research. Literature during this time, not minimizing the intellectualism, stressed the importance

of a personal relationship between the student and the teacher. During the 1970s there was a clear relationship between faculty and students. For example, on the campuses of Kent State and Jackson State, students and faculty participated in a demonstration together to protest the US invasion of Cambodia. In 1972, a study surveying faculty tolerance of student dissent suggests that a more collaborative relationship between faculty and student exists (Pugh et al, 1972). Another motivating factor in the development was the accountability that came with federal and state aid, business and industry in the mid 60s. Since higher education is the largest single supplier of educated manpower to society, a look into the better teaching and learning had new demands. In 1960, forty percent of the sampled institutions of higher education used student ratings to evaluate professors indicating a very different relationship between the faculty and student (Shecklein, 1960).

A few years later, Gustad (1967) reported a decline in faculty evaluations, but it was likely due to a lack of convincing data (Grush & Costen, 1975). The push for faculty evaluations was a period, as Dessel has said, that would likely be a threat because it would knowingly bring deficiencies in teaching to light (Dessel, 1970). Aside from highlighting "bad teaching," many administrative decisions regarding promotion, salary increase, and tenure are dependent on teaching (Gage, 1975). The change in the relationship between the student and faculty indeed brought a more democratic approach to the relationship.

Today in twenty first century academia, professors are still evaluated by the students they teach. In addition to student evaluations, faculty members are known to

participate in research and collaborative publications with their students. Student-faculty collaborative research promotes the professional development of both students and faculty (Stith, Jester & Linn, 1992). Many faculty are required to serve as advisors to their students, and some faculty are a crucial part of the recruitment of students and authors of grants that provide specific opportunities for their students.

Though the body of literature on the relations between professor and student during the nineteenth century is helpful in understanding the development of such relationships, its context is very limited in the diversity of populations of students served on college campuses, as the experiences are mainly of White professors and White male undergraduate students. If historically it is a challenge to form relationships between White students and White professors, then the addition of race adds another layer to consider. Faulkner et al (2006) suggests that human beings cannot exist with culture or race as a basic organizing principle of human life. Therefore, as two distinct individuals meet, there is a need to categorize others by culture. If negative preconceptions about certain cultures remain, then the development of relationships will continue to suffer the ramifications.

*Need for Faculty Involvement*

Included in the research is a substantial amount of literature surrounding the importance of the involvement of faculty members towards student success. The significance of close interaction for effective education is widely acknowledged. A quantitative study done by Spady (1970) in the late 1960s, sampling 683 students at the University of Chicago revealed that women, more commonly than men, have increased

intellectual development that seemed to be associated with a capacity for involvement with faculty members. Though the study suggests that structured relationships have less bearing on the intellectual development of men than women, the individual beta testing weights derived from the full equation suggest that the structural patterns that facilitate intellectual development for these men also revolve primarily around faculty contacts (Pascarella 1980, Chickering 1969, Graff 1973).

Spady (1971) conceptualized the process of interaction between individuals in an institution to explain attrition. According to Spady (1970) and Tinto (1975), the degree to which students integrate into the academic and social system of a college will determine their degree of persistence. Astin (1977) found that students who interact more frequently with faculty reported significantly greater satisfaction with the college environment. Chickering (1969) suggested that when student background traits and the organizational characteristics of an institution are taken into account, interactions with the major agents (faculty and staff) of socialization on a campus are a particularly important source of influence on student development (Volkwein, King and Terenzini, 1986).

One of the most extensive studies, done by Wilson, Gaff, Dienst, Wood and Bavry (1975), revealed that students with greater amounts of interaction perceived they made more progress in a variety of academic skills and expressed greater satisfaction with their overall college experience. A review of the literature clearly indicates the need for faculty involvement. However, no literature specifically looks at how faculty

involvement is created, or how it affects African American undergraduate students on a predominantly White campus.

Endo and Harpel (1982) concluded, "The growing body of literature on the impact of student-faculty interaction was becoming difficult to ignore." Their study focused on four aspects of student-faculty interaction (frequency of formal interaction, frequency of informal interaction, quality of faculty advising, and helpfulness of faculty) on a variety of student outcomes after four years. According to Nettles (1984), factors such as student satisfaction with faculty relationships, their feelings that university faculty are sensitive to their interests, the needs and aspirations of students, and the ease with which students feel they can develop close personal relationships with faculty members on campus directly emphasized "academic integration." Jones (2001) explains how students' interactions with faculty and staff affect their attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions, thus enhancing or diminishing the satisfaction, academic achievement, and persistence of students.

*Faculty Classroom Behaviors*

Faculty involvement is specifically referring to the classroom. The behavior of faculty within the classroom has some interesting outcomes. Behaviors from faculty members can determine a student's perception as to the receptivity of either party and usually determines further contact outside the classroom. If professor contacts are constrained to commuting or nonresidential settings, the classroom is typically the only avenue for meetings. In some instances, faculty may be initiators of contact. They may give attention to and pay special attention to certain students in the classroom. They

become actively involved in nurturing individuals whom they see as having unusual potential for future growth (Valadez and Duran, 1991); however, this process is not common to all faculty. Neither are all students equally likely to be picked for additional tutelage. Even for those particular events to take place, faculty has to be interested and available, and the faculty and students must desire the contacts. When queried, faculty describes selected individuals as not only as "a cut above other students" in initiative and drive but also as reminding them of something in themselves as former students (Tinto, 1993).

*Informal Contacts*

Though classroom behaviors are typically important precursors to further interactions, it is the occurrence of those interactions outside the classroom, which shape student decisions regarding departure (Terenzini & Wright, 1987). Students see encounters beyond the classroom as rewarding, warm and strongly associated with persistence. Jacob (1957) studied a national sample of twenty-two institutions having what Jacob's termed as "peculiar potency" with regards to their impact on student values, which tended to be characterized by such factors as 1) high degree of value homogeneity between faculty, 2) having high expectations of student's intellectual interests, 3) related academic performance and 4) frequent faculty-student contacts outside of the classroom. Consequently, Jacob's study concluded that the effect of faculty contact outside the classroom appears to be more pronounced at small liberal arts institutions where a prominent culture of extensive and relaxed conversations outside of the classroom persists (Pascarella and Terenzini 1980). Though the literature suggests

that this relationship is common only at certain universities, only a small percentage of students have opportunities for informal contact with faculty. The literature further expands that contact in most universities is restricted to formalized settings, such as lectures, labs, and discussions. Though the behavior of faculty outside of the classroom is crucial, studies generally only include the quantitative responses for the number of times there were contacts and omit detailed information about the events occurring during those contacts.

*Effects of Faculty-Student Contact*

The absence of sufficient contact with members of the institution proves to be the single most important predictor of eventual departure, even after taking account of the independent effects of background, personality, and academic performance (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1979). Pascarella and Terenzini found that actual frequency and quality of student contact with faculty contributed to higher freshmen-year grade point averages, as well as to students' personal and intellectual development. That development varies by particular college or university environment and it leads to a certain level of integration into academic and social systems of the institution. Nettles, Thoeny, and Gosman's (1986) suggest that students' perception of a high degree of faculty concern for students' academic and career plans are far more important than the actual frequency. Endo and Harpel (1982) found that informal faculty contact with students had a far greater effect upon attitudes about satisfaction with college experience than formal contacts. The idea of college persistence appears to be especially true when contacts extend beyond the formal classrooms to various informal settings (Stage, 1989). Though

informal contacts often begin with formal contacts, formal contacts may set the tone for the informal contacts and prove to serve as precursors for subsequent contacts (Pascarella and Terenzini 1977). Centra & Rock (1971) concluded that faculty and student interaction were linearly related to achievement. Some of the results from the students reinforced popularly held notions, in particular that those students learn more if instructors are readily accessible and interested in students are individuals. Feldman & Newcomb (1969) found that informal and informal contact with faculty outside the classroom increased as the students progressed through college and that faculty were seen by students to be important in their influence on intellectual development and on occupational and career decisions. While this literature is valuable in identifying the validity and effects of the relationship of faculty student contacts, it isolates the definitions, parameters and how involvement and contacts are structured.

The literature is clear that faculty involvement and faculty contacts (informal and formal) are crucial to the persistence of college students. New research is needed to look specifically at the experiences between faculty and African American undergraduate students on predominantly White campuses. The research clearly omits the details of faculty involvement and/or contacts and how it should be structured.

*Social and Academic Integration*

Some of the research highlights the importance of social and academic integration. Though the term is slightly different than faculty-student involvement, the two appear to be related. Research shows a direct correlation between faculty-student contacts and social and academic integration. Social and academic integration draws a

positive correlation to how much the student is involved in the college life. This involvement may include extracurricular activities, such as Greek organizations or clubs, academic involvement such as working with faculty on research projects, leadership conferences, and dinner at a faculty member's house. Though the research is far from complete, it is apparent that the more students are involved in the social and academic life of a college, the more frequently they make contact with faculty and other students (Tinto, 1993). In addition, academic, and social integration show a positive correlation to increased student development, student persistence and student retention, though not inconclusively to all university types (Nettles, 1988). This literature is significant to the importance of social integration as it relates to faculty involvement; however it does not clearly define specific practices for developing integration or exploring the experiences of faculty and students.

## Discussion of the Literature

This literature review indicates that the relationships between African Americans and Whites in this country trace back to the beginnings of slavery. As much as slavery was about fulfilling an economic need, slave owners used oppression to "keep slaves in their place." When a controversial difference with the morality of owning people divided the country, slaves and Northern Whites began to challenge their treatment and advocate for rights. This conflict, created general tensions between Whites and African Americans, which can be documented in our society to date.

Discriminatory practices such as a negative self-image, White privilege, intelligences testing and eugenics contributed to oppression in education (Jensen, 2005, Macintosh, 1990). These practices are well documented in the literature. However, many practices are evident within our education system (CampbellJones & Lindsey, 2010; Gould, 1981; Kevles, 1985; Armstrong & Moore, 2004).

The literature surrounding student retention and factors associated with it is substantial. According to the literature, we know a lot about student success relating to retention. What we do know is based on a population of faculty and students that no longer represents the majority. Clearly, research is needed to close the attrition rate of students of color. If our society is to continue to thrive and produce contributing members, we must begin and maintain research that is reflective of the country we are becoming.

Because of the increased numbers of African Americans attending predominantly White institutions, efforts to create programs for retention are documented. However, the literature is vague and does not include basic communications strategies that facilitate the programs that have been researched. Though literature has been dedicated to communication between the races, it is limited to the specific journals of just communication. This literature should be utilized regularly to implement change programs relating to problems communicating in the classroom and to increase the retention of African American students.

There is an overwhelming amount of literature surrounding the problems with students of color attending predominantly colleges; however, much of the information

omits the direct relationship between White professors and African American students. Providing an avenue for conversations merely highlights problem areas of focus for further research.

As my selected group of African American students and White professors speak, I anticipate varied experiences, some relating to past research and some new insight for further research. As a researcher, I am cognizant of the many contributors to the topic, however I hope to contribute to the vast literature in a more narrow approach. I also seek to expose a few more perspectives in this topic to advance the field of the education of African Americans, particularly for those who choose to attend predominantly White institutions.

This study differs from previous studies on the retention of African Americans in that I examine the experiences of these students and professors as they encounter challenges at their university. My goal is not to present an end-all solution to the problem but to understand the phenomenon of how communication through a facilitated dialogue can shed light to varying problems in this particular relationship. By highlighting these voices of African American students and White Professors, we can begin to improve on the implementation of programs researched in the past and new initiatives to address this nationwide challenge.

# CHAPTER III

# DIALOGUES

Dialogue is a phenomenon that is used in various formats to find meaning and acceptance through diverse points of view. The origin of dialogue goes back to ancient Greece. Dialogus, can be traced back to the early 1600s through the literary work of Galileo Galilei. In "A Dialogue Concerning Two Chief Work Systems," Galielo wrote about contradicting views of the planetary positions and paths (Galilei, 1953). Dialogues arose again in the nineteenth century in the work of Thomas Peacock Love in 1807. Love was a novelist who wrote several books that included characters sitting around a table dialoguing about philosophical views of the day (Dawson, 1970). Love was followed by his successor, W.H. Mallock, who continued a trend of writing literary works about dialogs. The characters discussed their position back and forth. His most well known work was *The New Republic*, which mirrors a story in a dialogue-like format. For example, a character in a setting is introduced.

Along with this introduction, the character has a particular position about an idea or concept. In the same way, another character is introduced. In the late nineteenth century, Mihkhail Bahktin, a Russian philosopher, began a concept on comparing a dialogic work to a monologic work. Bahktim believed dialogues was not simply a way of persuading other to accept our ideas, but a way of holding ourselves accountable for all our thoughts. Bakhtin challenges the traditions of argument and persuasion handed down from Plato and Aristotle, and he offers, as an alternative, a dialogical rhetoric that

restructures the traditional relationship between speakers and listeners, writers and readers, as a mutual testing, contesting, and creating of ideas (Zappen, 2004).

Most recent work in the field of communication is that of physicist David Bohm in 1998. He developed the idea of dialogue as a flowing exchange of ideas. Dialogue is a process which explores an unusually wide range of human experience: our closely held values, the nature and intensity of our emotions, the patterns of our thought processes, the function of our memory, the import of inherited cultural myths and the manner in which our neurophysiology structures moment to moment experiences (Bohm, 1996). As Bohm began to develop the concept of dialogues, he also inquired into the nature of communication, involving English psychiatrist, Dr. Patrick de Mar. Through collaboration with Bohm, the concept of impersonal fellowship evolved, meaning that within a dialogue, trust and openness can emerge within in-group context without the members of the dialogue having extensive personal history with one another.

While Bohm continued to explore dialogues, he furthered his ideas by adding two other components: 1) The notion of a shared meaning within a group and 2) The absence of a pre-established purpose or agenda other than that of inquiring into the movement of thought, and exploring the process of "thinking together" collectively. This activity can allow group participants to examine their preconceptions and prejudices, as well as to explore the more general movement of thought.

Dialogues have been and are used all over the world in various formats and for different groups. A dialogue was used recently between teams and Union of European Football Association (UEFA) referees committees (Chapman, 2012), ensuring success at

a summer tournament. Officials, coaches and players engaged in a dialogue about significant changes in the sport of football and the use of additional referees to increase safety. Political dialogues occurred daily between candidates in the presidential election. One study compared whether students preferred interpersonal or intrapersonal dialogue while studying Chemistry (Gorsky, Caspi & Trumper 2006). Dialogues between countries at war are very commonplace. The Department of Political Affairs (2012) writes that The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) works to promote national dialogue and reconciliation, and carries out its responsibilities in contact with the Government of Iraq and leaders from all segments of Iraqi society, as well as with representatives of countries around the region and the wider international community. Bohm (1996) suggested that dialogue consists of two to forty people and is aimed at exploring problematic day-to day relationships and communication where no one is trying to win and everyone can win. The goal is to have common content to discuss and attempt to go into all the pressures that are behind our assumptions.

In the past twenty-five years, researchers across a number of disciplines have spent considerable energy examining the differences in African American and European American communication (Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993; Orbe, 1994). Ethnicity as an individual difference variable has been examined in a variety of topical areas, including dialect (e.g., Folb, 1980; 1973), bidialectalism (e.g. Taylor, 1989), communication styles (Kochman, 1981; Smitherman, 1972), and nonverbal communication (e.g., Erickson, 1979). Much of the existing research that focuses on contrasting African American and European American communication has resulted in literature which obscures the

heterogeneity among African American people. To a certain extent, research has created a "universal iconography" (Aptheker, 1989, p. 12) of African American communication that promotes the illusion that all African Americans, regardless of gender, age, class, or sexual orientation, communicate in a similar manner.

One limitation of the existing literature on African American communication is that the vast majority of research was within a traditional empirical methodological framework. To compound this, the approach was highly Eurocentric (Gonzalez, Houston, & Chen, 1994). Such variable analytic research, characterized by statistics, generalizable research findings, and other unidimensional data, offers only a limited perspective on how African Americans communicate in this country (Hacker, 1992). Secondly, as it stands, the lived experiences of "everyday" African Americans are often not reflected accurately in communication research (James, 1994). The final limitation within the literature on African American communication involves the polarization of African American and European American communication. For the past 25 years, many research studies have focused on comparisons between the communication styles, patterns, and competencies of African and European Americans (Bachman & O'Malley, 1984; Buck, 1968; Hecht & Ribeau, 1987; Willis, Reeves, & Buchanan, 1976). The majority of research within this framework was binary invoking a comparison that conceptualizes European American communication as the assumed standard of measure (Nakayama & Penaloza, 1993).

A study done by Hecht et al (2003) evaluated the conversational style of African Americans. Common themes were identified. One prominent conclusion of the study is

that differences in African American and European are likely mediated by variables such as in-group/out-group status, gender, or socioeconomic status as well contextual and regional factors. This literature on communication on the conversational style was considered to determine its influence on the difficult dialogue; however, the dialogue between African American undergraduate students and professors did not include extensive demographic information of the participants to examine other factors. Cocultural communication theory (Orbe, 1996) as well as previous research on group dynamics (e.g., Brown & Mistry, 2005) suggest that many people of color have considerable experience being silenced and marginalized when interacting with White, dominant group members. Whereas many White individuals may expect equal treatment or take it for granted when communicating in a public deliberation setting, the experience of being able to speak one's mind and have others listen attentively in a group with at least 50% White membership appears to have been unusual and noteworthy for individuals of color. Cocultural communication theory suggests that members of historically underrepresented groups adopt particular communication orientations and use a variety of communication strategies to counter dominant group members' attempts to exclude or silence them (Orbe, 1996). The most recent work on African American communication is by Singleton (2006) and Gilchrist & Jackson (2012). Singleton poses a format called 'dialogic'. This process addresses simultaneously the historical fashioning of the science of humanity and the importance of multiparty interactions in the formation of social relationships. Though the process highlights the use of multiparty interactions, its focus is on the researchers. Gilchrist &

Jackson (2012) call for more research in the area of African American communication.

The Ford Foundation established a $2.5 million grant initiative to support scholarship, teaching, and civil dialogue about difficult political, religious, racial, and cultural issues in undergraduate education in the United States. The initiative entitled, “Difficult Dialogues” initiative was created for accredited, degree granting, nonprofit institutions to create a campus environment where sensitive subjects could be discussed with intellectual rigor, open scholarly inquiry and include various viewpoints. The initiative would support new and existing courses and academic programs that increase knowledge of the religious and cultural complexity of American society and engage students in constructive discussion of conflicting viewpoints.

"Debates taking place on college campuses often mirror controversial issues being examined in the society at large," said foundation president Susan V. Berresford. "Educators are seeking ways to foster constructive dialogue on these matters and at the same time reduce intolerance and threats to academic freedom. Foundation resources can help this effort. The initiatives’ understanding of others is essential in our diversifying and interconnected world also led to more than 40 campuses to initiate civil and constructive debate about divisive issues.

The grant program, which drew more than 675 proposals in a national competition, is part of Ford's Difficult Dialogues initiative created in response to reports of growing intolerance and efforts to curb academic freedom at colleges and universities.

Difficult Dialogues established a national research center that is maintained by

maintained by the Thomas Jefferson Center for the protection of Free Expression. The center maintains a past and present database of the Difficult Dialogue projects across the nation. It also updates news and events surrounding the topic of Difficult Dialogues. Various resources are also available.

## Difficult Dialogues at This Midwestern University

Difficult Dialogues refers to a series of dialogues that were held at a university in Midwest entitled, "Breaking the Silence." The grant supported dialogue activities that kept with the project's mission, which is to promote dialogue about issues related to race, religion, and sexual orientation. The university was the recipient of a $100,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to promote academic freedom and constructive dialogue on campus. This university in the Midwest was one of 27 higher education institutions to receive funding. The goal was to help institutions address this challenge through academic and campus programs that enrich learning, encourage new scholarship, and engage students and faculty in constructive dialogue about contentious political, religious, racial and cultural issues.

This university commits to fostering a campus climate in which students of color, faculty and staff can trust that their voices will be heard. The Difficult Dialogues initiative served as a powerful tool in our continuing efforts to achieve this goal. Unlike ordinary conversation or debate, dialogue is a form of communication that helps to build capacity in communities to explore hopes and concerns in a way that encourages mutual understanding and respect at times when differences can be difficult and challenging

(Fagre and Littlejohn, 2006). As it relates to problems surrounding students of color attending predominantly colleges, a dialogue provides a forum to allow both parties to get information about feelings values, concerns and ideas.

# CHAPTER IV

# METHODOLOGY

This chapter will begin with a brief description of the analysis that was applied to the research. Afterwards, a more in-depth history of the theories, concepts and types of inquiry will be examined. The next section of this chapter will evaluate the aspect of qualitative research followed by the procedure used for the Difficult Dialogue and the interviews.

The qualitative analysis was guided by:

- The use of four basics philosophical concepts or assumptions that guided the inquiry. The framework involved seeking the "reality" of the experiences of African American undergraduate students and White professors as it relates to the world. The goal was not to "get an answer," but rather to gain understanding and wisdom in the process (Ruona and Lynham, 2004).
- Thomas' (1993) postmodernist perspectives and critical theory dealing with empowering humans by Fay (1987), served as theoretical frameworks for this study. Critical theory was used in this study as a framework for the purpose of challenging and seeking change in the relationships of professors and African American students.
- Phenomenological inquiry was used allowing the research searches for an underlying meaning of experiences. The researcher also analyzes specific statements to look for specific meanings.

- Qualitative design was used to structures the study. The approach as naturalistic and interpretive.

## Philosophical Frameworks

Cresswell (1998) notes that researchers start their studies with a certain paradigm, worldview or assumptions that guide their inquiries. These assumptions are usually known y five different categories: onotology (nature of reality), epistemology (relationship between the research and what is being researched), axiological (what is the role of values), rhetorical (what is the language of the research), methodological (what is the process of the research). Using a philosophical approach by allows the data to drive in inquiry. These components interact in a dynamic, multi-virtuous and systemic way, together forming a guiding framework for a congruent and coherent system of thought and action.

An ontology approach aided the foundation of the study to understand the participant's "reality. Mapping the ontology of a field involved making explicit the common understandings. At the risk of oversimplification, ontology is about identifying and articulating the core assumptions about reality that drive the thought and practice of a field.

Epistemology (also described as theory of knowledge) is the component of philosophy that raises questions about the nature of knowledge and reasonable beliefs and assumptions of how those in the field saw the world, of how they perceived the essences of reality and phenomenon that constitute the field's concern and focus. Using

an epistemological framework to study the impact of a difficult dialogue was a process that involves understanding the relationship between the researcher, a former student on a predominantly campus, and what was being researched. Gioia and Pitre describe epistemology as 'fundamental assumptions about the nature of knowledge about phenomena" (1990: 585). Gioia and Pitre describe epistemology as 'fundamental assumptions about the nature of knowledge about phenomena" (1990: 585). Rouna & Lynham (2004) cite that epistemology (also described as theory of knowledge) is the component of philosophy that raises questions about the nature of knowledge and reasonable belief. In so doing, it addresses the following kinds of questions:

- What is knowledge?
- How does knowledge differ from mere opinion or belief?
- How is knowledge acquired?
- When is a belief justified or reasonable?

Axiology is the third basic concept of the philosophical framework. It also served as a means of congruence to ontology and epistemology. Thus axiology was useful in that it played an important role in putting the standards and requirements of acceptable methods and methodology for research and practice in human resource development in place (pg. 156).

## Theoretical Frameworks

Postmodernism is a perspective that focuses on changing ways of thinking rather than calling for action based on these changes (Thomas, 1993). The idea was that "reality" is not based on truths are traditionally applied across class, race, gender or other groups. Reality comes through individual interpretation of one's view of

themselves in the world. Postmodernism highlights negative conditions that are evident in the power and control of a hierarchy, and in multiple meanings of language.

Though extensive research was done and considered for this study, it were not strictly applied. The researcher attempted to maintain the natural experiences of the participants in this study. The postmodernism theoretical framework was loosely used as a foundational framework, as it considers the negative conditions that African Americans and professors experience at their institution. Though initially the study was aimed at attempting to change behaviors of the participants, the researcher realized the need for further studies, specifically on this topic. These recommendations will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Six.

*Critical Theory*

Critical social science assumes that contemporary societies are oppressive in that they systematically encourage the development of certain groups at the expense of others. Critical social science seeks to expose the ways in which social and cultural realities may be hindering the human potential of all people. "Critical Theory" in the narrow sense designates several generations of German philosophers and social theorists in the Western European Marxist tradition known as the Frankfurt School. According to these theorists, a "critical" theory may be distinguished from a "traditional" theory according to a specific practical purpose: a theory is critical to the extent that it seeks human emancipation, "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (Horkheimer, 1982).

In the design of the research question and the interview questions that challenge the passive acceptance that "things are just the way they are." (i.e., What are the similarities and differences between African American undergraduate students and professors in a difficult dialogue?) Critical theory allows the researcher to focus on understanding the lived experiences of real people in context. For example, this study highlights the experiences of the professors and African American students during a difficult dialogue. It also allows the researcher to bring which might not previously been aware of in order to change and resist existing systems. Critical theory seeks to uncover hidden structures.

*Phenomenological Inquiry*

Edmond Husserl can trace the origin of a phenomenological study back to 1962. This framework has been used in social and human sciences, nursing, health services and education (Borgatta & Borgatta, 1992; Pokinghorne, 1989, 1994; Nieswiadomy, 1993). Husserl emphasized many points about phenomenology. The researcher should preclude all judgments, personal experiences, and rely on imagination, intuition and universal structures to paint a picture of the experiences (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990).

A variety of methods can be used in phenomenological- based research, including interviews, conversations, participant observation, action research, focus meetings and analysis of personal texts. Husserl emphasized many points (Moustakas 1994). The emphasis was that the researcher searched for a central meaning of the experiences and intentionality of consciousness where experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image and meaning.

Husserl (1936/1954) adopted two fundamental procedures as necessary for the study of experience: the epoch of natural science and the epoch of natural attitude.

Epoch means to abstain from the traditional and contrasting methods of research. The first epoch involves putting aside natural science such as theories, hypotheses, instrumentation and prior research topics of investigation. Husserl famously said, "We must return to 'the things themselves.' Abstaining from or bracketing prior knowledge of the subject matter allows the researcher to attend to "life world" and to freshly reflect on concrete examples of the phenomenon under investigation (Wertz et al, 2011). The second epoch, natural attitude, is referred to as phenomenological reduction. This refers to staying away from natural tendency of consciousness and to focus strictly on the existence of object of experiences. This process of natural attitude is reflective and selectively turns from the existence of objects to process to meaning. Phenomenology investigates the person's way of being in the world by descriptively elaborating the 'I' (ego or self), the types of intentionality (ways of experiencing), and the meaningful way that the world is experienced. Phenomenology, as a form of rationality, qualitative in nature, utilized a general human capacity intuition of senses. Husserl generated this as a scientific method called eidetic analysis (Giorgi, 2009). A phenomena can be described at lower levels of generality, beginning a lower limit, a person's individual experiences, to various types of experiences, (the experiences of many), to the highest level of experiences, the general experiences of commonly held.

Lester (1999) states phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the forefront those experiences and perceptions of individuals, and therefore

at challenging structural or normative assumptions (Lester, 1999). While single-case studies are able to identify issues that illustrate discrepancies and system failures – and to illuminate or draw attention to 'different' situations – positive inferences are less easy to make without a small sample of participants. (pg. 1)In multiple- participant research, the strength of inference which can be made increases rapidly once factors start to recur with more than one participant. In this respect it is important to distinguish between statistical and qualitative validity: phenomenological research can be robust in indicating the presence factors and their effects in individual cases, but must be tentative in suggesting their extent in relation to the population from which the participants or cases were drawn (pg 1).

Polkinghorne (1989) posited that phenomenology study must consider whether or not the findings of the study are "valid." To him, (pg. 57) validity refers to the notion that an idea is well grounded and supported. He poses the following question that a researcher might consider:

1. Did the interviewer influence the contents of the subjects' descriptions in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the subject's actual experience?
2. Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation in the interview?
3. In the analysis of the transcription, were there conclusions other than those offered by the researcher that could have been derived? Has the researcher identified these alternatives?

4. Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcription and to the account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?
5. Is the structural description situation specific, or does it hold in general for the experiences in other situations?

Phenomenology was consistent with understanding how African American undergraduate students and professors experienced difficult dialogues. Theorists who use extensive studies on the phenomenological approach agree that this foundational approach attempts to highlight personal experiences that might otherwise seem trivial. Further, the approach was useful in giving voice to the students and professors about their experiences. As Lester (1999) concluded, the use of a multiple case is capable of distinguishing recurring experiences to challenge normal assumptions.

*Qualitative Research*

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Typically researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense or interpret a phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them (pg 3). It is the understanding of qualitative research that the process is pragmatic, strategic and self-reflective. In many instances the strategies, methods and empirical material are not set in advanced. The choice of tools utilized for the research largely depends on the questions asked in the study.

Writers agree that the researcher is the instrument of the qualitative research that gathers words and pictures. The qualitative researcher recognizes his or her research as an interactive approach, which combines a process, shaped ones own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity and those of the people in the setting. Qualitative focuses on meanings and processes not examined in amounts or quantity.

Creswell (1998) emphasizes a "complex, holistic picture," a reference to a complex narrative that takes the reader into the multiple dimensions of a problem or issue and displays it in all of its complexity. (See Table 4.1.Contours of Qualitative Studies) He furthers (pg. 15) that qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem.

Table 4.1

Contours of Qualitative Studies. Adapted from Creswell (1998)

| Characteristics | Bogdan & Biklen (1992) | Eisner (1991) | Merriam (1998) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Natural setting | √ | √ | √ |
| Researcher as key instrument | √ | √ | |
| Data collected as words or pictures | √ | | √ |
| Outcome as process rather than product | √ | | √ |
| Analysis of data inductively | √ | √ | √ |
| Focus of participants perspectives, their meaning | √ | √ | √ |
| Use of expressive language | √ | √ | |
| Persuasion by reason | | √ | |

This study was a qualitative investigation of the four African American Undergraduate Students and Two White Professors: Reflections of a Difficult Dialogue Program at a Predominately White University. In this phenomenological study, the researcher examined a question that was intended to capture their various experiences. A proposal for the study was submitted to and approved by the graduate committee at Texas A&M University. The researcher was granted approval to conduct the study by the Office of Research and Compliance Institutional Review Board on August 9, 2011. A letter was sent to the director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs at the university

(Appendix B) Permission to conduct was granted by the Director of Multicultural Affairs.

Information was gained using *dialogue evaluations* to examine the immediate reflections that occurred during the event. Secondly, the researcher conducted *follow-up interviews* with a sample of the population from the Difficult Dialogue. The follow-up interviews were used to examine any change of thought or behavior as a result of their participation in the Difficult Dialogue.

All participants were from a large, predominantly research institution with an environment of approximately 45,000 students, with approximately 37,000 undergraduates and 9,000 graduates. The public institution offers more than 150 courses of study among different departments. The overall ethnicity is approximately 79 %, 11.8% Hispanic, 2.8% African American, less than .01% American Indian or Alaskan, and 3.9% Asian or Pacific Islander.

## Research Design

### *Difficult Dialogue Procedure*

The grant was awarded to facilitate the dialogue at the university. See Appendix C. Money from the grant was used for fliers (See Appendix F) to get participants and to pay students from the Technology Department to record its facilitation. The Office of Multicultural Affairs identified several staff and faculty as possible facilitators. Selection criteria were based simply on their position and involvement with either group of participants. Letters were mailed through intercampus mail to invite the facilitators. A

flier was e-mailed to all university professors. Students were invited via fliers posted in the Student Center and within the Office of Multicultural Affairs (MCA). In addition to the fliers, MCA staff personally invited students that frequented the office. Participants were asked to RSVP to the MCA. An RSVP list was used to develop sign in sheets for the dialogue.

Two adjacent rooms were reserved for the dialogue. A removable wall divided the rooms. Both rooms were furnished with tables that were set in a U shape with chairs, a table set up front with one chair for the facilitator. MCA staff was used to man the rooms to ensure that each person signed in and that there were enough seats.

The intent was to videotape each session but when the students arrived the video cameras were not working, so the sessions were only audio recorded. When the 30 minutes passed time was called in each session. Each audiotape was then given to the opposite room. The groups then reviewed the other group's audiotape and responded to it for another thirty minutes. The process of listening and responding was repeated two more times. At the conclusion of the session, the wall between them was removed and the group merged into a large circle for concluding discussions. The two facilitators then co-facilitated the dialogue with the entire groups about what conclusions they drew from the dialogue.

*Demographics of Difficult Dialogue Participants*

There were 7 White professors that participated in the dialogue. All professors identified as White. Two professors were male and five were female. Two professors were from the Department of Communication, one were from the Department of

English, one was from the Department of Information Systems and Quantitative Analysis, one was from the Department of Foreign Language, one from the Department of Philosophy, and one from the School of Public Administration. (See Table 4.2 College of Professors Who Participated in the Dialogue)

Table 4.2

College of Professors Who Participated in the Dialogue

| College | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Arts and Sciences | 3 |
| Information and Sciences | 1 |
| English | 1 |
| Communication and Fine Arts | 2 |

There were 27 students participating in the dialogue. There were twelve males and fifteen females. Eight students were sophomores, five freshmen, three juniors, three seniors, one graduate student and seven whose classes were unidentified. Four students identified as Hispanic or Latino, two Native American and 18 African American, and one unidentified. Two students identified Journalism as their major, two Education, one Construction, one Business Management, one Math, one Advertising, two Biology, four Business, one Dietetics, one undecided, and 11 unidentified. (See Table 4.3 College of

Students Who Participated in Dialogue) below for the various colleges those students represented.

Table 4.3

College of Students Who Participated in the Dialogue

| College | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Arts and Sciences | 5 | 27.7% |
| Information Science and Technology | 1 | 6% |
| Business Administration | 4 | 22.2% |
| Communication, Fine Arts and Media | 3 | 16.6% |
| Public Affairs and Community Service | 2 | 22.2% |
| Unidentified | 3 | 16.6% |

*Difficult Dialogue Guiding Questions*

The following questions were used to guide the Difficult Dialogue:

- What are your experiences in working with White professors/students of color here at the university?
- What challenges do you face when dealing with WPS/SOC?

*Difficult Dialogue Evaluation*

All participants from the Difficult Dialogue were given evaluations to complete. The questions included are listed below:

1. When I spoke I felt like others were really listening.

2. I felt comfortable sharing my views and experiences.

3. In today's dialogue, I heard a variety of perspectives.

4. As a result of today's' dialogue, I have a better understanding of how this issue affects people's lives.

5. As a result of today's dialogue, I feel more willing to listen with an open mind to differing perspectives.

6. As a result of today's dialogue, I feel more willing to speak openly about my experiences and views.

There were two open-ended responses included on the evaluations.

7. Did anything in today's event surprise you or change how you think? Please explain.

8. Other comments?

Participants ranked their responses one of the following options.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

*The Interview Procedure*

For a phenomenological study, the process of collecting information involves primarily in-depth interviews with as many as 10 individuals. This concept is consistent

with other studies (Dukes 1984, Polkinghorne 1989, Riemen 1986). A process of identifying possible participants by using a purposeful sampling technique was used. According to Creswell (1998), using this process the investigator selects a sample from which the most can be learned. Miles and Huberman (1994) posed a strategy called criterion sampling. In addition, this study uses a criterion sampling type, as phenomenological studies have limited range, as all participants must experience the same phenomenon. Criterion sampling works when all individuals studied represent people who experience the same phenomenon (Creswell 1998).

Approximately three years after the dialogue professor participants were contacted for follow-up interviews. Initially professors were contacted via email. One to two weeks later an email reminder was sent to request an interview with participants. Priority was given to professors who were associated with different departments, then for availability. Two professors responded to the email invitation. No other professors responded after several months of email attempts. Once the professors responded, a mutually agreed upon interview was scheduled.

The researcher contacted the African American students who participated in the Difficult Dialogue via Facebook. Facebook was used for initial contact. Afterwards, other means of communication such as text, and phone calls to were utilized. Four of the African American students responded and were chosen based on their response and availability. Interviews were set up at mutually agreed upon times and locations.

*Demographics of the Interview Participants*

As previously stated, both professors identified as White, with one being male and one being female. The professors were from the colleges of Management Information Systems Programs and Public Administration. Of the four African American students, three were female and one was male. At the time of the interview, two of the students had completed their undergraduate studies and two were still enrolled in the undergraduate programs. College affiliations of the two remaining enrolled students were Business and Arts and Sciences.

*The Interview Questions*

During the interview, the following questions were utilized to examine change in thought and/or behavior.

1. What are the similarities and differences between African American undergraduate students and professors in a difficult dialogue?
2. What were the experiences of difficult dialogues on four African American male and female students and two professors?

*Data Collection for the Interviews*

The researcher's interviewing techniques were motivated by the desire to learn everything the participant can share about the research topic. Researchers engaged with participants by posing questions in a neutral manner, listening attentively to participants' responses, and asking follow-up questions and probes based on those responses. They do not lead participants according to any preconceived notions, nor do they encourage participants to provide particular answers by expressing approval or disapproval of what

they say. However, questions emerging within the flow of the dialogue are meant to provide clarity and understanding; additionally they may serve to pro- mote more focused and intimate dialogues. Descriptions deriving from interviews of this type supply a rich and nuanced source of information concerning the personal meaning attributed by participants to the phenomenon under consideration.

Typically, in depth interviews are conducted face to face and involve one interviewer and one participant. The questions were designed to ensure the responses reveal "depth, detailed, vivid, and nuance that are the strength of qualitative research" (Rubin & Rubin 2011), and to focus more on the subjective experience of the participant (Seidman, 1998). Interview procedures were found useful in enabling researchers to develop first-person descriptions of diverse human experiences (Polkinghorne, 1989; Kvale, 1996; Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Pollio, Henley, and Thompson (1997) characterized the phenomenological interview as one in which a participant is enabled to describe his or her experiences of some phenomenon with as little direction from the inter- viewer as possible. Unconcerned with issues of causality or mechanism, phenomenological interviewing concerns the "what" of an experience and seeks to capture the specific meanings uniquely characterizing that experience (Davis et al 2004).

*Data Analysis*

Initially, the researcher uses the narrative progress to set aside, as far as is humanely possible, all preconceived experiences to best understand the experiences of participants in the study (McCormack 2011). Secondly the researcher utilized process of "allowing the data to reveal itself," to list every significant statement relevant to the

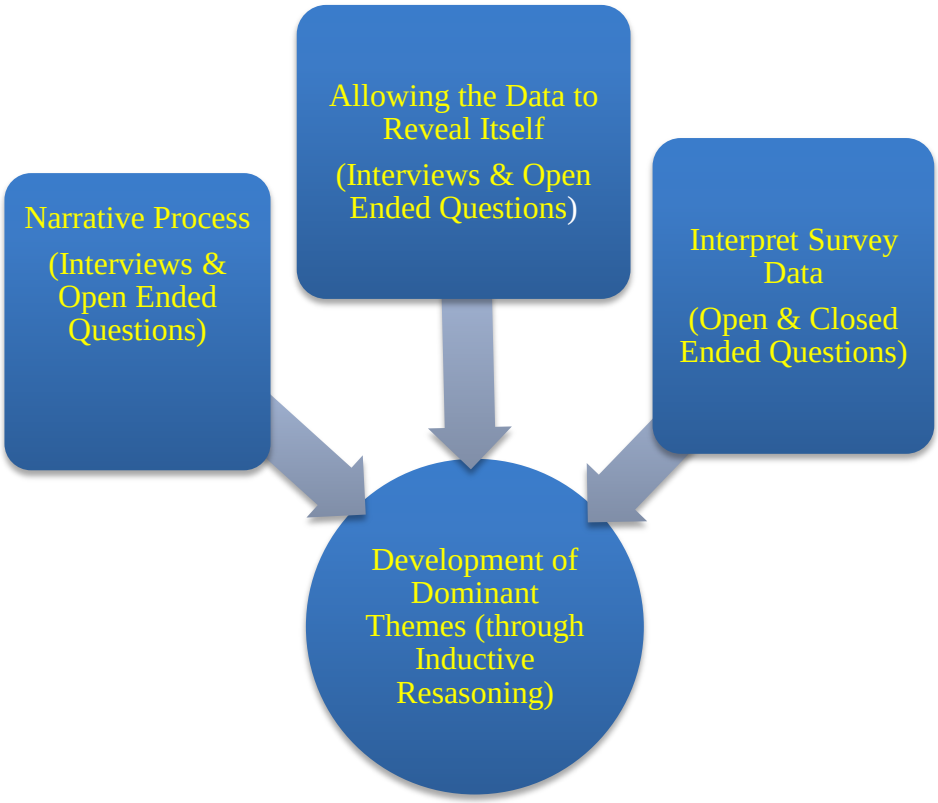
topic and those that give equal value (Alexander 1988). Then the units are transformed into clusters of meanings expressed in phenomenological concepts (Creswell 1998, Alexander 1988). This means that the researcher clusters the statements of the participants into themes or meaning units, removing overlapping and repetitive statements (Bailey & Jackson 2003, Moustakas 1994). These are then tied together to make a general description of the experience. A description in a narrative form describing the "essence of the experience" followed. This process is followed by the researcher's account of the experience in conjunction with the experience of each participant (Creswell 1998). (See Figure 4.1.Conceptual Model of the Data Analysis Applied)

The philosophical theme of this study follows an ontological assumption. The theme assumes that the reality of the characteristics are subjective and multiple, as seen by the participants. Examples of the implications are that the researcher uses quotes and themes in words of participants and provides evidence of different perspectives.

An African American researcher completed all of the interviews. Data analysis were completed by an African American researcher with advisement of one African American female, one African American male, and two African American females.

Figure 4.1

Conceptual Model of the Data Analysis Applied




## Credibility of the Study

Howe and Eisenhardt (1990) suggest that there are five standards to be applied to all research. The first assessment is whether the research questions drive the data collections and analysis. Secondly, the researcher should examine the extent to which

the data collection and analysis technique was applied. Third, the researchers assumptions were made explicit. Fourth, the study should be examined to determine whether it is warranted, used respective theoretical explanations. Lastly, the study should add value, both in informing and improving practice.

In this study, the researcher met with an advisement committee to gain assistance with the research questions prior to the research being done. The advisement committee gave the researcher assess to veteran researchers from with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Several qualitative resources were employed to provide specific technique to the data analysis. Resources include: Qualitative Research and Research Design, Qualitative Research, Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials.

Bias and Suppositions: I am an African American student attending a predominantly White university with experiences that may be very similar or unique to those participants of this study as noted in the section "The Conception of the Study: A Personal Story." As with any qualitative study, having a purposely-selected pool of participants will present certain biases and suppositions.

In reviewing the recent trends outlined in the section from HBCUs to PWIs, along with the challenge across the country of the retention of African American students, a clear need is apparent. African Americans are leaving college prior to graduation at larger percentages. Much literature has been dedicated to this problem with minimal changes. By highlighting the voices of African American students and White professors and the problems with retention, will segue to new and improving practices.

# CHAPTER V

# PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a difficult dialogue and the reflections of four African American undergraduate students and two White professors concerning their experiences at a predominantly White college. It also evaluates whether there were any changes in practices, beliefs or views after the dialogue. The review of literature clearly establishes problems with African Americans students leaving college regardless of various retention programs. It also suggests a dier need to understand why this problem exists. Little literature specifically looks at African American undergraduate students in conjunction with White professors on predominantly White campuses. The literature suggests retention programs have been used all over the country with little to no improvement.

## Difficult Dialogue Results

In the first section of this chapter I will present general reflections of the Difficult Dialogues. Then, the responses of the *Difficult Dialogue participants* will be presented in tables, followed by responses to the open-end questions.

### *General Reflections of the Difficult Dialogue*

After the grant was approved, I was faced with many challenges. Several staff members did not think that a dialogue between professors and students was possible. They doubted that anyone would participate and assumed that if they did show, they

would not talk and provide meaningful information that could impact the problems. Several staff doubted that any interactions within the classroom were even problematic.

Several days prior to the dialogue, several professors called and canceled, stating that something deterred them from coming. The response from professors was far less than from students. Students seemed anxious to talk about the problems that they were facing.

A few days before the dialogue, a colleague and I attended a luncheon that honored students for their academic performance. At the beginning of the luncheon, as we mingled, we noticed one of the students who frequented our office entering. She approached our table and decided to join us. Shortly after, her science professor walked in. He did not notice the student. My colleague and I remembered that the student had mentioned having problems in her Biology class. We told the student that it was a perfect time to have a conversation about the problems that she (the student) was having. She begged us not to get the professor's attention. After several minutes passed, the student got up and left the luncheon, afraid that she would have to talk to the professor. This encounter solidified the need for a dialogue about problems in the classes between races.

On the day dialogue, I walked from the student room to the professor room assessing the conversations. I remember the students sharing areas of frustrations with passion in their voices. Professors shared some level of frustration in that they wanted to be able to find ways to get all students involved in their classrooms.

I felt great anticipation for the combined group dialogue. From the students, I heard experiences that resonated with my own experiences as an African American; however, I felt the genuineness of the professors who just wanted to be better at their jobs, and who sincerely sought for solutions in working with African American students.

*Difficult Dialogue Evaluation Results*

The following information represent the results collected from the professor evaluations at the Difficult Dialogue. The evaluations were circulated at the end of the whole group discussion including professors and students. Evaluations were collected and returned to the Office of Multicultural Affairs. The researcher tabulated results. Results from the professors will be presented first followed by the results of the students (See Table 5.1 Difficult Dialogue Professor Responses).

Participants ranked their responses based on the following:

1) Strongly Agree
2) Agree
3) Neutral
4) Disagree, and
5) Strongly Disagree

Table 5.1

Difficult Dialogue Professor Responses

| Evaluation Questions | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| When I spoke I felt like others were really listening. | 57% | 43% | NA | NA | NA |
| I felt comfortable sharing my views and experiences. | 43% | 57% | NA | NA | NA |
| In today's dialogue, I heard a variety of perspectives. | 43% | 57% | NA | NA | NA |
| As a result of today's' dialogue, I have a better understanding of how this issue affects people's lives. | 43% | 43% | 14% | NA | NA |
| As a result of today's dialogue, I feel more willing to listen with an open mind to differing perspectives. | 71% | 14% | 14% | NA | NA |
| As a result of today's dialogue, I feel more willing to speak openly about my experiences and views. | 57% | 29% | 14% | NA | NA |

*Responses Gained from the Two Open-Ended Questions*

**Did anything in today's event surprise you or change how you think? Please explain.**

It reinforced the need for me to get to know people as individuals.

Yes, many things. I think the most surprising was how the students know about our jobs as faculty mentor, but not the promotion and tenure process, incentives, demands, etc. It shows how poorly we must do as instructors to communicate this content.

The extent of students experience ….and perceived ideas about us

I had no idea that students felt isolated/invisible, and the comments about group work were really useful. I generally tend to let students form their own groups so that there are fewer complaints about members not participating, but I see that I need to be more involved in group formation.

Confirmed more what I do-but it was good to hear the other points of view.
I was often surprised by the view expressed amongst the races. Some students seemed to feel the efforts of minority students are lacking in terms of attempting to be heard and not just seen on campus."

I was surprised at how much students are concerned about exclusiveness in the curriculum.

**Other comments?**

I want more tools to be able to do better with race and other different issues in class.

Let's get together more often and continue the conversations.

Very valuable topic and I hope to continue the conversations.

Excellent event. Thank you for offering it.

Confirmed more of what I do but is was good to hear the others point of view.

We need more events like this. I think it can do a lot for UNO.

I find it frustrating that we did not ever directly address, together, the question of how interactions in the classroom could be improved, and how students can feel more or less welcomed and interested. This is one of the most interesting conversations I have ever seen here or anywhere, and I ask-no demand that a follow-up continue in the future.

(See 5.2 Difficult Dialogue Student Responses)

Table 5.2

Difficult Dialogue Student Responses

| Evaluation Questions | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| When I spoke I felt like others were really listening. | 70% | 26% | 4% | NA | NA |
| I felt comfortable sharing my views and experiences. | 70% | 26% | 4% | NA | NA |
| In today's dialogue, I heard a variety of perspectives. | 74% | 17% | 9% | NA | NA |
| As a result of today's' dialogue, I have a better understanding of how this issue affects people's lives. | 52% | 39% | 9% | NA | NA |
| As a result of today's dialogue, I feel more willing to listen with an open mind to differing perspectives. | 61% | 30% | 9% | NA | NA |
| As a result of today's dialogue, I feel more willing to speak openly about my experiences and views. | 61% | 26% | 13% | NA | NA |

*Responses Gained from the Two Open-Ended Questions*

**Did anything in today's event surprise you or change how you think? Please explain.**

Latinos point of view

Professor's point of view

I was surprised from what the professors had to say.

That the professors were not knowledgeable about how we feel.

Unless someone says anything about the Native American cultures it is not recognized.

Had no one mentioned the Native Americans, the discussion would have only included Blacks and Whites.

It changed the way that I look at things.

I was really surprised at how the professors feel. From the discussion, I was able to be aware of how professors feel.

Curriculum: A course about ethnic backgrounds should be accepted as a history course rather than just being a cultural/humanities course

**Other Comments?**

I enjoyed when we came together into one room. The students spread themselves out but I didn't see any teacher move. Granted some introduced themselves to the students who next to them.

I think there should be more events like this.

Honestly think more dialogues like this should be held. It will not only answer questions, but is will bring instructors and students together.
More dialogues!

## Interview Results

To gain a deeper understanding of their perception, interviews were used in addition to the Difficult Dialogue responses. In the second section, general reflections derived from my researchers notes and colleague discussions after each interview, will be shared. Then, I will introduce the *interviewees*, four African American undergraduate

students and two White professors. Each account will include a quote, a participant profile, their reflections and researcher reflections.

*General Reflections of Interviews*

Generally, I attempted to stay with my question of what impact the dialogue had on the interviewees, but the conversations sometimes explored other topics. As I listened to the participants, my experience as a researcher developed with each interview. Initially, I inserted my experiences into the interview questions and found it difficult to not include my own personal experience as an African American student. As the interviews continued, I became more of a listener and used my questions to clarify and probe for a deeper understanding of what was being shared. My interview experiences differed with professors and students. The professors seemed to have really processed the effects of the dialogues and seemed to enjoy hearing themselves talk, whereas the students needed more probing and clarifying.

I also found that I got more results from the interviews if I engaged in some small talk before delving into the interview questions. Much of the small talk was about my agenda as a researcher/graduate student and the purpose of the interview. I asked a few demographic questions to better understand their interest in the dialogue. Demographic information included current status (job or school classification) age, and marital status. Student participants were asked about their future plans.

Notes were taken during the interviews but much of my reflection of experiences and biases took place in oral discussions with my colleague after each interview. Notes were vague and shorthand as I wanted to demonstrate to the participants that they had

my undivided attention. During moments of silence, I tried to extend wait time to allow participants the opportunity to continue to talk or completely finish a thought. Students came with various backgrounds and experiences, but having the variety was insightful and enriched the study.

*Interview Responses*

By exposing the voices of the selected group of participants in this study, new knowledge of the difficulties between White professors and African American students on predominantly White campuses can be established. Another possible benefit from hearing the voices of the participants is to trigger an interest or investment of resources into issues that are important to the participants. The interviews will begin with voices from the two White professors followed by the four African American students

*Part One: Hearing Our Voices*

Karen

> "I learned that if I wanted to get feedback from students that I needed to do something to invite them to make things clear to me. I have since used personal invites, board invites and personal conferences with individual students."
>
> Karen, Professor, School of Public Administration & Advisor

Karen, Professor Participant 1 (PP1), is a 41-year-old married female and works as an associate professor in the School of Public Administration at a university, where she also serves as the advisor for the nonprofit concentration in the MPA program. Before returning to graduate school, she was a development and grant writing consultant. She

completed her Bachelors of Arts in International Studies, specializing in Asian Studies/Korea. She received her Masters degree in Public Administration at the UNO. She continued on to complete my Doctorate degree in Public Administration focusing on *Nonprofit Organizations and Philanthropy*

Her main research interests include philanthropy and nonprofit organizations and their role in democratic governance. She has published articles in numerous academic journals and her research has been featured on NPR's *All Things Considered* and in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Her book, *Giving Circles: Philanthropy, Voluntary Association, Democracy*, was recently published by Indiana University Press and won the CASE 2010 John Grenzebach Research Award for Outstanding Research in Philanthropy, Published Scholarship. Karen teaches the following courses: Organization Theory and Behavior, Public Administration and Democracy, Introduction to the Non-Profit Sector, Qualitative Research Methods, and Philanthropy and Democracy.

*Participant Reflections*

Karen started the interview by sharing how impactful the dialogue was for her. Karen stated that in her classes that Difficult Dialogue had been useful in getting more students involved in her classes. She stated that prior to the dialogue, she assumed that students were not involved because they just didn't care. After the dialogue, she intentionally involved students in the curriculum. For example, she reflected on how a student took the content that they were to complete a project on and used her own culture to bring relevance to the topic. She also shared how important personal

conferences with individual students were in increasing student engagement. Karen also mentioned using personal invites on Blackboard (database used for communication, grades and assignments at the university) to get more quiet students involved. In her classes she taught Ethics, Morals and current issues in Philosophies. Specifically on race, she started to hear more comments from all backgrounds. She remembered it to have been a valuable experience and she hoped that a follow-up dialogue would be scheduled in the future.

*Researcher Reflections*

My interview with Karen was quite insightful. We agreed to meet at her office at the university. Karen is medium height and pregnant. She hustled around the office busily. I got the impression that I needed to get straight to the point, as Karen had given me a set amount of time that she was available for the interview. Though I felt rushed, we still managed to talk about her pregnancy and the local school district. But the small talk was short and to the point. Karen went straight into the changes that she had implemented into the courses that she teaches at the university. Though her body language was abrupt, she assured me of how the university needed dialogues like this. She informed me of the changes and told me that she was more than willing to participate in any future dialogues of this sort.

I found this interview to be the most helpful, as the professor had made changes in her classroom instruction as a result of the Difficult Dialogue. I did not have to probe or ask any clarifying questions. Not only had Karen implemented strategies that she thought would be helpful, she noticed a difference in the way her students responded to

the changes. She was very comfortable sharing the past assumptions that she had before the dialogue and how they had changed since the dialogue.

Jeff

> "You know, the take home was, go ahead and say something and if you make a mistake, talk about it but don't be frozen into inaction because of the unknown."
>
> Jeff, Director of Masters in Science Management Information Systems Programs

Jeff, Professor Participant 2(PP2) is a 50-year-old White male. Jeff is married with one daughter. He is an associate professor at UNO. He has taught there for seventeen years and received his Ph.D. in Management Information Systems from University of Arizona in 1993. His doctoral work involved an examination of the high-performance computing (HPC) sector of the former Soviet Union. His research interests are in the international aspects of information technologies, currently the Global Diffusion of the Internet, IT for development, and e-government.

Jeff's teaching interests are in data management and distributed computing systems. He is currently the Director of the Master of Science in Management Information Systems Program. He is a graduate faculty member. Jeff has long-standing interests in the international dimensions of information technologies. His most active research at present focuses on the role of information technology for development (ITD). He teaches students to apply ITD concepts and practices to promote economic, social, and human development in microenterprises. He has published several articles in the area of technology development.

Jeff is also working on the Global Diffusion of the Internet Project, which explores the Internet theory and practice in developing countries. Another interest of his is the development of municipal e-Government in countries around the world. He published an article that looked specifically at e-Governments in Norway, status and emerging issues.

His past research focus has been on the international aspects of high-performance computing. More recent work includes a study of the U.S. HPC export control regime. Currently, he teaches Database Management, Information Technology for Development, and Database Administration. He has published several articles in the area of technology development. *Participant Reflections*

At the start of the interview, Jeff consulted some of his personal journals to help his reflection of the Difficult Dialogue. As he scanned he started to reflect on the Dialogue. Jeff talked about the diversity in his classes. He mentioned that his students were international students and that their conversations in the classroom were very limited due to the type of assignments and projects that are required. He stated that his students are required to do some work with an outside corporation. For that project, he and the students interact with people of color. Before the Difficult Dialogue, he remembered going to those sites and having a mentality of "all knowing." After the dialogues, he realized that the people that he and his students work with come with their own knowledge and that there is always something for him to learn from them. He also mentioned that he intentionally placed himself in environments in the northern part of the city (predominantly African American community) to have more African American

exposure professionally and socially. Jeff mentioned that the most valuable lesson for him was to "do something" and accept the possibility of making a mistake rather than to do nothing at all. A concise account of Jeff and the other professor responses is provided in Appendix F.

*Researcher Reflections*

Jeff is a very tall man. He smiled a lot and talked with a warm monotone voice. Jeff was highly organized. As we began the interview, he asked me to remind him of the date of the interview. He snickered as he fumbled through his journal looking for the appropriate page. At times, I was not sure if he was talking to me or to himself.

Jeff's comments in his interview thoroughly surprised me. Based on his appearance and office space and the type of professor he was, I assumed that he would be able to relate to computers more than people. His response to how the dialogue had affected him was astounding. He seemed excited to share his experiences and perceptions.

*Student Responses*

Jonnie

> "Well when I first started college, I never talked to the professors about anything. I would be struggling and would not speak up. I would skip classes and be absent without saying anything. Since the dialogue I communicate with professors a lot."
>
> Jonnie, College of Business and Management, Senior

Jonnie, Student Participant 1(SP1) is a 23-year-old African American male. He is a first generation college student. He lives at home with his mom, younger sister (Age 20) and brother (Age19.) Jonnie works part-time job a locally owned restaurant, where he is one of the lead cooks. Jonnie received most of his formal schooling in New Orleans but relocated to local public schools in 2005 during Hurricane Katrina. Jonnie's family was eligible for free lunch throughout his attendance in the local public schools, which equates to an annual income of 130 percent of the poverty line of $16,600 for 2006-07 year. Jonnie attended Northwest High School.

Northwest is a school with approximately 2000 students. His graduating class size was about 764 students. Forty eight percent of the students were African American, forty-five percent White, five percent Hispanic, .6 percent Asian and 1.1 percent Native American. The school had a 25.26% mobility rate. Jonnie's school had 50.08% of the students on free and reduced lunch. During the Jonnie's years of attendance at Northwest High School, the enrollment dropped by nearly 600 students. The percentage of White students decreased by 8%, African American students increased by 6%. Hispanic, Asian and Indian population remained consistent. Jonnie's overall high school experience was very positive. He had a great relationship with his teachers and his principal. Jonnie was asked to speak at his high school graduation.

He planned to graduate in the Fall of 2013. After graduation from high school Jonnie attended Metro Community College as a business major. He transferred to UNO in 2008 and planned to graduate in May 2013 with a Bachelor of Arts in Management. He was currently looking for an internship, but mentioned that but the field was quite

competitive. He was open to seeking employment both, locally and abroad, but was undecided at the time if he would continue on to graduate school.

*Participant Reflections*

Jonnie stated that there were several things that had changed for him. He stated that in the past, his classes, GPA and success were left up to chance because he was not involved with his professors and was not always conscious about his progress in his classes. He talked about how before the Difficult Dialogue, he felt that professors talked all the time and there was not time or space for him to talk. Jonnie shared how his thought process had changed. He reflected on a time where he had missed a class. He said that normally, he would have missed and not considered the consequences. Participation in the Difficult Dialogue gave in the initiative to be proactive in his learning. He spent more time with the professors. He asked questions after class, and went to their offices. He was more comfortable talking with professors since the dialogue. This is evident as Jonnie felt comfortable enough to communicate with his professor to find out what he would miss to ensure he could remain on track. He also had contacted another classmate to ask them to take notes.

*Researcher Reflections*

Jonnie and I met at a mutually agreed upon time and location. My impression of him was that he was a bright, articulate and responsible young male. At first he seemed a little nervous and removed from the conversation. As I attempted to engage in small talk, he seemed impatient as if he had somewhere to go. As the interview progressed, he seemed to warm up and talked more freely. The interview was intriguing since Jonnie

seemed to have processed the necessity of effective communication between he and his professors and made progress towards speaking to them more freely.

Sheryl

> "Well, my mother raised me to be confident in myself so I have always been very comfortable speaking up. So before and after the dialogue I pretty much operated the same."
>
> Sheryl, College of Arts and Science, Recent Graduate

Sheryl, Student Participant 2 (SP2) is a twenty-four year old African American female student. Sheryl lived at home with her mother. Sheryl attended the local public schools for a while and then moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where she says most the kids at her school were poor and Black. She returned to the local city in and attended one elementary school and then attended several magnet schools. She remembers that most of the schools were predominantly White. She attended two schools that were "more diverse," Lewis & Clark and Beveridge Middle Schools. She was eligible for either free or lunch throughout her life, which equates to an annual salary range of $14, 378-$20, 461. Sheryl took Honors English, Spanish and Algebra.

She graduated from Central High School. Sheryl's high school had approximately 2,557 students. Sheryl's class started with about 388 students and increased by almost 100 students. Thirty-seven percent of the students were African Americans, forty-seven percent were White, thirteen percent Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 2% Native American. Sheryl's high school had a twenty-four percent mobility rate,

almost double that of the state. The free and reduced rate was forty-two percent. During her attendance at Central High School the enrollment of the school increased each year.

She graduated from a midwestern university in 2010 with a Bachelors of Art in Journalism & Public Relations. She was employed at the City Community Development part-time. She was looking at graduate schools trying to determine what she would do next.

*Participant Reflections*

Sheryl shared that she remembered the Difficult Dialogue but she felt that her ability to communicate with professors and anyone came from her family upbringing. Her mother had expected it. Sheryl had always been somewhat comfortable talking to professors but hearing the professors say that they didn't know students felt the way they felt taught how important her upbringing really was. Sheryl talked about how if there was a problem at school, how her mom responded, she was expected to talk about it. This response about her upbringing led Sheryl into a conversation about how her assertiveness recently led her out of a relationship that was unhealthy for her. She was starting fresh and would use her ability to speak up for herself and seek out a new pathway. At one point she did mention that she became very active as a student leader on campus and the more she got involved with advising students the more she found that's what she would like to do.

*Researcher Reflections*

I met with Sheryl at a mutually agreed upon location. It took us three attempts to actually make the meeting so much of our getting to know one another was about all of

the obstacles that had kept us from meeting. Sheryl was a medium height, fair skinned young woman. Because neither of us was officially affiliated with the University any longer, I asked her how she had been. Sheryl a friendly person, talked for several minutes about life outside of college. Though she seemed very excited to talk about her life, she seemed to have lost motivation and switched to discuss the dialogue. Though she mentioned enjoying the dialogue, she said that she was raised to speak up for herself and that she had always been comfortable doing so. She felt that is a skill that her mother instilled in her. The dialogue had been a mere reminder that you have to be comfortable with yourself and look out for you.

I was fairly disappointed because Sheryl didn't seem to have been impacted by the dialogue quite as much. Still, I learned something very valuable. Every African American student does not have problems with attending a predominantly White college. Sheryl mentioned having been to predominantly White schools during her formal education. It is important to note that generalizations can lead to some very untrue assumptions. Problems for African American students do not mean problems for all African American.

The most valuable experience that I brought from the interview as a researcher was to better pace myself. After the period when Sheryl discussed how her life had changed after college, there was an awkward transition into the interview. It felt as if she was talking to be as a friend and that made it difficult to turn the conversation over with the recording. Next time, I should just be very straightforward about my purpose and

pausing and stating that I will be taping the next part as the actual interview to avoid the awkwardness of just trying to keep a certain flow or rhythm flowing.

Latoya

> "My mom is White and my dad is Black. I was around both families and so that exposure helped me to learn how to communicate through differences."
>
> Latoya, Student graduate, International Management and Business

Latoya (SP3) is a 35-year-old African American female. Latoya received all her formal education in the local public schools. Latoya describes the population of her schools as mixed. She lived with her mom. Because her parents did not live in the same house, Latoya went between two households. Latoya graduated High School in 1995. She worked as a Program Director at the YMCA, where she created and facilitated programs for the community. Prior to her employment there, she worked at the Southern Sudan Community Association where she assisted the refugees with various tasks of resettlement and provided more community awareness.

*Participant Reflections*

Latoya didn't remember very much from the dialogue. Her stated that her mom is White and my dad is Black. She was around both families and so that exposure helped me to learn how to communicate through differences. She said that before and after the dialogue, she pretty much operated the same. Latoya did continue to talk more about her

job and other unrelated topics. A concise account of Latoya and the other student responses is provided in Appendix G.

*Researcher Reflections*

Latoya and I agreed to meet at her job. Upon my arrival, I was invited back to her private office. Latoya was very friendly but reserved and polite. She followed my lead to start any conversation. Though she was pleasant, she did not elaborate much on her responses. I spoke briefly about why I was there and she listened attentively. As she stared at me, the glare in her eyes led to believe that she was is deep thought.

Whether she was in deep thought or not, she informed me of the minimal changes in her thoughts or behavior. During the interview, I became a bit frustrated because I had really hoped that the impact would be much greater, but after revisiting my interview it occurred to me again that students come from different places. Not all African American students struggle with the same things. Latoya was very clear that being reared in two different cultures had been an advantage for her. She had learned how to navigate various kinds of people. Though this study does not include biracial students, Latoya's response clearly opened a new area of research. Do biracial students who regularly navigate two races or cultures of people bring a level of skills with navigating between them?

Nakeyta

> "The biggest impact outside of the classroom, as a Black student you have to do your part. You have to know where you stand. I felt like it was my duty to

polish my own history so that if I came into contact with other professors that I could articulate my concerns professionally."

Nakeyta,
Undergraduate
Student, Sociology

Nakeyta is 23 year-old African American female. She attended local schools in elementary and secondary grades. She graduated in 2007 from South High School. Most of Nakeyta's schools were predominantly Black. Nakeyta qualified for free or reduced lunch, which equates to an annual income from $14, 630 to $17,650. Approximately 76% students during that academic year qualified for free or reduced lunch. The school had a mobility rate of 27.76%. The ethnic make-up of the school was Fifty-one percent, Hispanic, Twenty-seven percent White, nineteen percent African American, 1% Asian, Island Pacific, and 2% Native American.

*Participant Reflections*

As Nakeyta shared her experiences with me, one glaring thought kept circling back through her comments. She was appalled that the professors seemed clueless about how to work with African American students. She stated that some of the ignorant teachers said that they didn't have training. She sternly believed that professors have to be more prepared to deal with different kinds of students. She believed that the professor comments challenged her. The shared that the biggest impact outside of the classroom, as a student was that she needed to spend some time learning about who she was as an African American. She said she needed to know where she stood. She stated that she

felt like it was her duty to polish my own history so that if I came into contact with other professors that she could articulate my concerns professionally.

*Researcher Reflections*

Nakeyta and I met at a neighborhood school, as this was more convenient for her. Nakeyta is very high-spirited and spoke with a great deal of passion. Rapport was established very quickly and easily as she spoke of her son initially. Because of my role as an educator, she seemed very comfortable sharing concerns of her education with me. As Nakeyta talked randomly about herself, my expectations were guarded because of the last student participant not having much to share. Ironically, she surprised me. Her experience in the Difficult Dialogue thrust her into a manner of educating herself about her own culture. It was if it was acceptable for her to be unaware of her culture but much more inappropriate for professors to be "ignorant" by her words.

## Monica - Walking Out My Story

When I started this journey to pursue an advanced degree, my motivation had been about two concepts: 1) Higher income, and 2) family expectations. (My father wanted one of his six children to have the opportunity that he had not been given; a chance to go to college and I was the last one.)

Attending a predominantly White college for me had not been about a choice, or financial aid offer, or the best athletic program. It was about convenience. I had resided in this small town my entire life and the university that I attended was located there.

Though I had vowed to never attend because “us- folks” didn’t belong there, it was the option that was available to me where I could physically have the support of my family.

Throughout my college attendance, many of my learning experiences and opportunities passed right over my head like an every day cloud that I never looked up to notice. They (those opportunities and learning experiences) had always lingered around. My world of family, money and church had dominated my life. Programs aimed at retaining me, getting to know my professors, collaborative opportunities were not my top priority! Making ends meet was.

As I continued on my pursuit, life changed. I talked to and observed students much younger than I having the same struggles. I hated seeing students going through the struggles and feeling helpless as if there was no help. At first in my heart, I became those African American staff to help other African American students. I preached to them the underwritten rules of navigating the system that I had not known years before. Through this study, I moved from secretly helping in my heart to openly and actively creating avenues for the voices of these students who are like me.

While through this study, I have attempted to help other students who are like me; I have also sought out research and the lived experiences of others to help me understand myself. Everyday, many African American students sit in classes where many do not look or speak like them. Many students likely do not stop to ponder those experiences because they feel they have no other options. We learn to live with things the way they are or find an outlet to change them.

During this study, I felt inspired and challenged to continue to strive for social change in this area of research. I have learned not only about the lived experiences of the participants, but I have also learned how to become a researcher. Like Nakeyta, as African American, I believe that it is essential for me to be informed about the education of African Americans in this country. It is equally important for me experience the rain that comes from the clouds, in the form of opportunities to change things, to nourish the grounds and eventually produce food for the generations.

Though all of the interviews were wonderful, the one that really resonates within my spirit is the words of Jeff;

> The take home for me was that if your intentions are pure, you should address that level of discomfort and as was mentioned, am I going to offend someone? You know, the take home was, go ahead and say something and if you make a mistake, talk about it but don't be frozen into inaction because of the unknown.

This inspiration unlocks and brings clarity to my voice in the next phase of my career as an educator. I will chose to ask, to challenge, to speak, to make mistakes, and to refuse to be frozen into inaction because of any unknowns.

## Data Analysis-What Do the Data Say?

In qualitative research it is essential that we ask which techniques or methods can be used to guide and support researchers in this challenging intellectual process (Jennings 2007; Hunter et al. 2002). Using the three varied approaches to analyzing the data was a process chosen to fully understand the data from various angles and approaches to develop valuable themes. These approaches were employed to answer both research questions, "What are the similarities and differences between African

American undergraduate students and White professors in a Difficult Dialogue?" and "What changes in behavior or thought have occurred since their participation in the Difficult Dialogue?"

McCormack (2000) offers a frame as options to organizing and examining different types of data revealed. Using McCormack's lenses aligns nicely with the phenomenological approach by providing management for large amounts of data effectively, and it enables the researcher to make accessible to the reader the lived experiences recounted. It also supports the researcher as an integral part of the research endeavor and enables transparency, thus increasing confidence in the findings.

It is important to note that narrative is a unique event that can never be recaptured in the same way twice. Though this may appear to be a disadvantage, in understanding the experiences of one through storytelling, qualitative inquiry creates an overall understanding of richness, breadth and depth of a phenomenon explored (Coffee and Atkinson 1996, Cutcliff & McKenna, 2002). McCormack's approach to analyzing data allows the researcher to look at the data from more than one angle. According to Murray (2000) this is referred to as "levels of analysis." This approach to looking at the narratives is advantageous because it enables the researcher to show different meanings in stories and to interconnect in and between stories.

From the interviews captured, I begin by looking at the data through the lens of language. For this process of looking at the data through the lens of language I examined the three different ways of how I, as the researcher, might interpret the data: first, the researcher as an African American students attending a predominantly White

college, secondly, the researcher as an educator, and lastly, the researcher as a parent. Table 5.3, Examples of the Language Influence on the Researcher shown below, highlights examples of the language influence and possible ways in which it might influence the researcher's interpretation.

Table 5.3

Examples of the Language Influence on the Researcher

| | |
|---|---|
| Researcher as an African American student | The biggest impact outside of the classroom, as an African American student was that you have to do your part. You have to know where you stand. I felt like it was my duty to polish my own history so that if I came into contact with other |
| Researcher as an educator | I learned that students expressed feeling intimidated and need an invitation to talk or become engaged in the conversation |
| Researcher as a parent | Well, my mother raised me to be confident in myself so I have always been very comfortable speaking up. So before and after the dialogue I pretty much operated the same |

Understanding the lens through which I was interpreting the data is important to examine possible bias. For example, as a 42-year-old mother with two children in college, seeing comments through the lens as a parent at this phase in my life may lend to portray the comments more powerfully than my role as an African American student. Consequently, this approach to bring awareness of the implications of language is vital to examine.

Additionally, Dibley (2011) and Alexander (1988) posit a framework of "allowing the data to reveal itself." After I looked at the interviews through language, I employed this strategy. Alexander's framework involves sifting through a network of rules to call attention to importance. This type of sifting has a two-prong purpose. The first purpose is to make the data manageable. The second is to break the conscious communicational intent of the content. Alexander argues that there is a relationship or intended relationship between the teller and the hearer that follow typical outcomes such as: Do you agree, like, understand, sympathize, feel pain, with what is said? This social communication model must be discarded in order to effectively respond to the data, having awareness of what signals importance to the individual and the message contained in how that world is construed. (Alexander, 1988). This process is important in understanding, who the individual is in a dynamic sense, instead of what category to assign them to. It allowed me to carefully filter through what was said first before drawing definite conclusions for any common theme or category.

Finally, Foggatt (2001) suggest qualitative data analysis is a process best "learnt by doing". There is no one right way to work with qualitative data. However, we need to keep in mind that the moment where one makes meaning beyond the facts, does not just happen haphazardly (Hunter et al., 2002). No themes, categories, concepts or theories will 'emerge' without the researcher who must "make it so" (Sandelowski, 1995). This requires expertise in reading, thinking, imagining, conceiving, conceptualizing, connecting, condensing, categorizing and thereby creating a new storyline (Jennings, 2007). This implies the development of 'intellectual craftsmanship') without which no

valuable qualitative work can be produced (Sandelowski, 1995). Extensive preparation is required to open the researcher's mind to multiple meanings and perspectives and to lay the groundwork for one to be creative (Hunter et al., 2002).

To utilize the above strategies the researcher extracted the meaningful data from both the evaluation and the interviews. These findings were included to validate the themes extracted from the data and to add credibility to the evaluation results. According to Fink (2003), a researcher must assemble the data. To complete this process, one must transcribe the data. For this study, an abridged transcript was used to preserve time. I highlighted these parts of the data and noted my interpretation of their experiences. I grouped these experiences into clusters that were similar in content. To extract information from the clusters idea of salience was utilized. For this process, the researcher used a set of rules designed to identify what in the material demands further scrutiny because of is importance.

Next, I developed the clusters into generalized themes. These themes created overall responses to how the phenomenon was experienced and what changes in thought and behavior occurred. In accordance with the concept, responses were gathered through these avenues. Alexander (1988) developed a process based on his years of working with different kinds of data. The principle identifiers are not exhaustive but provide a frame that has been relied upon by many. The nine identifiers are primacy, frequency, uniqueness, negation, emphasis, omission, error, isolation, and incompletion. Alexander points out that we are tuned to frequency or repetition as increasing signs of certainty and of importance. He furthers that in many instances frequency may be an expression

of powerful conscious value schemas. For this study, I utilized frequency and emphasis as key identifiers. These identifiers are best suited for this data as I am dealing with a heterogeneous group. Thus, a frequency or emphasis of similar responses increases the likelihood the one homogenous aspect of the sample, being African American, shapes the experience.

## Identified Themes

This section will highlight the themes that were identified as a result of the analysis of the evaluations and interviews. The themes are separated by professors themes, student themes, and one combined theme.

### *Dominant Themes*

#### Examples of Student Dominant Themes

##### *Ownership of student responsibility to talk to professors*

The biggest impact outside of the classroom, as a student you have to do your part.

You have to know where you stand.

I felt like it was my duty to polish my own history so that if I came into contact with other

I felt like the professors talk a lot and there was not a lot of time left for me to talk. Now I email my professors, I talk to them, I let them know when I am going to be absent and I ask how I can get the information that I might miss.

I am just more comfortable talking with professors since the dialogue. And my grades reflect that.

Hearing the professors say that they didn't know students felt the way they felt or were not taught made me want to be more assertive

*Students' feelings of isolation or exclusion*

Curriculum: A course about ethnic backgrounds should be accepted as a history course rather than just being a cultural/humanities course.

Intimidation stopped me from talking before.

I would be struggling and would not speak up

I felt like the professors talk a lot and there was not a lot of time left for me to talk

I would be struggling and would not speak up

Examples of Professor's Dominant Themes

*Professors' awareness of Students' feelings of exclusion and isolation*

I was often surprised by the view expressed amongst the races. Some students seemed to fell the efforts of minority students are lacking in terms of attempting to be heard and not just seen on campus.

I had no idea that students felt isolated/invisible, and the comments about group work were really useful.

It reinforced the need for me to get to know people as individuals

Some students seemed to feel the efforts of minority students are lacking in terms of attempting to be heard and not just seen on campus."

*Professors need to step out of their comfort zone*

I learned that if I wanted to get feedback from students that I needed to do something to invite them to make things clear to me.

I have since used personal invites, board invites and personal conferences with individual students.

So I have tried to put myself in some situations like those and to spend more time in the northern part of the city.

So let's have a conversation and learn from each other, right?

I generally tend to let students form their own groups so that there are fewer complaints about members not participating, but I see that I need to be more involved in-group formation.

Examples of Student and Professor Dominant Themes

*Awareness of one another's feelings*

I assumed that I didn't hear from students because they weren't interested.

Confirmed more what I do-but it was good to hear the other points of view.

That the professors were not knowledgeable about how we feel.

## Conclusion

African American college students face a number of stressors including lack of knowledge about the college process, institutional racism, poor health and energy, social isolation, and family and economic problems (Arnold, 1993; D'Augelli & Hersberger, 1993), and when there is no critical mass of African Americans and/or students of color on campus, students' social networks tend to be compromised and the challenges compounded (D'Augelli & Hersberger, 1993; McCauley, 1988; Pike & Kuh, 2006). However, the literature asserts that feelings of isolation are prevalent among African American students attending predominantly White institutions. "A fly in the buttermilk" was one participant's way of describing his perception of an experience that stood out for all participants: being alone in a class with many White students.

The Experiences of White Professor responses indicated some level of impact on the professors as practices in their teaching changed. Changes include students being a part of the decision about curriculum, an awareness of the reasons students may not

interact, a different mindset about communicating across people from various backgrounds, utilizing various communication outlets to obtain student input, and an awareness of the level of intimidation student's face when attempting to communicate with teachers. One professor indicated that the most prevalent take home message for him was to at least attempt to communicate, and that it is okay to make a mistake but it is not okay to frozen to inactivity.

Four African American students responded to the invitation to participate in a follow-up interview. The impact of the dialogue on the African American students was an increased intention to communicate with professors, and having awareness of the lack of information that professors had about students from various backgrounds.

# CHAPTER VI

## SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains a summary, findings, and recommendations for future research and closing remarks. The findings are organized first by research questions and then conclusions and recommendations.

The primary objective of this study was to examine the problems surrounding White professors and African American Students at a Predominantly White university in the Midwest. The following questions were addressed:

1. What was the impact of difficult dialogues on White professors and African American male and female students?
2. What changes in behavior or thinking on four African American students and two White professors have occurred since their participation in difficult dialogues?

In analyzing the results of this study using a postmodernism theory, it is suggested that there is a form of intellectual imperialism that ignores the fundamental uncontrollability of meaning. The 'out there' is constructed by our discursive conceptions of it and are collectively sustained and continually renegotiated (Parker 1992). The researcher is advised to resist systemizing, defining or imposing 'logic' on events. Using the postmodernist theory, language in constituting reality is the central unit of all attempts to find the 'truth.' Furthering this idea in society is transforming, with new forms of social beings that require new methodologies (pg 3). Postmodernism

presents itself as a celebration of the multiplicity of individual experience. It encourages a multiplicity of views of, and approaches to understanding. It supports the view that knowledge is contextual and localized and it rejects generalized ways of knowing. Because postmodernism asks us to rethink how power relations within society are maintained through language and discourse (Fook 2002), the conceptual space is created to challenge dominant understandings to be more inclusive (Allan 2009). Bringing to light the experiences of African American students and White professors simultaneously, this study extracts meaning from the language of the participants to find the truth about both experiences on a predominantly White campus. The researcher is hopeful that insight will influence new research interests in the field of the education of African Americans.

According to Nettles (1990), factors such as student satisfaction with faculty relationships, their feelings that university faculty are sensitive to their interests, the needs and aspirations of students, and the ease with which students feel they can develop close personal relationships with faculty members on campus directly emphasized "academic integration." Jones (2001) explains how students' interactions with faculty and staff affect their attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions, thus enhancing or diminishing the satisfaction, academic achievement, and persistence of students.

In identifying problems that students face on PWIs, this study supports the findings of the current literature on the retention of African Americans. I found that this group of African Americans lacked ownership in their self-advocacy within the classrooms, and possessed feelings of isolation and exclusion. Their experiences

captured limited formal and informal contact with White professors, a strategy noted as clearly successful in the retention of students of color. Self-report surveys of students of color have shown that students (African American, Chicano, and American Indian) possess a feeling of discontentment in their relationships with faculty members and with their college experience in general (Blackwell, 1981; Burrell, 1981; Duncan, 1976; Green & McNamara 1976; Morris 1979). Some students of color indicated that they do not feel they are treated equally by professors and do not receive oral feedback as often as non-students of color (Duncan, 1976). Others felt that professors did not inspire them to work better and avoided interaction with them (Burrell, 1981).

## Analysis of Findings Using Critical Theory

Critical theory involves issues of power, and justice and the ways that education and other social institutions interact to construct a social system. Within critical enlightenment a researcher analyzes competing power interests between groups and individuals within a society - identifying who gains and who loses in specific situations. Kineloe & McLaren (2003) argue that privileged groups often have a vested interest in supporting the status quo to protect their advantages. Research should attempt to uncover winners and losers in particular social arrangement and the process by which such power plays operate. (Cary,1996; Fehr, 1993; Pruyn,1994; Wexler, 1996). In this study, a difficult dialogue mitigates the relationship between African American students and White professors.

Jones (2001) argues how students' interactions with faculty and staff affect their attitudes, behaviors and perceptions and enhances the satisfaction, achievement and persistence of students. Research furthers that the study of racial/ethnic differences in student-faculty interactions still remains fundamental to understanding minority students‟ academic success and failure (Astin, 1993; Cole, 2007; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). While a significant body of research exists on the effects of these interactions on students' educational outcomes (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), relatively few studies have examined the different effects of student-faculty interactions on students college grades across racial/ethnic groups. This study supports that literature that more research is needed on racial/ethnic groups. When one considers the dismal look on the education of African Americans in this country and the increasing numbers of African Americans attending PWIs highlighted in this study, an urgent call to research in the field is warranted.

Critical theorists pay close attention to power dynamics (Blades, 1997; Gee, 1996; Lemke, 1993; Morgan, 1996; McWilliam & Taylor, 1996). This inequitable power matrix has been generally accepted as natural and inevitable (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2002). One basic understanding of emerging criticalist is that power is a basic constituent of human existence that works to shape the oppressive and productive nature of the human tradition (Kineloe & McLarren, 2003). Antonio Gramsci's central notion to oppressive power is critical research. He contends that oppressive power has an ability to produce inequalities.

Critical research appreciates the fact that language is not a neutral and objective conduit of description of the "real world." Critical theorist look at the way language, in the form of discourses serves as a form of regulation and domination. Critical researchers believe language is an unstable social practice with shifting meanings, depending upon context. Discursive practices are defined as a set of tacit rules that regulate what can and cannot be said, who can speak with the blessings of authority and who must listen, whose social constructions are valid and whose are erroneous and unimportant. For example, in education, discursive practices of power tell professors what books may be read by students, what instructional methods may utilized, and what belief systems and views of success may be taught. In this study, two students confirmed this practice,

A course about ethnic backgrounds should be accepted as a History course, rather than just being a cultural/humanities course.

I enjoyed when we came together into one room. The students spread themselves out, but I didn't see any of the teachers (professors) move.

(Student reflects on his encounters from his classes) I felt like the professors talk a lot and there was not a lot of time left for me to talk

(Student responds to professors' comment) Some of the ignorant professors said that they didn't have training about different cultures.

In the looking at both the basis of the critical theory and language that students used to express their reflections, it is apparent student feel that professors possess the authority to set rules and speak, while they do not. Therefore, it becomes clear that the use of applying critical theory for analysis of the findings was warranted.

## Findings: Relationships Between African Americans and White Professors

Durant and Knottnerus (1999) argued that plantations are the origin of Black-White race relations in this country, and as shown in the literature, Whites are associated with power and Blacks associated with inferiority. This relationship transfers over into the classroom, creating problems with communication. In this study, the feedback from professors and students validate that there is a disconcord in communication with one another, making the need for this particular dialogue salient. Both professors and students acknowledge their surprise in understanding the views of the others. Professors admittedly voiced a desire for tools to dealing with students from various backgrounds. Students took ownership in the importance of being assertive and becoming a mutual contributor in communicating with their professors.

One student noticed that when the group of professors and students came together that it was the students who took the initiative to spread themselves out among the professors. He noted, "I enjoyed when we came together into one room. The students spread themselves out, but I didn't see any of the teachers (professors) move." Though many factors may have contributed to this behavior, the students' perception alluded to a certain level of power or privilege on the side of the professors.

Whether the assumptions of the professors and students about one another were based on intelligence, inferiority, low expectations, or just ignorance about one another was not evaluated, however this concept is definitely an area of research that could be beneficial in improved relations between White professors and African American students.

*Eugenics*

As noted earlier the topic of Eugenics within education has been well documented for more than a hundred years in the formative years of education through various policies and practices. Though Eugenics ideals could not be observed or heard during this study, it was clear that professors owned certain assumptions about the lack of student interest. Indirectly, professors perceived that students who speak up in class or communicate with them were the ones who 'wanted' their education. Professors were surprised that students who didn't participate were very vested.

## Addressing the Research Questions

The initial research question for this study was: "What are the similarities and differences between African American undergraduate students and White professors in a difficult dialogue?" Meanings were extracted from the evaluations and interview responses to answer the question. This section will summarize the findings.

*Professor Responses*

Research question 1 was evaluated based on responses from the workshop evaluations and follow-up interviews. Table 5.1 in Chapter V showed that almost 100% of the professors either strongly agreed or agreed that others really listened to them as they spoke, felt comfortable sharing their views and experiences and heard a variety of perspectives. Eighty-six percent of the professors felt that had a better understanding of how the issue of African Americans on a predominantly White campus affects people's lives. Fourteen percent responded neutrally to understanding this issue. Statistically, six

of the seven professors felt they had a better understanding of the issue whereas one professor was neutral. The percentages were the same when asked would you be more willing to listen to differing perspectives and speak openly about ones views and experiences.

The open-ended questions highlighted a variety of viewpoints that were surprising to the professors. Some of the most pronounced responses were the fact that professors had no idea that students felt so isolated and not heard in general and in the curriculum. Professors noted a need to get to know students as individuals and to be more strategic in how they assign groups for group work. Other comments about the dialogue were that professors were interested in tools for how to involve and interact students in their classes. Several professors were interested in participating in other dialogues like this one.

*Student Responses*

Table 5.2 in Chapter V shows that ninety six percent of the students felt others were really listening and they felt comfortable sharing their views and experiences during the dialogue. Ninety percent of the students felt they heard a variety of perspectives and have a better understanding of how the issue affects people's lives. That equates to approximately 27 of the 30 students. Eighty-seven percent (26 of 30) of the students feel more willing to speak openly about their experiences and views.

Students were surprised by how the professors were unaware of their feelings. African American students were surprised by the feelings of other races of students (i.e.,

Latinos and Native Americans). Other comments that students made were that they wanted more dialogues like this one to be held.

Both students and professors either agreed or strongly agreed that others listened to them as they spoke. They also felt they had a better understanding of the issue of students of color attending predominantly White institutions. On the open-ended questions students and professors were surprised by the feelings of the others. Professors were surprised at how much knowledge the students had about the tenure and promotion process, incentives and demands of professors. Professors acknowledged that students felt their efforts were lacking and unheard on campus and the need for them to become more intentional and strategic in their classroom efforts to involve students. Professors wanted more tools and conversations surrounding this topic.

*Research Question 2*

1. What changes in behavior and thoughts occurred since their participation in since the Difficult Dialogues?

Two professors, one male and one female responded to the letter emailed out to participants of the dialogue. (Appendix B) One professor noted that regardless of the level of discomfort in difficult situation, one should not allow that discomfort to enable them to be frozen into inaction because of the unknown. Professor Jeff also noted that his thought process has changed from believing that he has all the knowledge and information when entering a conversation with someone who is different from him, to belief that both parties have knowledge and information in different areas. Both parties then have the opportunities to learn from one another. Professor also noted that now he

intentional puts himself into situations and environments of differing backgrounds, views and even parts of town.

Professor Karen acknowledged feelings of intimidation and isolation of students. She noted a need for an invitation to become engaged in topics of conversation in the classroom. She also incorporated the use of a variety of communication techniques such as board invites, personal invites, and personal conferences to get input from students. Professor Karen acknowledged that her past assumption had been that students did not talk or become involved because they were not interested. She gets more input from students on difficult topics and curriculum.

Jonnie indicated an increased communication with professors. The level of comfort with communicating with professors created higher grades and more fulfillments in pursuing education. He noted a level of comfort in talking to professors but felt the need to be more assertive and knowledgeable because of the lack of information and knowledge that professors had about students. Nakyta felt the need to know exactly where she stands on topics and to know her own history to be able to articulate her concerns effectively. Sheryl and Latoya felt that there were not a lot of changes in their interactions with professors. Both contributed their ability to communication with people easier due to their upbringing. They felt they would be comfortable talking to professors with or without the dialogue.

Both professors and students were impacted positively by their participation in the dialogue. Both groups were surprised by the feelings of each other. Both professors and students are interested in participating in more conversations and see a need for this

type of dialogues. Though students felt that what they needed was either provided in the dialogue or they already possessed the skills to accomplish, the professors felt the need to have more tools to work with students.

## Conclusions for Specific Changes

The following paragraphs discuss conclusions for the variables used for this study.

*Variable 1: Gender*

The results of the study indicated that there were no noticeable differences in the reflections that the dialogue had on males and females. The study clearly shows that females opted to participate in the study at three to one and two to one frequencies. Both males, one professor and one student, had changes in their thoughts and practices. Of the females, two females, one professor and one student had changes in their thoughts and practices. Two females, both students, noted no changes. According to the study there appear to be an increased change in thoughts and practices by males.

*Change: Educational Level*

The results of the study indicate that there is an increased level of change by the professors more than the students. Both professors report changes in their thoughts, how they practices in and out of the classroom and one professor notes that he intentionally attempts to be involved in events held in Northern part of the city an area of town that is predominantly African American. Bowen (1977) concluded that higher education, taken as a whole, is enormously effective in terms of its contributions to positive individual

and societal changes. On average, a college education produces a large increase in substantive knowledge; moderate increases in verbal skills, intellectual tolerance, esthetic sensibility, and lifelong cognitive development; and small increases in mathematical skills, rationality, and creativity. However, faculty members are unaware of culturally competent pedagogical strategies on how to respond in culturally sensitive ways, and thus they lack the ability to successfully communicate and work with learners from other cultures (Paige & Goode, 2009)

*Change: Department/ College Affiliation*

A correlation between the department affiliation of the student or professor could not be established because the small sample of the population that was available for a follow-up interview. The two professors that responded to the follow-up interviews were from the Department of Information Science and Technology and Quantitative Analysis and the College of Arts and Sciences. Students who responded to the follow-up interviews were from the colleges of Business Administration, Communication, Fine Arts and Media and Arts and Science.

*Change: Age*

A difference between the responses by age can be found. All of the professors responded a desire for more training, resources or development. LaBouvie-Vief & Diehl (1998) noted that as people age they develop a more complex understanding of emotions and seek to integrate emotions and cognition. Specifically, older adults place a heavier emphasis on personal values and experiences (Labouvie-Vief & Blanchard-Fields, 1982). Adults think dialectically when they inhabit the arena of decision-making

in which an awareness of universal rules, general moral strictures and broad patterns of causal and prescriptive reasoning ("if this is the case then I should do that") is balanced against, and constantly intersects with, the contextual imperatives of a situation (Brookfield publishing in progress).

Recently, Myers (2003) has conducted an examination of exemplary retention programs and found attention to emotional as well as cognitive factors paramount in the philosophy of one program reporting a 90% retention rate for African American students. Success was attributed to the strong ties students developed with staff (Myers). It seems that more than anything else, students liked knowing that help was available (Myers). Faculty involvement has made a difference as well. In another program involving faculty cooperation to improve retention, rates rose from 83% to 90% over four years (Myers). A third program that focused on viewing students holistically (attending to psychological as well intellectual needs) reported a 14% increase in retention rates for s over 6 years, from 65% to 79% (Myers).

## Significance of the Study

This study is significant for two reasons. First, there is a lack of literature surrounding Black students and White professors on predominantly White campuses. This lack of literature may be contributed to the following. First there is an unawareness of the existence of a communication problem between many African Americans and Whites. Secondly, there is a lack of university accountability in the retention problems of African American students. Lastly, universities relate problems with African Americans as a cultural problem rather than an instructional problem.

This study specifically examines the experiences and subsequent changes that occur as a result of participation in a Difficult Dialogue with one another. It fills in the gap in the literature and provides a solution to enhancing communication between the African American students and White professors. Secondly, this unlike other studies

actually highlights, the voices of African American students and draws conclusion based on their perceptions. This gives a better understanding of the research more beneficial as the voices of African American students are frequently omitted in the literature.

The use of dialogues for changes is documented in various arenas such as politics, entertainment, and sports; however dialogue for change efforts in retention are limited. This may be due to the hierarchical structures of facilities of higher education, where faculty accountability is left to their various departments, which are usually led by Deans and Department chairs. Though students evaluate professors, the evaluations typically are based on the goals of the course, not necessarily the difficulties faced by a particular population of students. The numbers of students graduated and how well students are prepared for the job industry, rates the successfulness universities, while negative experiences are used at the discretion of each university.

In addition to the lack of research on experiences of African American students and White professors on PWIs, the study has implications for change theory. Educational change research, in all its various forms and permutations, has meant different things in different contexts and periods. Understandably, in a hard to reach consensus over the key dilemmas in the change literature, it seems to be some ongoing difficulties and challenges when conducting research. A failure to fully analyze the contexts of change is one thought. It has been argued that educational change theorists and administrators responsible for educational change tend to have rather generalized, uncritical and underdeveloped conceptions of the context of change (Hargreaves 2005). Due to this failure to adequately examine the context at various levels (e.g. class- room,

departmental, school, district) (Wells et al. 1995, Levin 2001), there has been a relative neglect of the antecedents or contemporary conditions that precipitate/inhibit change, just as there is a temptation towards under- taking analyses in piece-meal fashion (Hopkins, 2005). Though the use of a dialogue may be a piece of the 'fashion,' it definitely is a piece that needs to utilize to include the experiences of all shareholders. Retention research should not only highlight the factors of African American students, but also take steps to expose and analyze what experiences are driving the behaviors. In this exchange, what are the experiences of African American undergraduate students that cause them difficulties, I offer to contribute to this body of retention literature that the concept of gleaning the personal experiences of students is critical in understanding the 'why' behind those issues. Secondly, the issues examined must be aimed at the exact group being targeted. In this study, professor and student experiences were unique. Institutions cannot expect to apply general practices and initiatives to address the needs of all.

## Revisiting Dialogues

Communication, or in this case dialogue, is considered a critical element in enabling people to change their attitudes and behaviors (Beckhard & Pritchard, 1992; Beer et al, 1990). Communication is also seen as a tool for diffusing dissatisfaction with the status quo in order to inspire people to change (Beer, 1980; Spector, 1989), as a mechanism for sustaining the change (Kirkpatrick, 1985), and as a way to receive feedback on what a change means to people and how they believe it will affect them

(Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992). Conversations for understanding are generally characterized by assertions (Scherr 1989) and expressives; that is, claims are made, evidence and testimony given, hypotheses examined, beliefs and feelings explored, and contentions maintained. Dialogue (Isaacs, 1993; Schein, 1993; Senge, 1990) provides an opportunity to (a) examine the assumptions, which underlie thinking, and to reflect on the implications of that thinking, (b) develop a common language among participants, and (c) create a shared context in which people learn how to talk to each other (Ashkenas & Jick, 1992).

I add to that literature that dialogues or conversations are the first step to understanding the cause of a particular behavior and how to change it. As researchers, we can expect classrooms to be more diverse. The nation's population will look dramatically different by mid-century, becoming more racially and ethnically diverse and older as it increases from about 302 million to 439 million by 2050, according to projections released today by the U.S. Census Bureau (Aizenman 2008). Current demographics indicate that 29.4% college enrollments are minority students ("Almanac," 2005), approximately 6% more than there was 15 years ago (Solomon et al 2002). Over the next two decades, however, minority enrollments are expected to grow to nearly 40% (Soloman et al 2002). We must invest time in fostering dialogues or conversations about the problems that we will continue to encounter. Inteviews and evaluations for a widespread problem that has plagued our country for decades, must utilize honest and open dialogue before programs are chosen to better serve students.

Recommendations and Implications: Practice Organizing Change Dialogues

Demographic information should be included on the program evaluation so that conclusions may be compared to determine similarities and differences among certain groups. When using the type of student where the researcher is allowing the data to reveal itself, it is important to have more information than you might expect to use. This allows for varied opportunities to look at the data, thereby making more in-depth and conclusive results.

In addition to more demographic information, another option for more data through the change in behavior of the participants would be that follow-up interviews might be set up and established at the time of the dialogue to follow progress more regularly and maintain communication and progress updates. Experts who study behavioral change believe that change must not originate out of guilt, regret or fear. Having a purposeful process in place to monitor change in thinking would bring a level of accountability and intentionality in what participants would like to practice differently. One of the most widely applied and tested in health settings is the transtheoretical model (TTM). First developed in the 1980s by alcoholism researchers James O. Prochaska and Carlo C. DiClemente, TTM presumes that at any given time, a person is in one of five stages of change: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, or maintenance. Utilizing such a model would provide various opportunities to not only monitor changes but also document them for further research (Prochaska et al, 1993).

A dialogue about difficult topics should be incorporated with a follow-up event to advance the dialogue to another step that includes tools for application of the

information obtained during the dialogue. When interviewing the participants, it was noted that participants desired more follow-up to facilitate and apply the information that was highlighted. Professors were interested in learning how they could continue to improve their instruction and make it more relevant for all learners. The researcher may also use a memorandum of understanding or agreement for researcher to have access to the participants for complete process of the dialogue to follow-up interviews then to future workshops to provide tools for development.

Utilize follow-up focus group interviews with participants to trigger and brainstorm the thought processes they used. The use of focus groups provides a different approach to qualitative data analysis. A focus group is, according to Lederman (Thomas et al, 1995), a technique involving the use of in-depth group interviews in which participants are selected because they are a purposive, although not necessarily a representative sampling of a specific population on a given topic. One of the distinct features of focus-group interviews is its group dynamics, hence the type and range of data generated through the social interaction of the group are often deeper and richer than those obtained from one-to-one interviews (Thomas et al, 1995). Focus groups could provide information about a range of ideas and feelings that individuals have about certain issues, as well as illuminating the differences in perspective between groups of individuals

## Recommendations and Implication Practices for Professors

Professors who have limited input from African American students in their classroom should use personal invitations, personal conferences and other communication tools and programs to get input from all students. Both professors in the study incorporated the strategies above and experienced increased involvement from their students. This supports the literature that poses the importance of professor involvement in student success (Jones 2001).

Students and professors should attempt to avoid assumptions about others but rather attempt to have conversations, even difficult ones to get input for improvement. The review of the literature about communication between Blacks and Whites is such that there is not a general way to communicate so one must simply attempt to have conversations without assuming that there is a certain approach with which one student communicates with others who are different. However it is more important to treat each conversation uniquely and attempt to get to know each person individually.

Expressing and hearing ones views and opinions can pose a valuable learning opportunity. Those views and opinions can change your thoughts and practices. In the format of a dialogue ones perceptions that are behind our assumptions are evaluated. The aim is to go into the whole thought process collectively. In all human relations nowadays, people generally have a way of not directly facing anything (Bohm, 1996). Dialogue is unique as it offers human beings and opportunity to operate in shared, living fields of assumptions and constructed embodied meanings. These fields tend to be fragmented, unstable, and incoherent. As people learn to perceive, inquire into, and

allow transformation of the nature of these fields, and the patterns of individual thinking and acting that inform them, they should keep open minds about the information being processed.

Professors should consider the inclusion of various backgrounds and cultures in the curriculum. Student in this dialogue across cultural backgrounds expressed frustration with their own cultures being isolated from curriculum. Professors should consider using student originated topics and projects that bring opportunities for students to share who they are and where they come from. This strategy is important in allowing students to have ownership in their learning. It also increases relevancy for student learning.

## Recommendations for Further Studies

The following are recommendation for further studies that arose from this study. Further research is needed on how to improvement the communications and interactions in the classroom between African Americans and White professors. For example, one professor incorporated the use of board invitations and personal conferences to solicit responses from all students. Studies might explore what other tools like these can be used for increased engagement of African American students. Also, further research is needed to prepare African American students on effective means of communicating problems surrounding feelings of isolations and intimidation when working with White professors. Third, mandatory professional development that addresses what is needed to teach a diverse population of students should be examined. For example, to date

professors choose their own areas of interest and/or development. Few mandatory developments are in place to address teaching diverse students.

Further research is needed in the area of student participation in curriculum development. Research supports the idea that people learn better when learning about what they are interested in. Currently students are usually given the option to pick topics of interest for individual or group projects. The university, department or the professor typically chooses general curriculum. Further research is needed in the area of addressing the needs of students from smaller cultural backgrounds such as Native Americans and biracial individual in and out of the classroom. More research is dedicated to larger minority groups such as African American, Latinos, and Asian. Lastly, dialogue across races should be examined in settings outside of the college classroom, such as K-12 classrooms, work sites, churches, and neighborhoods.

## Ending My Story

At the conception of this study, I assumed that this research was all about the problems of several African American undergraduate students at a university in the Midwest. As I worked through the process of setting up the dialogue, it still did not occur to me that the conversations meant more than just those students frequenting the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Their experience was my own experience. My passion and perseverance in the area of research was about my internal challenges in pursuing a higher education. Through the course of this study, I lived through the experiences of not just the African American students, but also through the caring and concerned

professors. These dedicated professors allowed vulnerability and courage to hear from the students they teach. As an educator, I have been encouraged to continue to professionally development as a future leader in education. I have learned that even with my power as the professional in my relationships with my students, it is crucial to have the courage to "sit down and listen." It is important to face that in my pursuit to becoming an expert, that I will forever be a 'student.' But, today, through four students and two professors, I have found the power of being a student, with a voice.

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# APPENDIX A

To: James XXXXXX

From: Monica Green
Texas A&M University, Graduate Student
RE: Request the recordings of the Difficult Dialogue

Dear Mr. Freeman,

I am writing to request the use of the audio-recordings of the event entitled, "A Difficult Dialogue: Developing Cross Cultural Relationships between Students of Color and White Professors." The audio-recordings will be transcribed and used for the purpose of research for a dissertation. My intentions are to further understand the experiences of the participants of the dialogue.

Thank you for your support in examining and highlighting the voices of African American undergraduate students and White professors.

Thanks and regards,

Monica Green

APPENDIX B

Email Script

Dear Professor/ Student,

You are being contacted because you participated in a Difficult Dialogue series entitled, "Developing Cross Cultural Relationships between White Professors and Students of Color." Your input in the dialogue was extremely useful for planning programs at the University. Your input on a follow-up study is being requested to determine any new experiences or observations since the dialogue. The time commitment for this research will be approximately one hour. An interview will be set up at a mutually agreed upon location. Only participants from the dialogue are eligible to participate. Please contact me if you would like to participate in this follow-up study. Upon receipt of your response, a convenient interview time will be set up for you.

Thanks and regards,

Monica Green
TAMU Researcher
mnebgreen@gmail.com

APPENDIX C

## "Begin to Develop Cross-Cultural Relationships"

Difficult Dialogue

April 8, 2008

1:00 p.m.

Dodge Room

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1:05 – 1:20 | Discussion 1 | 20 minutes | Both groups dialogue Simultaneously |
| 1:25- 1:45 | View Video from | 20 minutes | View video |
| 1:50-2:10 | Discussion 2 | 20 minutes | Dialogue about video |
| **2:15-2:35** | **BREAK** | 10 minutes | |
| 2:40-3:00 | View 2na Video | 20 minutes | View video |
| 3:05-3:25 | Response Dialogue Discussion #3 | 20 minutes | Dialogue about video *(video will not be viewed)* |
| 3:30 | Whole Group Discussion | 30 minutes | Both groups join and dialogue using predetermined prompts *(Video will not be viewed)* |
| Evaluation | Session Closing | 5-10 | |

APPENDIX D

# Snapshot of Professor Responses

| Interview Question 1:<br><br>Since your participation in the difficult dialogue, what has changed in your thoughts, practices, or interactions? | |
|---|---|
| Professor Participant (PP) Responses | |
| Professor Jeff | Professor Karen |
| "The take home for me was from was that if your intentions are pure, you should address that level of discomfort and as was mentioned, "Am I going to offend someone."? You know, the take home was, go ahead and say something and if you make a mistake, talk about it but don't be frozen into inaction because of the unknown."<br><br>"You can go in there and you can think well, I'm in. And I know it all and I know what's good for you right? And that kind of conversation doesn't go nearly as well as if you go in and say, I'm here and I know some things, but you know a lot of things that I don't know. So let's have a conversation and learn from each other, right? `So that a little bit of an indirect impact."<br><br>"So I have tried to put myself in some situations like those and to spend more time in North part of the city" | "I learned that students expressed feeling intimidated and need an invitation to talk or become engaged in the conversation."<br><br>"I learned that if I wanted to get feedback from students that I needed to do something to invite them to make things clear to me. I have since used personal invites, board invites and personal conferences with individual students."<br><br>"I assumed that I didn't hear from students because they weren't interested."<br><br>"In my class I teach Ethics, Morals and current issues in Philosophies. Specifically on race, I have started to hear more comments from all backgrounds." |

APPENDIX E

# Snapshot of Student Responses

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Interview Question 1:<br><br>Since your participation in the difficult dialogue, what has changed in your thoughts, practices, or interactions?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Student Participant (SP) Responses</td></tr>
<tr><td>SP1<br><br>“Well when I first started college, I never talked to the professors about anything. I would be struggling and would not speak up. I would skip classes and be absent without saying anything. Since the dialogue I communicate with professors a lot.”<br><br>“Intimidation stopped me from talking before.”<br><br>“I felt like the professors talk a lot and there was not a lot of time left for me to talk. Now I email my professors, I talk to them, I let them know when I am going to be absent and I ask how I can get the information that I might miss.”<br><br>“I even spend more time with the professors. I ask questions after class, I go to their offices. I am just more comfortable talking with professors since the dialogue. And my grades reflect that. Earlier in college, I was struggling. Now my grades are much better and I will graduate in a year.”</td><td>SP2<br><br>“I have always been somewhat comfortable talking to professors but hearing the professors say that they didn’t know students felt the way they felt or were not taught made me want to be more assertive. You have to put yourself out there no matter what the color… you have to put yourself out there.”<br><br>“Some of the ignorant teachers said that they didn’t have training but you have to be more prepared to deal with different kinds out students.”<br><br>“The biggest impact outside of the classroom, as a Black student you have to do your part. You have to know where you stand. I felt like it was my duty to polish my own history so that if I came into contact with other professors that I could articulate my concerns professionally.”</td></tr>
<tr><td>SP3<br>“Well, my mother raised me to be confident in myself so I have always been very comfortable speaking up. So before and after the dialogue I pretty much operated the same.”<br><br>“I was very active as a student leader on campus and the more I got involved with advising students the more I found that’s what I would like to do.”</td><td>SP4<br>“I actually don’t remember very much from the dialogue. My mom is White and my dad is Black. I was around both families and so that exposure helped me to learn how to communicate through differences.”</td></tr>
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