

2015

Challenges African American Students Face When Adjusting to Predominantly White Institutions

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Walden University

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Argyle Smallwood

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

Challenges African American Students Face
When Adjusting to Predominantly White Institutions

by

Argyle J. Smallwood

MBA, Strayer University, 2007

BS, Elizabeth City State University, 2004

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

October 2015

Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to explore the challenges African American students face when adjusting to predominantly White institutions and to review these institutions' diversity policies to determine whether the institutions are aligned with African American students' needs. The study was based on critical race theory to examine whether and how racial microaggressions influence racial tension at the predominantly White institutions selected for this study. The research questions were used to gauge (a) the level of comfort among African American students attending one of these predominantly White institutions, (b) their overall satisfaction with their decisions to attend the institution, and (c) whether an active diversity policy could be found at that institution. Qualitative data were collected from a sample of 107 African American students attending 1 of the 6 predominantly White institutions selected for this study. Descriptive statistics of cross-sectional survey data, along with the diversity policy within each institution, were employed to measure (a) the mean and standard deviation of participants' satisfaction with the environment their campus provided, (b) the decision to attend their institution, and (c) the awareness of their institution's diversity policy. The chi-square test was conducted to test student awareness of the diversity policy and their satisfaction with the organization of the policy. The results from this test were significant ($p < .01$), showing that the participants were aware of their institution's diversity policy and the protection it provides. Through effective policy changes, predominantly White institutions can positively affect graduation and retention rates among African American students and provide a greater opportunity to promote positive social change.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Higher education institutions have evolved during the past century. According to Barnett (2011), “Recent shifts in many economic and socio-demographic factors of university environments have brought about unprecedented changes in systems of higher education” (p. 131). Although these changes are evident, some universities are slow in accomplishing real change and implementation, forcing hidden curriculums of diversity on students. According to Esposito (2011), “The hidden curriculum of diversity is the informal interactions and lessons students learn regarding gender, race, difference, and power” (p. 145). For example, issues of diversity can be indirectly imposed on students without a formal lesson plan or syllabus. The indirect imposition of diversity on a student dates to 1933 when Carter G. Woodson authored *The Mis-education of the Negro*. Asante (1991) highlighted Woodson’s belief that “African Americans have been educated away from their own culture and traditions and attached to the fringes of European culture; thus dislocated from themselves and often valorizing European culture to the detriment of their own heritage” (Asante, 1991, p. 170).

As the importance of higher education increases, Rodgers and Summers (2008) showed how more African American students are deciding to move forward in their educational endeavors. Rodgers and Summers highlighted in a Department of Educational Statistics report that “. . . in 2001, 87.1% of African American undergraduates attended predominantly White institutions” (p. 172). Because Rodgers and Summers’ research showed that 87.1% of African American students are deciding to attend predominantly White institutions, questions may arise concerning retention and graduation rates. Rodgers and Summers highlighted, “Predominantly

White institutions have not been as effective as historically Black colleges and universities in retaining and conferring degrees upon African American college students” (p. 171). Further, recent statistics reported in the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2007) highlighted that the graduation rate among African American students is 20 points below the rate of their White counterparts at predominantly White institutions.

With “87.1% of African American undergraduates deciding to attend a predominantly White institution” (Rodgers & Summers, 2008, p. 172), questions arise regarding the difficulty for these institutions to retain and graduate them. Statistical research has shown that African American students find it difficult to transition into their predominantly White institution. “According to the most recent statistics, the nationwide college graduation rate for African American students stands at an appallingly low rate of 40% which is 20 points below the 60% rate for White students” (Blankenship, 2010, pp. 26–27). Although predominantly White institutions strives to enroll more African American students, “graduates of predominantly White institutions account for a disproportionately low percentage of degrees awarded to African American students” (Rodgers & Summers, 2008, p. 172).

Slater (2007) highlighted causes such as a lack of a nurturing environment and the absence of college graduates within the family as factors contributing to the lack of a comfortable learning environment for African American first-time and transfer students at predominantly White institutions. Although reviewing articles in other journals such as *The Australian Educational Researcher* and *The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning*, Wilkinson (2009) and Chan (2005) discussed policies concerning

diversity, but much emphasis was placed on gender and not issues concerning racial/ethnic diversity. According to Iverson (2007),

Diversity action plans are a primary means by which U.S. postsecondary institutions articulate their professed commitment to an inclusive and equitable climate for all members of the university and advance strategies to meet the challenges of an increasingly diverse society. (p. 586)

As the climate of predominantly White institutions changes, policies need to be in place that protect the specific needs of African American students. Many predominantly White institutions, such as North Carolina State University and East Carolina University, have offices of institutional equity and diversity in place that are responsible for creating diversity policies for their institutions. Although these offices have created diversity policies, this study will determine whether these policies are improving comfort levels for African American first-time and transfer students and whether the offices are increasing retention and graduation rates of African American students attending one of the predominantly White institutions in this study.

This case study is based on experiences African American students encountered while attending one of the predominantly White institutions selected for this study. I proposed that these students would share positive and negative personal experiences they had while attending their predominantly White institution. This study built on the positive experiences shared and assessed the negative experiences to determine the causes and whether the predominantly White institution could have protect the students better. My vision was that all predominantly White institutions involved in this study will create a diversity policy that is conducive to what African

American students need by collaborating with these students to show that their opinions matter and change what is not working.

Background

Achrazoglou (2010) and Aries (2008) conducted studies on diversity at predominantly White institutions, and they discussed how African American students enrolled and adjusted to these institutions. The researchers sought to educate others on African American students' struggles, not necessarily to address the methods established to protect the students.

Achrazoglou stressed the importance of diversity, stating that "it needs to move beyond tolerance because tolerance has a negative connotation" (p. 24). When teaching people to tolerate those races and cultures different from them, it forces them to accept each other even if they do not agree to the mingling of races. In this study, a report was established by the Pew Research Center highlighting "how Generation Next is the most tolerant of any generation on social issues like immigration, race, and sexual preference" (Achrazoglou, 2010, p. 24). In 2008, Aries highlighted that Amherst College, a predominantly White institution, attracted talented minority students to its campus hoping to provide a measure of social equity. In identifying and attracting this caliber of students, Amherst College administrators implemented policies to retain them.

From Aries's study,

"30% of the student population reported changes in the way they saw people of both different races and classes; an additional 32% reported having learned something about people of either other races or other classes; and of the remaining 38%, just over half felt that they had gained something from the classroom comments of peers who differed from them in race and class" (pp. 1–2).

As early as 1976, Ronald Gross and the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation assessed methods and implications concerning diversification of predominantly White institutions. Gross (1976) highlighted the following implications in assisting these institutions in becoming more diverse:

1. More options and possibilities for students graduating from open high school programs, which allows students to complete the high school curriculum outside of the formal school structure.
2. Loosening traditional requirements for college entrance.
3. Changes in the uninterrupted course or continuous enjoyment of a course through 16 or more years of schooling.
4. Changes in the students themselves.
5. The theoretical implication concerning the curriculum and trends supporting the concept of life-long education. (p. 1)

These implications resulted in a change in how students and educators view lifelong learning. As the demographics changed, educators had to change their teaching styles and find a pedagogical format appropriate for their diverse learners.

Problem Statement

After the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, “The nation made great strides toward opening the doors of education to all students and progress toward integrated schools continued through the late 1980s” (The Leadership Conference, 2012, para. 2). This ruling helped establish the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which, according to Dorsey (2008), “prohibits an employer or organization from discriminating against individuals because of their race, color, religion, sex, or

national origin” (p. 18). This act also gave the U.S. attorney general the right to investigate schools that he or she believed were still participating in discriminatory activities. This resulted in an increase of African American students furthering their education at any institution they chose. Although this ruling gave African Americans equal rights to attend any school they chose, schools of today have gradually become segregated. According to Kozol, Tatum, Eaton, and Gandara (2010), “charter schools, favored by the White House are even more profoundly segregated than most other public schools and magnet schools, with a few exceptions have failed for more than 40 years to achieve more than a pittance of diversity” (p. 29).

One study by Lum (2008) demonstrated the efforts that predominantly White institutions are taking to ensure that African American students find comfort at their institutions. Lum (2008) stressed how predominantly White institutions are diversifying their campuses by “helping minority students create a space of their own. These efforts consisted of encouraging students with similar interests to live among each other” (Lum, 2008, p. 11). To make this an easier process, “ethnic-themed housing was created to provide supportive environments to minorities and underrepresented students at predominantly White institutions” (Lum, 2008, p. 12).

By helping African American students create a space of their own, it helps some of them find a fit in this foreign culture, but does not protect them from being discriminated against. According to Grier-Reed, Ehlert, and Dade (2011), “providing a safe space in which African American students can find support and encouragement for reflecting on and making sense of their experiences, they have a better chance of thriving in this new environment” (p. 23). Changing the factors and mindsets of individuals who discriminate or exert racism upon

minorities is difficult to accomplish. Other cultures have been saturated with stereotypical images of what African Americans are and how they act and no matter how wrong it is, some White students have a strong misconception of this minority group. For example, at some predominantly White institutions, “African American men are often described by their White counterparts using terms such as dangerous, endangered, uneducable, and lazy, which generally reinforce negative stereotypes to which some non-Black peer, teachers, and faculty subscribe” (Strayhorn, 2008, p. 502). Although these factors are present, further research should be conducted to ensure that predominantly White institutions assure that their diversity policy protects their African American students. This diversity policy should cover issues such as isolation, alienation, discrimination, and racism as it pertains to race, ethnicity, gender, sex, sexual orientation, age, and disabilities. Love (2008) demonstrated “predominantly White institutions with fewer minority students treated them as symbols and many experienced isolation on campus rather than living as individuals sending the message that maintaining diversity was not an institutional priority” (p. 42). This policy should also focus on the appropriate penalty that students choosing not to abide by these rules will face. African American students should feel protected while attending predominantly White institutions and once a sense of protection is reached, these institutions should see an increase in academic success, retention, and graduation rates among African American students.

The importance of a diversity policy derives from some United States colleges and universities establishing student learning outcomes that entail diversity education as part of their general education requirements. U.S. colleges and universities have linked diversity education with a students’ emotional outlook of their experiences. Terms such as *respect* and *appreciation*

served as the platform of the diversity policies. These terms “exemplify a policy position that, one, such recognition is accessible to the student; two, that it is achievable within the cognitive sphere; and three, that the object of respect or appreciation remains a defined, understandable external entity or concept” (Swain, 2012, p. 4). The Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) and the Evergreen State University has set strategic diversity policies in action and has achieved favorable results. In MCLA implementing their strategic diversity plan they have been able to teach their students how to “function in a multicultural world” (Swain, 2012, p. 4). The Evergreen State University’s strategic plan assists their campus community in bridging the multicultural gap. The outcomes from this policy resulted in “their students’ ability to harmonize differences in order to advance community and social connections” (Swain, 2012, p. 4).

By examining predominantly White institutions’ diversity policy using a case study strategy, the focus should be on the effectiveness of this policy currently in place and the students’ awareness of what it is and what it entails. With this understanding, researchers and policymakers can build upon the aspects of the current diversity policy ensuring that it is effective and with the assistance of a small sample of the student population, change those aspects that are not. Administrators, faculty, staff, campus security, and students can plan information sessions and seminars to educate the entire University community on what the diversity policy is and how it serves African American students.

Nature of the Study

This case study will explore African American students’ perceptions toward the efforts predominantly White institutions have taken in helping them feel comfortable in their new

environment. It is hypothesized that the findings of this study will reveal that predominantly White institutions have diversity policies or diversification initiatives in place for African American students but these efforts have not fully worked due to lack of awareness on the students' part or lack of satisfaction with the level of protection the diversity policy offers. For example, Davis (2007) stressed the following:

Syracuse University hosted African American and Hispanic Weekends on their campus bringing minority prospects to campus for pre-orientation to the many campus activities, both social and academic, that Syracuse University offered. After conducting interviews with several attendees of the Minority Reception, friendship was a theme that surfaced through all of the students' data. These receptions allowed them to establish friendships that followed them and made the transition to college a little easier. Although these friendships made it a little easier, African American students were still bombarded with racially motivated distractions making it difficult for them to reach the academic expectations set by the families and communities. (p. 48)

Hinton (2010) agreed with Davis's views on higher education and focused on "the current higher education paradigm works well for those who inherit the legacy of a college education, but as the demographics of those who comprise colleges shift, there has been no more to make the culture more inclusive" (p. 43). The lack of success that predominantly White institutions are experiencing in implementing a diversity policy that is conducive to African American students' needs continues to hurt African American first-time and transfer students by making them feel isolated and unwelcomed sometime resulting in them choosing to quit.

Research Questions

This study addressed three guiding research questions:

1. What is the current level of comfort for African American students attending a predominantly White institution?
2. What is the current level of awareness concerning diversity policies among predominantly White institutions and African American students attending predominantly White institutions?
3. How satisfied are African American students with their decision to attend a predominantly White institution?

The null hypothesis for this study is that upon creation or revision of a diversity policy there will be no changes in the level of comfort African American students feel when attending a predominantly White institution. The alternative hypothesis for this study is that African American students will feel more comfortable attending a predominantly White institution once a diversity policy has been revised or created because they will feel protected by it. In the case of this study, the independent variable are African American students attending a predominantly White institution and the dependent variable is the effectiveness of a diversity policy in increasing African American students level of comfort while attending the predominantly White institution in this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the case study was to explore the perception of African American students toward their predominantly White institution's diversity policy as it pertains to their overall comfort level to this new environment. This examined the difference between each

predominantly White institution's diversity policy and the overall satisfaction of the African American students attending.

Theoretical Base

The declaration stating that “all people are created equal” is important when focusing on how African American students adjust to predominantly White institutions. This declaration calls for both predominantly White institutions and African American students to change their perspectives as to what they should expect from each other. James, Marrero, and Underwood (2010) interviewed three young African American women concerning their experiences at a predominantly White institution. “While interviewing these ladies, they complained about the emotional stress they encountered being confined by labels and the importance of finding an effective method from which to draw strength” (James et al., p. 61). The participants also highlighted how this predominantly White institution did not provide a place for them where they could feel free to let their hair down and be themselves. Although these interviews provided the participants' personal perspectives of this predominantly White institution, it did not provide any information concerning any communications they had with the policymakers at this institution. With this being stated, the conceptual framework of this study was based on the critical race theory examining “racism as normal in American culture, White over color hierarchy as it exists mentally and materially, and race as a social construction” (Wallace & Brand, 2012, p. 346).

Critical race theory is the theoretical framework for this study because it analyzes a combination of social and cultural factors and governmental realities of color to expose unwelcome influence on race. Critical race theory is best aligned with this study because when

examining diversity policies at predominantly White institutions and how it helps African American students adjust to their campus, it brought light to racial tensions evident on these campuses. It sheds light on the myth that “racial justice in the United States is forward-moving, progressive, and eventually triumphant” (Woodward, 2011, p. 23).

Wallace and Brand (2012) demonstrated that “critical race theorists seek to unmask and expose racism in its many permutations to reveal the deeply ingrained racial hegemonic structures enmeshed in American cultures in an attempt to eliminate racism” (p. 346). For any changes to be made at predominantly White institutions, leaders must become culturally inclusive in order to recognize racism as it occurs and understand that “race still matters” (Wallace & Brand, 2012, p. 346).

Gillborn highlighted how Derrick Bell called critical race theory interest-divergence. “Derrick Bell’s concept of interest divergence argues that moments of racial progress are won when White power-holders perceive self-interest in accommodating the demands of minoritised groups; such moments are unusual and often short-lived” (Gillborn, 2013, p. 477). The premise of interest-divergence derives from further exclusion and oppression of African Americans in today’s society further justifying the importance of predominantly White institution’s implementation of a formal diversity policy at their institution. To improve the overall educational standards among African American students at predominantly White institutions, educators must make a commitment to close the existing achievement gap. Unless this is done “education reforms that systematically disadvantage Black students and demonstrably widen educational inequalities will continue to increase” (Gillborn, 2013, p. 477).

Another theorist by the name of Daniel Solorzano used critical race theory to examine racial microaggressions and how they influence the collegiate racial climate. Solorzano (2007) further used critical race theory to “study how race and racism, in their micro-level forms, affect the structures, processes, and discourses of the collegiate environment” (p. 63). With the theoretical framework of critical race theory, Solorzano concluded that for African American students to succeed academically a positive campus environment must be created. If a positive collegiate racial climate is not presented to them it will result in “poor academic performance and high dropout rates among African American students” (Solorzano, 2007, p. 63).

Tara Yosso’s interpretation of critical race theory “shifts the research lens away from a deficit view of communities of color as places full of cultural poverty disadvantages, and instead focuses on and learns from the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged” (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Yosso demonstrated how students of color comes from different backgrounds and brings those experiences into the classroom. This makes it imperative for the scope of education to change for predominantly White institutions to capture the strengths of African American students in an attempt to focus on the struggles of social and racial injustices in higher education.

The theoretical framework behind critical race theory resulted in further examining (a) the level of comfort among African American students attending a predominantly White institution, (b) their awareness concerning diversity policies among predominantly White institutions, and (c) their level of satisfaction with their decision to attend a predominantly White institution. In using critical race theory, this study brought attention to the issues surrounding

African American students at predominantly White institutions and determined if issues of race, discrimination, and diversity were related to these issues.

Definition of Terms

Critical race theory: The critical race theory is “a form of oppositional scholarship challenging the experiences of Whites as the normative standards and grounds its conceptual framework in the distinctive experiences of people of color” (Closson, 2010, p. 264).

Diversity: Diversity is the “range of differences among people in the community; an attitude that recognizes the value and contributions of all members of the community; and a commitment to respect and provide equitable treatment for members of the community” (Central Michigan University, 2011, para.1).

Discrimination: Discrimination has been defined as “verbal and physical attacks targeting one’s racial minority” (Jackson, Yoo, Guevarra, & Harrington, 2012, p.241).

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU): Historically Black Colleges and Universities “were established to serve the educational needs of Black Americans and became the principle mean for providing postsecondary education to Black Americans” (United States Department of Education, 1991, para.1).

Environment: The educational environment is “the diverse physical locations, contexts, and cultures in which students learn” (Great Schools Partnerships, 2014).

Predominantly White institution: Predominantly White Institutions also known as majority serving institutions, was originally established to educate and serve White students.

Prejudice: Prejudice has been defined as “negative bias toward a particular group of people.” (Utsey, Ponterotto, & Porter, 2008, p. 339).

Racism: Racism is “based on beliefs and reflected in behaviors that accepts race as a biological entity and maintain that racial groups, other than one’s own, are intellectually, psychologically, and/or physically inferior.” (Utsey, Ponterotto, & Porter, 2008, p. 339).

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study was based on the assumption that all participants will honestly and accurately answer all questions pertaining to their overall satisfaction with their predominantly White institution and their institutions’ diversity policy. This study was limited to African American students attending predominantly White institutions in North Carolina. Therefore, the results of this study could not be generalized to the entire population of African American students within North Carolina.

The second limitation was the willingness of all potential participants to participate in a controversial study such as this. Some students were afraid of what the outcomes will mean for them in the long run. To eliminate these fears, each participant’s identity remained anonymous.

The last limitation considered by the researcher was the willingness of the predominantly White institutions selected for this study to participate in a study concerning diversity. Some institutions felt that the results may place them in a negative light ultimately deterring African American students from attending their institution. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all predominantly White institutions within North Carolina.

Significance of the Study

The study of the effectiveness of the diversity policy that predominantly White institutions have in place to better assist African American transfer students in adjusting to their environment is significant because it takes previous research concerning diversity at

predominantly White institutions a step further. Current research focuses on the importance of diversity and how “it needs to move beyond tolerance because tolerance has a negative connotation implying that the tolerator has the power to not tolerate” (Achrazoglou, 2010, p. 24). Diversity is much greater than tolerating an individual which stresses the importance of predominantly White institutions to have a diversity policy in place that effectively assists African American students adjust to their new environment. Some predominantly White institutions such as Amherst College and Iowa Wesleyan College have created and institutionalized methods in an attempt to make African American students more comfortable, but current research does not place emphasis on diversity policies of African American transfer students. For example, Amherst College places a lot of effort on “identifying and attracting talented minority students to their campus with the hope of offering opportunities for social and economic mobility to those students” (Aries, 2008, p. B47). Iowa Wesleyan College is known for their “high acceptance of African American women students and how in the 1900s, they had more African American women graduates than any other predominantly White institution in the North, Midwest, or West” (Breux, 2010, p. 159). Both of these institutions have increased the presence of African American students on their campus, but no emphasis has been placed on the creation of a diversity policy that will assist them in setting and enforcing policies that protect minority students from feeling isolated, alienated, and discriminated against by the majority population. African American students should feel protected while attending predominantly White institutions and once a sense of security is reached, these institutions should see an increase in academic success, retention, and graduation rates among African American students.

Summary

This study examined the perceptions of African American students' attitudes towards their predominantly White institution of higher education and their institution's diversity policy. This study also determined if the policy on hand meets the needs of African American students or if any changes need to be made to capture what is required to retain and graduate these students. Predominantly White institutions need to make changes to help African American students feel more comfortable in their new environment and it should start with their diversity policy. Through effective communication, understanding, and leadership, these institutions' policymakers can positively affect African American student matriculation by involving more of them in revising the policy, which will create a greater opportunity to promote positive social change.

Section 2 includes an extensive review of literature beginning with an overview of the many layers of diversity which define diversity and explain its importance. The section also presents information about discriminatory practices in higher education and methods predominantly White institutions have created to produce a more diverse campus, and it concludes with a review of diversity policies in action within higher education.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review begins with an overview of diversity and its importance to African American students at predominantly White institutions. I will also review discriminatory issues African American students have faced while adjusting to predominantly White institutions. I will then review the methods predominantly White institutions have institutionalized to help African Americans smoothly transition into their new campus environment. In future sections, I will examine the use of a diversity policy in helping African American students find a perfect fit in their new environment and enforcement strategies used to protect minority students from discrimination.

I gathered information for this literature review from journals, dissertations, and professional websites. I also reviewed diversity policies from various universities to gather information concerning the role that these policies play in African American student retention and graduation rates.

The Many Layers of Diversity

Diversity can be defined and interpreted in many ways. The University of Tennessee at Knoxville (2008) defined *diversity* as a “commitment to recognizing and appreciating the variety of characteristics that make individuals unique in an atmosphere that promotes and celebrates individual and collective achievement.” Many definitions of *diversity* exist, but its importance in higher education is universal.

Diversity helps us learn and understand ourselves and others. Striving to learn about others decreases an individual’s limited perceptions of others who are perceived as different

while increasing the many possibilities available outside the individual's normal environment. When participating in diverse communities, walls built on discrimination are torn down and interpersonal skills, which in the past have been based on prejudice, are improved. Diversity's foundation has been built on inclusion and inclusiveness. According to Central Michigan University (2011), "inclusiveness helps us build trust by promoting understanding and breaking down prejudice. A community can only be strong and healthy when built upon trust" (para.2).

Trust is important when dealing with a diverse population, especially in higher education. For minority students to thrive, they must feel comfortable in their environments. For students to feel comfortable, they must trust their surroundings and the people in it. To ensure this comfort, institutions must actively participate in diversity.

These institutions must define diversity in a way that is inclusive to every student enrolled. "Diversity needs to move beyond tolerance because tolerance has a negative connotation. To tolerate and to be tolerated involves an unequal relationship implying that the tolerator has the power to not tolerate" (Achrazoglou, 2010, p. 24). For predominantly White institutions to successfully move toward diversity, they must encourage students to overcome the negativity and rid themselves of unfair biases and attitudes concerning populations different from their own. Achrazoglou (2010) stressed that "instead of mere tolerance; predominantly White institutions should see their goals as creating welcoming environments, understanding and appreciating differences and developing cultural competencies that model compassion and trust" (p. 24).

Along with compassion and trust comes the need for change. Hinton (2010) stressed that "as the demographics of those who comprise college shift, there has been no move to make the

culture more inclusive; rather, the student must fit narrow cultural norms” (p. 43). This is neither fair to them nor conducive to a comfortable environment if they are expected to change instead of their educational environments changing. Institutions should focus more on creating an environment that is conducive to minority student success, which, in turn, will increase their retention and graduation rates.

When all important parties have accepted change, equal opportunity must be presented. According to Waldron (2007), “If equality of opportunity is present, one’s starting point in life does not have to be a permanent barrier” (p. 33). Barriers such as poverty, finances, and others may be impossible to change, but according to Waldron (2007), “Institutions must ensure that these students find the academic experience and services that meet their particular needs” (p.33). Student needs differ regarding race, and what works for the majority group may not work for their minority counterparts. For example, Baruch College valued the needs of its minority students by changing its practices. Waldron (2007) highlighted that Baruch College, for example, “opened more weekend, evening, summer and winter classes; addressed academic difficulty immediately; and established learning communities of small groups of students with intensive faculty involvement to help improve student satisfaction and achievement, retention, and ultimately graduation rates” (p. 33).

Historical Implications Toward Diversity

Diversity is a word that has been used for decades. For more than a century, African Americans sought to ensure access to equal educational opportunity (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 1). Parents of African American students were willing to create legal battles to achieve educational equality. After many years of legal battles, the actions of

attorneys representing parents and school children chipped away at legal segregation in schools (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 2). Court rulings protected African American students when racism was rampant.

The earliest reported case concerning the desegregation of schools was *Roberts v. The City of Boston*, which dates back to 1849. This case was centered on parental concerns that African American students were not educated at the same level as their White counterparts. Although the schools in Boston were not segregated, African American students believed they were at a disadvantage because White teachers and students in the integrated schools harassed and mistreated them (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 3). After numerous years of submitting petitions that were ultimately denied, it was not until 1849 that these petitions were taken to court. Under the legal leadership of attorneys Charles Sumner and Robert Morris and the lead plaintiff Benjamin Roberts, African American parents explained how their children had been denied enrollment in all Boston schools except the segregated Smith School (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 3). Although the arguments were valid, this case was unsuccessful because “special provisions were made for African American students to have a school” (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 3)

The next attempt towards desegregation of schools were the Kansas cases which occurred during 1881 – 1949 which was nearly 70 years. During this span, “the Kansas Supreme Court became the venue for the constitutional question of public schools and segregation” (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 5). Although Kansas’ “free state heritage, central geographical location, and makeup of its population positioned them to play a central role in the major questions of educational freedom and equality, they passed a statute specifically allowing

cities to conduct separate elementary schools” (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,”

para. 6). The 12 cases that occurred during this 70-year span were:

- *Elijah Tinnon v. The Board of Education of Ottawa* (1881) in which Elijah Tinnon fought for equal educational opportunity in Kansas for his seven year old son when he was “educated in a separate room within the Central School because of his race” (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 8).
- *Knox v. The Board of Education of Independence* (1891) in which “Jordan Knox of Independence fought for his two daughters to attend a school closer to their home that was designated for White students” (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 11).
- *Reynolds v. The Board of Education of Topeka* (1903) in which “William Reynolds fought to have his son Raoul attend a newly erected school for White students, but lost due to the fact that Kansas Supreme Court ruled that Kansas was able to operate separate elementary schools” (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 12).
- *Special Legislation for Kansas City, Kansas* (1905), in which “Mamie Richardson brought suit when she was not allowed to attend the Morning Hill High School, sparking the Kansas Legislature of 1905 giving Kansas City schools permission to operate separate high schools” (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 13).
- *Cartwright v. The Board of Education of Coffeyville* (1906) in which “Eva Cartwright along with her mother attempted to register in an all White sixth grade class and was denied” (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 14). Eva’s father, Bud

Cartwright along with his lawyer James A. Guy issued and successfully won a law suit issued against Kansas City Schools. “The Kansas Supreme Court determined that Kansas could not deny an African American acceptance in all White classes/schools in cities of the second class” (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 14).

- *Rowles v. The Board of Education of Wichita* (1907) in which Sallie Rowles won the case for her daughter to attend a predominantly White school closer to her home, but a couple years later Wichita Board of Education issued a resolution permitting their schools to separate schools based on race to “keep with the ideals and wishes of a majority of patrons” (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 15).
- *Williams v. The Board of Education of Parsons* (1908) in which “D.A. Williams fought for his children to attend a school close to their home due to the fact that his children had to travel a mile away over dangerous railroad traffic” (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 16).
- *Woolridge v. The Board of Education of Galena* (1916) in which W. E. Woolridge and other parents fought to keep their children in integrated classrooms when representatives of Galena tried to convince Kansas Legislature to allow them to segregate schools.
- *Thurman-Watts v. The Board of Education, Coffeyville* (1924) in which Celia Thurman-Watts fought for her daughter to be admitted into Roosevelt Junior High when she was denied. It was determined that prejudice was a factor in her daughter’s rejection; they won their case, and African American students gained access to all high schools.

- *Wright v. The Board of Education Topeka* (1929) in which George Wright fought to have his daughter attend a White school closer to home because of the dangers walking 20 blocks to school caused. “Wright lost this case because the Board provided bus transportation for his daughter ensuring safe travels to school” (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 20).
- *Graham v. The Board of Education of Topeka* (1941) in which Ulysses Graham fought for African American seventh and eighth graders to be granted the same educational rights as their White counterparts and be allowed access to junior high schools.
- *Webb v. School District No. 90, South Park Johnson County* (1949) in which after a new school was built, African American students were forced to attend the old, outdated school while White students attended the new one. African American students tried to enroll in the new school but were denied due to race and color. “Webb and other parents pressed the issue and gained support from attorney Elijah Scott who took their case before the Kansas Supreme Court. Kansas Supreme Court ruled that black students must be granted equal educational facilities as Whites and African American students were admitted to the new school” (National Park Service, 2010f, “*Related Cases*,” para. 22).

Along with the 12 cases listed above, five were important in desegregating schools. They were:

- *Belton (Bulah) v. Gebhart*
- *Bolling v. Sharpe*
- *Briggs v. Elliott*

- *Brown v. Board of Education*
- *Davis v. County School Board*

The *Belton v. Gebhart* case concerned parents who were forced to send their children to subpar schools in Wilmington versus local schools in their community. The *Bulah v. Gebhart* case concerned “Sarah Bulah, a parent who made several attempts to convince the Delaware Department of Public Instruction to provide bus transportation for black children in the town of Hockessin” (National Park Service, 2010a, “*Belton (Bulah) v Gebhart*,” para. 1). Louis Redding presented the cases at the Delaware Court of Chancery and “the Chancellor ruled that the plaintiffs were being denied equal protection of the law and ordered that the eleven children involved be immediately admitted to the White school” (National Park Service, 2010a, “*Belton (Bulah) v Gebhart*,” para 3).

The *Bolling v. Sharpe* case concerned “Gardner Bishop and the Consolidated Parents Group, Inc. crusade to end segregating in Washington, DC” (National Park Service, 2010b, “*Bolling v Sharpe*,” para. 1). This case was brought about when “11 young African American students were denied admission into John Philip Sousa Junior High School” (National Park Service, 2010b, “*Bolling v Sharpe*,” para. 1). The representative from the NAACP expressed that this denial was based solely on segregation and built the case on it.

The *Briggs v. Elliott* case concerned Harry Briggs’ “suit against R.W. Elliott, the president of the school board for Clarendon County, South Carolina” (National Park Service, 2010c, “*Briggs v Elliott*,” para. 1). After African American parents request to provide buses for African American students were ignored, this suit was filed on the basis of segregation. “The

three-judge panel at the U.S. District Court ordered the schools to begin equalization of schools” (National Park Service, 2010c, “*Briggs v Elliott*,” para. 2).

The *Brown v. Board of Education* is one of the most popular landmark cases concerning discrimination within the United States educational system and the most influential to African Americans. In this case the court decided that separate but equal was unconstitutional. This verdict resulted in laws and cases that catered to the majority population to be struck down so that African Americans would have equal educational rights. “The Brown decision initiated education and social reform throughout the United States and was a catalyst in launching the modern Civil Rights Movement” (O’Brine & Kritsonis, 2008, p. 2). This case “overturned the Supreme Court *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling and involved thirteen parents that took their children to schools in their neighborhoods and attempted to enroll them for the upcoming school year” (National Park Service, 2010d, *Brown v Board of Education*,” para. 1). They were all denied and were forced to enroll their children in African American only schools far from their homes. This sparked the suit against the Topeka Board of Education. “Initially the U.S. District Court ruled against the plaintiffs, but the psychological evidence that African American children were adversely affected by segregation was later quoted by the U.S. Supreme Court in its 1954 opinion” (National Park Service, 2010d, “*Brown v Board of Education*,” para 2).

Davis v. County School Board involved 450 African American students’ 2-week strikes to protest poor school conditions. “In May 1951 two local NAACP members filed a suit on the African American students’ behalf asking that the state law requiring segregated schools in Virginia be struck down” (National Park Service, 2010e, “*Davis v County School Board*,” para. 2). Although their request was rejected, “the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the ruling ordering

desegregation” (National Park Service, 2010e, “*Davis v County School Board*,” para. 2). This caused a lot of kickback resulting in the “Board of Supervisors for Prince Edward County refusing to appropriate any funds for the County School Board for the period 1959-1964, effectively closing the public schools rather than integrating them” (National Park Service, 2010e, “*Davis v County School Board*,” para. 2).

Discriminatory Practices

Racism, discrimination, and/or prejudice have been an issue that African Americans have been dealing with for years. They have been dealing with this in their personal lives and it is growing rampant in higher education. Evidence of how this affects education was present in the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision to desegregate schools “with all deliberate speed” (Dorris, 2009, p. 1). Although these measures were put into place many educational institutions put up road blocks in an effort to slow any future progress from happening. To examine this problem further Ashburn-Nardo and Smith (2008) focused on “whether individual differences in extropunitive and intropunitive responses to prejudice account for African Americans’ concrete attitudes towards school” (p. 479). The following extropunitive qualities were examined:

- Distrust.
- Dislike.
- Discriminatory expectations of Whites.

Ashburn-Nardo & Smith (2008) examined the intropunitive quality concerning the “internalization of society’s disparaging views” (p. 479). All of these qualities were examined “to determine if they negatively affect how African American students view higher education at

predominantly White institutions” (Ashburn-Nardo & Smith, p. 480). In measuring the importance of all of these qualities, African Americans examined school negatively when Whites distributed extropunitive qualities, but intropunitive qualities did not affect them. Dahlvig (2010) reported that some African American students experienced some unanticipated challenges resulting from the fact that “most African American students leave their home environments where supportive families and communities sheltered them from some of the harsh realities of racism and prejudice” (p. 370) When African American students are introduced to the harsh realities that this world can bring it prevents them from adjusting and adapting to the environment that higher educational institutions provide. These harsh realities can also prevent African American students from being academically successful.

Daniel (2007) used the lens of critical race theory to examine the experiences of minority students at predominantly White institutions to “increase the number of students, faculty, and administrators of color; a curriculum reflecting their historical and contemporary experiences; programs supporting recruitment, retention, and graduation of students of color; and a college mission reinforcing institutions’ commitment to pluralism (p. 27). Harris (2007) specifically focused on the issues that African American women experience when adjusting to predominantly White institutions. “Historically marginalized racial groups are still being subjected to varying degrees of prejudice, discrimination, and bias that temporarily divert their personal journey towards intellectual advancements” (Harris, 2007, p. 56). African American women are faced with the daunting task of having to defend both their gender and race which can produce unwanted stress. To eliminate the stress associated with being an African American female professor, this professor “co-created cultural contracts with her students to ensure that their

stereotypical views of her race and gender do not supersede their understanding and perceptions of her role and identity as their professor” (Harris, 2007, p. 58). This study showed that although predominantly White institutions have tried to diversify their campuses, African American professors and students must create their own measure to prevent being discriminated against.

Since African Americans are placed in situations where they must create their own preventive measures to prevent discrimination, predominantly White institutions have to work harder to protect their minority students. Predominantly White institutions must find ways to change the mindsets of the majority population to create a place for minority students to call home. Minor (2008) examined Mississippi and North Carolina’s progress towards desegregating their campuses. “Although steps have been made towards desegregation findings show that enrollment by race across institutional sectors remains considerably segregated” (Minor, 2008, p. 870). As a result of the failed attempts that Mississippi and North Carolina made in desegregating and diversifying their campus, initiatives were mandated forcing them to change their ways of doing business. Minor (2008) highlighted how “North Carolina’s consent decree allowed students to choose state institutions based solely on programs offered and how Mississippi granted Historically Black Colleges and Universities \$503 million in additional financial aid to better support the needs of their students” (p. 875).

Mississippi and North Carolina are not the only states affected by segregation. Moore (2007) highlighted how the State of Michigan has “axed affirmative action program in public institutions and turned their attention to ethnic-themed scholarships” (p. 12). Michigan made it illegal for donors to place certain criteria such as race, gender, ethnicity, or national origin on scholarships and have placed stiff penalties deterring donors from doing it. By placing such

strenuous limitations on donors, it prevents them from donating money preventing African American students from having the funding to reach their goals. Many African American students depend on these scholarships to help pay for their education, but when this financial assistance is being taken it prevents them from receiving the same funding and support as their White counterparts.

Creating a Diverse Campus

Predominantly White institutions are striving daily to make their campuses more diverse thus appealing to minority students. One method that Alexander and Moore (2008) highlighted was “the increasing need of African American faculty to be visible at predominantly White institutions” (p. 1). Alexander and Moore (2008) stressed that their presence on these campuses is vital for the following reasons: “serve as mentors and role models for African Americans; dispel the myth and stereotypes held by White students; challenge negative and low expectations of colleagues not believing in their capabilities; and bring a different perspective on justice and equality” (p. 1)

While adding African American faculty to its campuses, Amherst College strives to not only attract African American students, but attract and identify talented minority students to their campus. “Amherst’s purpose is to offer opportunities for social and economic mobility to those students with hopes of providing some measure of social equity” (Aries, 2008, p. B47). By attracting a diverse population of students it allows Whites and African Americans to interact with each other in hopes of them having a deeper understanding of one another.

Further understanding results in adaptation. The more Whites and African Americans understand each other, the easier it is for them to adapt to their new environment. Cole and

Arriola (2007) established a “two-dimensional model of Black acculturation in order to describe how African American students adapt to predominantly White institutions” (p. 380). This two-dimensional model must be understood and implemented in a way that will guarantee rapport between the majority and minority populations. “This two-dimensional model of Black acculturation should include one orientation toward maintaining the cultural heritage and identifying of one’s own group and a second one tapping relations with the majority group” (Cole & Arriola, 2007, p. 380). This model suggests that as more students spend time at predominantly White institutions, the more they are made aware of their Black culture and identity.

Gallaudet University created an initiative entitled “Keeping the Promise” in an attempt to diversify their campus. “Keeping the Promise is a comprehensive retention program that addresses the academic and social barriers faced by African American students” (Feintuch, 2010, p. 18). This initiative was created to ensure that Gallaudet University was in compliance with several accreditation standards and to ensure that they retained and graduated minorities.

A large predominantly White institution in the Midwest created the African American Student Network (AFAM) in an effort to diversify their campus. “The AFAM was developed as a response to the pressing challenge of increasing persistence-to-graduation for African American students at predominantly White institutions” (Grier-Reed, Ehlert & Dade, 2011, p. 22). The AFAM has proven to be a safe haven to help African American students deal with the stresses associated with attending predominantly White institutions. By providing African American students with this safe haven it helped them to better understand their experiences and gave them ways to handle the frustrations and aggressions associated with these experiences.

“Allegheny College hired Dr. Lawrence T. Potter as their first chief diversity officer to increase level of awareness concerning diversity” (Levine, 2011, p. 23). Levine (2011) highlighted how “Dr. Potter restructured Allegheny College’s discriminatory harassment and sexual harassment/assault policies and reporting protocols; negotiated the creation of the Council on Diversity and Equity; and updated faculty search materials to enable departments to hire more diverse candidates” (p. 23). All of these initiatives were created to increase diversity in hopes of making this campus comfortable for minority students.

Another method to assist minority students was the creation of ethnic themed residence halls. This encourages students possessing the same similarities to live together in a community that best fits them. “Ethnic themed housing at predominantly White institutions has been created to provide support to minority and underrepresented students” (Lum, 2008, p. 11). Along with the creation of ethnic-themed housing comes the use of Greek organizations to increase the success of African American students. McClure (2006) focused on “the importance of fraternities and sororities in increasing the sense of closeness the participants feel to each other, the campus, and to Black history” (p. 1040). Fraternities and sororities have also been used to assist African American men and women in becoming a part of predominantly White institutions, “understanding the difficulty they experience in adapting to an environment very different from the one they came from” (McClure, p. 1042).

The Need for Diversity Policies at Predominantly White Institutions

Predominantly White institutions continue to create initiatives in an attempt to fight inequities and racial seclusions on their campuses. According to Iverson (2007), “diversity action plans are a primary means by which U.S. postsecondary institutions articulate their

professed commitment to an inclusive and equitable climate for all members of the university and advance strategies to meet the challenges of a diverse society” (p. 586). Iverson used critical race theory to examine how discourses of diversity, circulating in educational policies, reflect and produce particular realities for people of color on university campuses. “Critical race theory originated from two movements – critical legal studies and radical feminism beginning in the mid-1970s” (Hartlep, 2009, p. 4). Hartlep (2009) highlighted how “critical race theory sought to transform the relationship among race, racism and power in response to critical legal studies challenging liberalism” (p. 5). Iverson (2007) used critical race theory to analyze four predominant discourses shaping images of African American students: “access, disadvantage, marketplace, and democracy. These discourses construct images of African American students as outsiders, at-risk victims, commodities, and change agents” (p. 586). The four discourses have also placed all African Americans into the same category as cultural outsiders to the institution stressing the need for predominantly White institutions to have a diversity policy in place. Stereotyping African American students seems to be a constant cycle which is unfair causing them to need the extra protection a diversity policy can provide.

The creation of a diversity policy covers more than African American students. African American educators will be protected as well. Sheets (2009) utilized the Diversity Pedagogy Theory to explain the role of an educator in promoting diversity. This theory explains that in order to be an effective teacher one must “understand the critical role of culture in the teaching-learning process linking cognition, culture, and schooling in one unit” (Sheets, 2009, p. 11). This theory requires educators to become culturally competent to better understand how African American students learn. When educators focus more on understanding the differences between

African American and White students and how they learn, this will effectively promote diversity while increasing retention and graduation rates.

Gandara and Orfield (2010) highlighted how “predominantly White institutions are creating policies to help underrepresented students enter college and complete degrees, but African American students continue to experience difficulty reaching their goals at these institutions” (p. 20). After many years of fighting to have the right to obtain equal education as their White counterparts, African American students won that right but were faced with being placed in racial and uncomfortable situations. This resulted in predominantly White institutions moving their focus to creating programs to help ensure that students of color complete degrees. Predominantly White institutions first point of action was to create policies to assist African American students in adjusting and adapting to their new environments.

Academic Success and Retention at Predominantly White Institutions

Academic success at predominantly White institutions differs for students of color. The rate of academic success for African American students depends on their academic successes in high school, relationships with faculty, their families and friends from home, and their peers. “Research indicates that strong relationships with faculty are crucial to student success at college and are positively correlated with student satisfaction with college, academic achievement, and retention” (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010, p. 311) Family support has a great determination on African American students’ success. “High achievers noted the emotional, academic, and financial support their families provided positively affected them and low achievers noted that the lack of support from their families negatively affected their college matriculation” (Guiffrida & Douthit, p. 311).

Harsh penalties African American students receive in grade school negatively affect their aspirations of furthering their education. When African American students are suspended from school they are not provided with any out-of-school services. This gives them the message that “they do not belong in school, adversely impacting both the desire and ability of African American students to attend college or seek some other postsecondary credential” (Jones, 2010, p. 6).

Once African American students earn or feel that they are academically successful at predominantly White institutions, graduation and retention rates will increase at these institutions. Museus (2008) stressed the need for African American students to “find memberships in the cultures and subcultures of predominantly White campuses” (p. 568). Their inability to do so will continue to decrease the graduation rates among them at these institutions. Museus and Ravello (2010) highlighted the role that academic advisors play in the overall matriculation of minority students at predominantly White institutions. “Academic advisors that humanized the practice of academic advising; adopted a multifaceted approach to advising; and were proactive contributed to minority students’ success” (Museus & Ravello, 2010, p. 47).

Rodgers and Summers (2008) restructured Bean and Eaton’s retention model in a way that better applies to African American students. Bean and Eaton’s retention model links any given behavior with similar past behavior, normative values, attitudes, and intention. Rodgers and Summers used this retention model to focus on “how African American students at predominantly White institutions flock to individuals and situations they are the most comfortable resulting in them shying away from White faculty and seeking support from their African American students and faculty” (p. 171). In knowing this about African American

students, predominantly White institutions must “create African American centered campus organizations assisting them in bridging the distance between the African American campus community and the larger, predominantly White campus community” (Rodgers & Summers, 2008, p. 171). These subcultures will give African American students a sense of belonging thus increasing retention at these institutions.

The importance of retention and graduation rates among African American students at predominantly White institutions continue to increase and grant money is being awarded to these institutions in an attempt to increase graduation and retention rates. Ruffins (2011) reported that “nine institutions catering to minority students were given portions of grant money to improve their ability to analyze and document their successes” (p. 12). Innovations and improvements were created to increase the completion rate of minority students. According to Ruffins (2011), these innovations and improvements consisted of the following:

- Computer-assisted approaches to remedial education courses.
- Allowing students to progress at their own pace.
- Hiring more full-time Math instructors.
- Rejecting letter grades in favor of a pass/fail skills mastery system.
- Giving more credits for remedial courses.
- Tracking student progress more closely” (p. 12–13).

All institutions share the responsibility of increasing the retention rate among minority students.

These students are becoming a large portion of the college population and institutions must continue to create new methods to guarantee success.

Summary

Historical implications show that the fight for equal educational rights has not ended for African American students. A review of literature related to educational opportunities at predominantly White institutions tends to show that although legal cases have granted African Americans equal access and opportunities to attend any institution they choose, they are still faced with overcoming negative stereotypes that are sometimes internalized resulting in self-fulfillment, self-defeat, and self-threat. In overcoming these negative stereotypes, predominantly White institutions should possibly present an educational environment that is easy for African American students to call home. Until predominantly White institutions master equality, it will continue to be a struggle for them to graduate and retain African American students.

Predominantly White institutions have institutionalized efforts to attract and retain African American students, but have been deemed ineffective. These predominantly White institutions that attract fewer minority students tend to use them as symbols creating a feeling of isolation sending the message that diversifying their campus was not the institution's top priority. Predominantly White institutions must be transparent with their initiatives and prove that diversification is their goal to gain African American students' trust.

The best way that predominantly White institutions can gain the trust of African American students is to possibly create a diversity policy that protects them from harm. They must feel protected at all times and this will happen if the diversity policies are structured in a way that places stiff penalties on racism and tensions arising from racial situations.

Section 3 will include the research design used for the proposed study as well as a description of the population that will be used in the proposed study. This section contains a

review of the instrumentation used for the study and a thorough description of the data collection and analysis process that will be implemented in the study.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to understand any negative and positive experiences African American students faced when adjusting to predominantly White institutions. In conducting this study, I searched the predominantly White institutions' websites to see whether a diversity policy was in place that protected African American students and whether the policy helped make the students feel comfortable in their new environments.

The questions for the study were as follows:

1. What is the level of comfort for African American students attending a predominantly White institution?
2. What is the current level of awareness concerning diversity policies among predominantly White institutions and African American students attending a predominantly White institution?
3. How satisfied are African American students with their decision to attend a predominantly White institution?

In this section, I describe the research design and approach I used for the study, followed by the rationale of the study. I explain the setting and sample used in the study, and I use a pilot study to establish reliability and validity. The various instruments in this study will be found in the section entitled "Instrumentation and Materials" and the analysis of the study will be found in the section entitled "Data Collection and Analysis." Information concerning the role of the researcher and further ethical considerations will be summarized in the final part of this section.

Research Design and Approach

I used a case study approach because it provided an “in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). The case study format allowed me to investigate predominantly White institutions’ diversity policies in a real-life context. This case study allowed me to pinpoint whether a problem was evident, with the goal of coming to an agreeable solution.

This case study consisted of an analysis of each institution’s diversity policy to determine whether and how it addressed issues concerning African American students. I also explored African American students’ attitudes toward these diversity policies. These attitudes were relevant to the study because they allowed me to record participants’ personal accounts and opinions and apply them to critiquing the diversity policies.

Merriam (2009) indicated that “case studies do not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis so any and all methods of gathering data can be used” (Merriam, 2009, p. 42). I conducted interviews to collect qualitative data, and I created cross-sectional surveys to collect quantitative data as they pertained to African American students’ awareness of their institutions’ diversity policies. According to Creswell (2008), “Survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population” (p. 388). I administered cross-sectional surveys to a sample of African American students attending predominantly White institutions to collect quantitative data and an analysis of preselected predominantly White institutions’ diversity policy to collect qualitative data. It was my belief that cross-sectional surveys was best for this study because “it is the most popular form

of survey design measuring current attitudes or practices and providing information in a short amount of time” (Creswell, 2008, p. 387). The interviews were beneficial to this study because they allowed me to “ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions” concerning their predominantly White institution’s diversity policy (Creswell, 2008, p. 225).

Rationale of Study

During the literature review, various studies noted the problems African American students face when adjusting to predominantly White institutions and the problems that some of these institutions have in attracting, retaining, and graduating African American students. Rodgers and Summers’s (2008) study focused on the issues predominantly White institutions experience in retaining and graduating African American students. Dahlvig’s (2010) and DeWalt’s (2011) studies took the issue of diversity further by focusing on the various problems African American students face at predominantly White institutions and the struggles they had in establishing an identity of their own in these environments. Shang and Barkis (2009) and Anyaso (2008) conducted studies revealing diversity challenges that some predominantly White institutions still experience, thereby stressing the need for further investigation into these institutions to determine whether they have diversity policies in place making their students aware of what diversity is, the steps they have taken in diversifying their campuses, and the penalties for discrimination. Rodgers and Summers’ (2008) research study reported the following:

African American students will continue to enroll in predominantly White institutions at greater rates than African American students enrolling at historically Black colleges and universities; yet, if this current trend continues, over half of African American students at

predominantly White institutions will fail to persist and graduate thus stressing the importance of creating a diversity policy to increase African American students' level of comfort (p. 175).

The findings from this study will be useful for updating existing diversity policies or creating new ones. This study will add to the growing body of knowledge on the roles of diversity policies in helping African American students adjust to predominantly White institutions.

Setting and Sample

According to Creswell (2008), "a target population is a group of individuals with some common defining characteristics that the researcher can identify and study" (p. 152). The target population for this study consisted of 270 African American students, which is approximately 2 % of the overall population of African American students attending the predominantly White institutions selected for this study in the State of North Carolina, but only 107 African American students consented to participate in this study. The sampling technique for this study consisted of nonprobability sampling. Nonprobability sampling is the best technique to use because it allowed me to "select individuals because they are available, convenient, and represent some characteristics the investigator seeks to study" (Creswell, 2008, p. 155). Nonprobability sampling can be divided into two broad types: accidental or purposive. Purposive sampling was selected for this study because it involves sampling with a purpose in mind. The purpose of selecting this sample of students was to gain insight of how they adjust to predominantly White institutions and if the presence of a diversity policy helped their transition. The following is a description of each of the predominantly White institutions selected for this study:

- Duke University: created in 1924 by James Buchanan Duke is composed of about 14,000 undergraduate and graduate students and a world-class faculty helping to expand the frontiers of knowledge (Duke University, 2010, para. 1). Of the 14,000 students 2,100 or 15% are African American.
- East Carolina University: created in 1907 by the North Carolina General Assembly is composed of about 28,000 undergraduate and graduate students (East Carolina University, 2011, para. 1). Of the 28,000 students, 3,920 or 14% are African American.
- North Carolina State University: created in 1887 and is composed of more than 34,000 students and nearly 8,000 faculty and staff. North Carolina State University is a comprehensive university known for its leadership in education and research, and globally recognized for its science, technology, engineering and mathematic leadership (North Carolina State University, 2011, "*The People's University*," para. 2). Of the 34,000 students, 2,720 or 8% are African American.
- The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: chartered in 1789 and opened in 1795 as the nation's first public university, is composed of about 29,400 students (UNC-Chapel Hill, 2011, para. 1). Of the 29,400 students, 2,940 or 10% are African American.
- The University of North Carolina at Greensboro: "a university recognized for community engagement, academic excellence and research innovation, is comprised of about 18,000 students. Of the 18,000 students, 4,860 or 27% are minority students. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC) is the most diverse campus among UNC's historically-White institutions" (UNC-Greensboro, 2011, para. 1).

- The University of North Carolina at Wilmington: created in 1947 is unique in its dedication of combining a small college commitment to excellence in teaching with a research university's opportunities for student involvement in significant faculty scholarship (UNC-Wilmington, 2011, "*Our Mission*," para. 1). The University of Wilmington is comprised of about 13,000 students of various backgrounds and nationalities.

These institutions are a part of "the first public university system in the United States and the only one to have graduates in the eighteenth century" (University of North Carolina, 2012, "*A History*," para. 1). These institutions were selected for this study because they are located in the State of North Carolina and are a part of the University of North Carolina system. Each institution was sampled based on the receipt of consent forms. As responses were received indicating their consent to participating in this study, they were forwarded the information pertaining to this study. The final sample of 107 students derived from the number of students consenting to participate and the number of students who actually completed the surveys. Of the six institutions selected for this study 24 students responded from Duke University, 35 from East Carolina University, 15 from UNC-Chapel Hill, 17 from UNC-Greensboro, and 16 from UNC-Wilmington. North Carolina State University was in the process of conducting a study similar to this study and would not allow me to sample their students, but provided a link to prior climate studies to be used for this study.

Threat to Validity

According to Creswell (2008), “a threat to validity means that design issues may threaten the experiment so that the conclusions reached from data may provide a false reading about probable cause and effect between the treatment and the outcome” (p. 308).

To control for threats to validity of the survey, I exercised caution during the creation of the questionnaires to ensure that the questions were not leading or insensitive. To control for this threat I submitted the questions to Dr. Wanda Coneal, an Assistant Professor of Education at North Carolina Central University to be analyzed and reviewed. Upon receipt of her review, changes were made that ensured that all questions were valid.

The threat to internal validity that affected this study was threats related to treatments. Under this category, diffusion of treatments affected this study because it allowed the pilot study and actual study participants to communicate with each other giving the actual study participants information about the treatment and created a threat to internal validity. To control for the diffusion of treatments, I maintained each participants’ confidentiality and did not inform them of who was selected for the pilot study and actual study.

The threat to external validity that affected this study was the interaction of history and treatment. To control for this threat, I conducted a pilot study to test the cross-sectional survey created. After reliability was obtained using the Cronbach coefficient alpha, this instrument was distributed to the other participants.

Instrumentation and Materials

This study used a case study approach consisting of both quantitative and qualitative research procedures. The case study approach was the best method for this study because it

allowed me to focus on the practices of the six predominantly White institutions in this study. It is also an appropriate method because it provided me with “the ability to tolerate real-life blurring between phenomenon and context” (Yin, 2009, p. 78). For example, the desired systematic change among predominantly White institutions within the UNC system goes well beyond these six institutions. It involves all 17 institutions within the UNC system. This systematic change is not limited to what happens at the six predominantly White institutions selected for this study, but within the UNC system as a whole. Issues of diversity have affected all of these institutions and the information presented in this study can be used to better serve all students within the UNC system.

The quantitative portion of the study used a cross-sectional survey created by me to gather numerical data on the current attitudes, beliefs, and opinions, or practices as it pertains to the predominantly White institutions’ diversity policy. Colorado State University (2012) promoted the use of survey research and “with its capacity for wide application and broad coverage this gives survey techniques its great usefulness” (para. 3). This is the design of choice for this study because it allowed me to use the cross-sectional design to evaluate predominantly White institutions’ current diversity policy and provide useful information to decision makers concerning this policy.

Creswell (2008) noted several methods in administering surveys, including mailed questionnaires, electronic questionnaires, one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, and telephone interviews. This study used one-on-one interviews to collect data. “One-on-one interviews are one of the most powerful ways of exploring the way people think and assessing their learning and development” (Dunphy, 2010, p. 332). Before the survey was implemented,

permission was sought from the six predominantly White institutions participating in this study. All 107 African American students attending or that have attended one of the six predominantly White institutions received an email invitation to participate in the study. Once confirmation was received from these students agreeing to participate in this study, a cover letter was emailed to them highlighting the significance and purpose of the study, assurances, completion time and returns. The cover letter guaranteed confidentiality of their responses and results. The cover letter also included details concerning an interview survey and gave them the option to participate in a face-to-face interview or telephone interview and informing them that participation is voluntary.

An informed consent form was attached to the cover letter to be reviewed, signed, and returned to me. Informed consent was obtained before administering the survey to “protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals who participate in the study” (Creswell, 2008, p. 157). “An informed consent form is a statement that participants sign before they participate in research stating that the researcher will guarantee them certain rights, and that when they sign the form, they are agreeing to be involved in the study and acknowledge the protection of their rights” (Creswell, 2008, p. 159).

The survey included background or demographic questions to identify the students’ age, classification, gender, and major. These types of questions allowed me to assess the personal characteristics of individuals in the sample. Open-ended questions were asked to give participants the opportunity to openly express what they know about the diversity policy, how they feel about it, and things that need to be changed. “Open-ended questions in a survey allowed the participant to supply an answer and did not constrain individual responses”

(Creswell, 2008, p. 399). This was the best option for the participants because it allowed them to “create responses within their cultural and social experiences instead of the researcher’s experiences” (Creswell, 2008, p. 399).

The cross-sectional survey contained 12 statements representing various qualities that African American students expect from their predominantly White institution and its diversity policy. The 12 statements were grouped into three domains: Decisions, Decisions; What Do You Know; and Is it Working for You. The domain entitled “Decisions, Decisions” provided information as to why the students chose to transfer to this predominantly White institution. The domain entitled “What Do You Know” provided information concerning participants’ current knowledge on their institutions’ diversity policy. The domain entitled “Is it Working for You” provided information concerning any changes that needed to be made to the existing diversity policy.

Interval scales were used to measure participants’ attitudes toward their predominantly White institution, what their predominantly White institution offers African American students; and whether they feel protected under their predominantly White institutions’ diversity policy. “Interval scales provide continuous response options to questions with assumed equal distances between options” (Creswell, 2008, p. 176). The most popular of the interval scales is the Likert scale. “The popular Likert scale illustrates a scale with theoretically equal intervals among responses” (Creswell, 2008, p. 176). Using the Likert scale, participants rated their level of satisfaction toward the 12 diversity policy statements. To accurately measure the attitudes towards each section of the diversity policy, participants were asked to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction for each of the 12 statements using a five-point Likert scale. The Likert scale

gave participants five response categories to rate their overall satisfaction with this policy. The following numerical values were assigned to the various choices: 1 – very dissatisfied; 2 – dissatisfied; 3 – neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; 4 – satisfied; and 5 – very satisfied.

After all survey responses were received, they were quantitatively analyzed using a one-sample chi-square test. The one-sample chi-square test was used to assess the participants' awareness of their institution's diversity policy and their overall satisfaction with it. Along with gaining the opinions of participants, I critiqued the diversity policies that could be found on each institution's website. I read each policy found and critiqued them based on the needs of African American students. The analysis consisted of highlighting the themes and coding it for relevance.

To coincide with the information obtained from the three policies found, phone interviews were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' views of their institutions diversity policy. The sample for these interviews consisted of ten students who consented to participating in this study. These students were asked a series of questions pertaining to their institution's diversity policy and given the opportunity to freely express themselves. These interviews were transcribed and used to support my hypothesis concerning diversity policies at predominantly White institutions.

Data Collection and Analysis

This case study approach allowed quantitative and qualitative methods to be used. In using these methods it allowed me to “retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2003, p. 2). Data collected from this study was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics was used “to indicate general tendencies in the data (mean,

mode, median) and the spread of scores (variance, standard deviation, and range)” (Creswell, 2008, p. 190).

Responses to each of the 12 survey items were entered into the data table using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21 software. The SPSS 21 software was used to measure central tendency including the mean, the median, and the mode. It was also used to measure variances and its square-rooted form, the standard deviation.

The following research questions were developed for this proposed study:

1. What is the current level of comfort for African American students attending a predominantly White institution?
2. What is the current level of awareness concerning diversity policies among predominantly White institutions and African American students attending predominantly White institutions?
3. How satisfied are African American students with their decision to attend a predominantly White institution?

These questions used univariate descriptive statistics. “Descriptive statistic involves summarizing distributions of scores by developing tabular or graphical presentations and computing descriptive statistical indices and converting scores to percentile ranks” (Green & Salkind, 2011, p. 147). The open-ended questions were coded into themes and then coded numerically based on the number of times the same theme is highlighted in the responses. The open-ended responses served the purpose of clarifying whether and why African American students feel uncomfortable at predominantly White institutions if a diversity policy has been created and implemented.

The case study also consisted of an analysis of each institution's diversity policy. I searched each of the institution's websites to find a clearly defined diversity policy and of the six schools selected for this study I could only find three. I analyzed these policies for relevance and similarities and compared it to the interview responses of the six interview participants.

Role of the Researcher

Before administering any form of survey, Walden University's Institutional Review Board provided me with the approval number 11-10-14-0124634 granting me permission to conduct this study. "An institutional review board is a committee made up of faculty members who review and approve research so that the research protects the rights of the participants" (Creswell, 2008, p. 157-158). I gained approval from the six predominantly White institutions selected to participate in this study. Once approval was received from the IRB and the six predominantly White institutions, the cover letter and sign-up sheet was emailed to the Dean of Students of each institution soliciting participants from African American students to participate in the surveys and informing them that they may be randomly selected to participate in face-to-face or phone interviews. Once the sign-up sheet was completed and received, I began emailing the surveys and scheduled days and times to meet or call the participants.

I also understood the role as a researcher. "How you present yourself communicates to others how a researcher acts" (Glesne, 2011, p. 59). The second researcher's role was the researcher as the learner. "The learner's perspective will lead you to reflect on all aspects of research procedures and findings" (Glesne, p. 60).

Ethical Consideration

“Data collection should be ethical and it should respect individuals and sites” (Creswell, 2008, p. 179). Informed consent was obtained from each participant for the research to be ethical. To protect the identity of each participant, numbers were assigned to results versus personal information. I understood that any data collected must be held as confidential information that cannot be shared with other participants. Lastly, I “respected the wishes of individuals who choose not to participate in the study” (Creswell, 2008, p. 179).

Summary

This study used a case study approach to explore the perceptions of African American students towards their predominantly White institution and the predominantly White institution’s diversity policy. The target population for this study consisted of 270 African American students who are attending or have attended one of the six predominantly White institutions selected for this study in North Carolina. Only 107 of the target population participated in this study resulting in a smaller sample. This study will add to the growing body of knowledge regarding the importance of predominantly White institutions to have a diversity policy that protects African American students and that fits their specific needs.

The findings of the study are reported in Section 4. Section 5 discusses the conclusion of the study, recommendations based on the findings, and further research as it informs practice.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

This section consists of a case study approach in which I used quantitative and qualitative analyses to present the findings. I used a quantitative analysis to analyze the data collected from the survey questionnaires. I then used a qualitative analysis to analyze each institution's diversity policy, if one was in place, and the participants' interview responses. The quantitative analysis consisted of a descriptive statistical analysis of the survey responses. The steps associated with this descriptive statistical analysis consisted of calculating the mean scores and standard deviations showing the participants' sentiments concerning their institution's diversity policy. I also analyzed the survey results using a one-sample chi-square test to assess the participants' awareness of their institution's diversity policy and their overall satisfaction with the policy. Qualitative analysis was used to analyze participants' interview responses for themes and a policy critique conducted on the six predominantly White institutions' diversity policies as they pertained to African American students.

The qualitative analysis consisted of three elements: an analysis of participants' interview responses, an analysis of the open-ended questions included on the survey, and a critique of the diversity policies found at the six predominantly White institutions selected for this study. In analyzing participants' interview responses, (a) survey participants' responses to the open-ended questions included on the survey and (b) policy critique themes relevant to their institution's diversity policy were coded and compared for similarities. The themes that were found among all three of these elements were elaborated.

Problem, Research Questions, and Hypothesis

Predominantly White institutions have increased their efforts in ensuring that African American students find comfort at their institutions. These institutions are constantly finding ways to better diversify their campus and helping minority students fit in this foreign culture. The urgency of predominantly White institutions diversifying their campuses is due to the increased level of minority students applying and being accepted into their schools. African American students who attended predominantly Black high schools found it difficult to fit into their new environments. Some of them cited how they wanted to leave their predominantly White institution after their first full week. This made it imperative for predominantly White institutions to help African American students create a space of their own helping some of them find a fit in this foreign culture, but it does not protect them from discrimination.

With this problem evident, I developed the following research questions:

1. What is the current level of comfort for African American students attending a predominantly White institution?
2. What is the current level of awareness concerning diversity policies among predominantly White institutions and African American students attending predominantly White institutions?
3. How satisfied are African American students with their decision to attend a predominantly White institution?

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis consisted of both a descriptive statistical analysis and one-sample chi-square test of the survey results. The desired sample of participants was 270 African

American students, which is approximately 2% of the overall population of African American students attending predominantly White institutions selected for this study in the State of North Carolina. However, due to time constraints and low responses, 107 African American students responded to the researcher's survey request. This low response level resulted in a lower p value, which increased the level of significance.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The participants of this study were African American students attending one of the predominantly White institutions selected for this study. Their classification ranged from freshman to senior, with majority of them being sophomores. The surveys issued to the participants consisted of a Likert item of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning very satisfied, 2 meaning satisfied, 3 meaning neither satisfied or dissatisfied, 4 meaning dissatisfied, and five meaning very dissatisfied. The descriptive statistics of the participants' satisfaction with the environment their campus provides, satisfaction with their decision to attend their predominantly White institution, and their awareness of their predominantly White institution's diversity policy were calculated. The mean and standard deviation between the participants' satisfaction with the environment their campus provides, their decision to attend their predominantly White institution, and their awareness of their institution's diversity policy were relatively similar therefore confirming participants' overall satisfaction with their educational decisions and are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Levels of Satisfaction

Variable (<i>N</i> = 107)	Descriptive Statistics	
	(<i>M</i>)	(<i>SD</i>)
Environment	2.0841	0.88084
Attendance	2.1028	0.93096
Policy	1.6168	0.86488

Note. 1=very satisfied, 2=satisfied, 3=neither satisfied or dissatisfied, 4=dissatisfied, 5=very dissatisfied

One-Sample Chi-Square Test

A one-sample chi-square test was conducted to assess the participants' awareness of their institution's diversity policy and their overall satisfaction with the policy. The researcher calculated the hypothesized proportion of 35.7 based on the number of students consenting to participate. There were three options to gauge students' awareness of their institution's diversity policy and only 107 participants. This number was split evenly three ways to equal 35.7. The proportion of students who were aware of their institution's diversity policy was much greater than the hypothesized proportion of 35.7, while the proportion of students who were unaware of their institution's diversity policy ($p = 12$) was much smaller than the hypothesized proportion of 35.7, and the proportion of students who did not answer the question concerning their institution's diversity policy ($p = 27$) was approximately the same value and less than the hypothesized proportions of 35.7 and can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Chi-Square Test of Student Awareness of Diversity Policy

Variable <i>N=107</i>	Observed <i>n</i>	Expected <i>n</i>	Residual
Aware	68	35.7	32.3
Unaware	12	35.7	-23.7
Unanswered	27	35.7	-8.7
Total	107		

The test statistics were significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 107) = 47.1, p < .01$, for the participants' awareness of their institution's diversity policy and $\chi^2(4, N = 107) = 90.0, p < .01$, for the participants' satisfaction with the organization of the policy and can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Chi-Square Test Statistics on the Students' Awareness & Satisfaction of the Policy and It's Organization

	SA	PO
Chi-Square	47.121 ^a	89.963 ^b
<i>df</i>	2	4
Asymp. Sig.	0.000	0.000
<i>p-value</i>	<.00001	<.00001

Note. SA = Student Aware of Policy;
PO = Satisfaction with Policy Organization

The chi-square test in Table 3 of the students' satisfaction with the organization of their institution's diversity policy yielded a result of 89.963. These results coincide with the research question concerning the current level of awareness concerning diversity policies among predominantly White institutions and African American students attending predominantly White

institutions. The chi-square test result of 89.963 expressed their satisfaction with the organization of their institution's diversity policy proving that African American students are aware of this policy and the said protection it provides.

Table 4

Chi-Square Test of Student Satisfaction with Diversity Policy Organization

<i>N=107</i>	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
VS	5	21.4	-16.4
S	50	21.4	28.6
NS/D	40	21.4	18.6
D	9	21.4	-12.4
VD	3	21.4	-18.4
Total	107		

*Note: VS = very satisfied; S = satisfied;
NS/D = neither satisfied or dissatisfied
D = dissatisfied;
VD = very dissatisfied*

Table 2 shows that of the 107 students, 63.5% confirmed their awareness of their institution's diversity policy and Table 4 shows that 55 participants or 81% of the 68 students aware of their institution's diversity policy indicated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with its organization. In the open ended questions on the surveys, about 73% or 40 of the 55 participants in Table 4 indicated that the presence of this policy has increased their level of comfort at their predominantly White institution thus helping them to matriculate better than if one was absent.

Qualitative Analysis

The purpose of this qualitative data analysis was to understand how participants felt about their institution's diversity policy. This analysis allowed me the opportunity to provide an explanation of the numbers reported in the quantitative analysis, as well as focusing on participants' real social experience.

This qualitative analysis consisted of a case study approach using a critique of three of the predominantly White institutions' diversity policy's effect on African American students; an analysis of the various interview responses; and an analysis of the open-ended questions that was included in the surveys administered. Three predominantly White institutions were used because of their clearly defined diversity policy. The three institutions included in this policy critique were UNC-Chapel Hill, East Carolina University, and Duke University. UNC-Chapel Hill is the nation's first public university enrolling 2,940 African American students which is 10% of their student population. East Carolina University is a predominantly White institution within the UNC System enrolling 3,920 African American students which is 14% of their student population. Duke University is a predominantly White institution in the State of North Carolina enrolling 2,100 African American students which is 15% of their student population.

The purpose of using a critique of three of the predominantly White institutions' diversity policy's effect on African American students; an analysis of the various interview responses; and an analysis of the open-ended questions that was included in the surveys administered was to clarify whether African American students feel uncomfortable at their predominantly White institution due to the lack of them having a diversity policy in place. It is also my goal to

determine if the presence of a diversity policy increased the comfort level of African American students attending a predominantly White institution.

Policy Critique

Based on my thorough review of each of the predominantly White institution's website selected for this study and phone contact with employees within the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, only three of them had a diversity policy in place. These predominantly White institutions were UNC-Chapel Hill, East Carolina University, and Duke University. In reading and critiquing the diversity policies found, the following themes were evident:

- Respect for differences – promoting an environment that fosters mutual respect and acceptance of individual differences.
- Comfortable learning environment – fostering a respectful and comfortable learning environment.
- Equitable access – providing equitable access to all of its information, resources, and services.
- Equitable recruitment and hiring procedures - encouraging the recruitment and hiring of employees regardless of race, color, creed, etc.
- Educational and professional development – one that fosters a culture of diversity.
- Diversified Resources – that supports emerging and existing areas of diversity.
- Collaborative Relationships – with other University departments and organizations to be aligned with the University's mission of diversity.

The criteria used to analyze the diversity policies found was relation and relevance.

Each policy was analyzed to determine if they are related, meaning were there any similarities and analyzed based on the relevance of each similarity, meaning if any of these points were addressed in the open-ended survey responses or mentioned in the phone interviews.

To coincide with the information obtained from the three policies found, phone interviews were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' views of their institution's diversity policy. Full-time students from each of the six predominantly White institutions selected for this study were asked a series of four questions based on their level of awareness of and comfort from their institution's diversity policy. The sample of interview participants consisted of Ray Smith (fictitious name), a junior at East Carolina University; Donna Harris (fictitious name), a senior at UNC-Chapel Hill; Nicole Marshall (fictitious name), a sophomore at UNC-Chapel Hill; Sebastian Thomas (fictitious name), a sophomore at UNC-Chapel Hill; Brenda Jackson (fictitious name), a junior at East Carolina University; and Tyshima Collins (fictitious name), a junior at Duke University.

These participants were given a copy of their institution's diversity policy to be reviewed and discussed. Each discussion lasted 15-20 minutes and focused on the effectiveness, specifications, relevance, and comfort with their institution's diversity policy. To maintain the authenticity of each interview, it was recorded and later transcribed. Each transcription was coded into themes based on how frequent each theme was addressed in the interviews. A comparative analysis was completed comparing the themes addressed in the interviews to the themes outlined in the policy critique. From this comparative analysis seven themes were highlighted.

Interview Analysis

Ten interviews were conducted to gain further insight on the level of satisfaction of each institution's diversity policy. Due to time constraints the ten interview participants were selected based on their consent to be interviewed and if they were a student at one of the institutions that had a diversity policy in place. Each interview lasted about 15-20 minutes and Table 5 highlights the questions asked.

Table 5

Interview Questions

1. After reading the information found concerning your institution's diversity policy, how effective do you feel it is?
2. Does your institution's diversity policy meet your specific needs as an African American student?
3. Did your institution's diversity policy help you to comfortably adjust to this new environment?
4. Are there any additional comments you would like to make concerning your institution?

Many of the interview participants knew that their institution had a diversity policy in place, but were unfamiliar with the specifics of it until it was presented to them. Ray Smith (fictitious name), a junior at East Carolina University stated that "they never knew the specifics of their institution's diversity policy because they never experienced issues of diversity on their campus" and a couple of other participants stated similar reasons as to why they were not aware of what was included in their institution's diversity policy (ECU005, personal communication, December 1, 2014). After the participants had the opportunity to review their institution's diversity policy, they were asked how effective they felt it was. Six participants felt that the policy specifically

outlined their institution's mission to make every faculty, staff, and student comfortable on their campus. Race, creed, religion, etc. was not an issue when discussing diversity because their institution provided an inclusive campus environment where everyone was treated fairly. Donna Harris (fictitious name), a senior at UNC-Chapel Hill stressed the point that her institution is very diverse. They have faculty, staff, and students from all over the world visible on their campus making it rich in cultural diversity. Sebastian Thomas (fictitious name), a sophomore at UNC-Chapel Hill stated that "he was very pleased with his decision to attend his institution, but the diversity policy did not prevent him from being discriminated against" (UNC-CH014, personal communication, December 1, 2014). Nicole Marshall (fictitious name), a sophomore at UNC-Chapel Hill felt that the diversity policy promoted an inclusive campus, but could not prevent some things from occurring.

When transcribing the other participants' responses, many of them felt that their institution's diversity policy promoted an environment that was based on the mutual respect of individual differences. The promotion of this did not mean that everyone would abide by it, but it was sufficient enough to provide a foundation on what diversity entails. They stressed how the policy was effective in outlining diversity and how their institution strives to provide an inclusive campus, but since many students are unaware that this policy exists, it loses some of its effectiveness.

The participants were then asked if their institution's diversity policy meet their specific needs as an African American student. All of them felt that the issue of diversity is not limited to just them as African American students and that could be a reason their race was not specified in their institution's diversity policy. Their institution's diversity policy addressed issues such as

race, creed, religion, national origin, etc. so to limit this policy to just African American students would do it an injustice. Brenda Jackson (fictitious name), a junior at East Carolina University stated that “although the policy does not specifically address me as an African American student, the policy addresses all types of issues of diversity so I do feel that I can cater it to meet my specific needs” (ECU001, personal communication, December 1, 2014).

The participants were then asked if their institution’s diversity policy helped them to adjust comfortably to their new environment. Most of them stressed how the diversity policy had nothing to do with them adjusting to their new environment. They felt that they had to find ways to rapidly adjust since they were the minority population. During their adjustment period they were more concerned with making it to class on time and passing their classes versus dealing with issues of diversity. Tyshima Collins (fictitious name), a junior at Duke University stated that “the diversity policy was the last thing on my mind when I was adjusting to my campus environment. I was just trying to make good grades and stay under the radar” (DU003, personal communication, December 2, 2014).

Last, the participants were asked if they had any additional comments they would like to make concerning their institution. Ray Smith indicated that deciding to attend a predominantly White institution was one of the best decisions of his life. Donna Harris indicated that she has been pleased thus far with her experiences at her institution. Sebastian Thomas shared similar sentiments by indicating that “all schools come with its challenges, but the challenges I have faced at my school was very minimal to the point it was not necessary for me to make a big fuss about it” (UNC-CH014, personal communication, December 1, 2014).

To address the concerns of the participants attending institutions where a diversity policy is not evident, the responses to the open-ended questions on the administered surveys were analyzed and coded into themes. The following themes were present:

- There is no diversity policy in place.
- Unaware of such policy.
- Diversity policy is not easily accessible, so policy based on a general idea.

Many of the survey participants found other statements and statistical information concerning diversity, but it was not a clearly defined diversity policy evident.

Evident Interview and Policy Themes

Respect for differences. Respect for differences focuses on promoting an environment that fosters mutual respect and acceptance of individual differences. Differences have placed a negative stigma on how students adapt to their new environment. Unless inclusiveness is heavily promoted at predominantly White institutions, African American students will feel out of place in their foreign environment. Montica Talmadge (fictitious name), a freshman at UNC-Greensboro indicated that reasoning behind choosing this institution was because of the high presence of African American students. She felt that “since there were a great number of people like me on this campus then I will excel and do well here” (UNCG002, personal communication, December 6, 2014). She also addressed issues she experienced in high school that consisted of teasing and bullying, thus making finding an inclusive campus one of her top priorities.

Comfortable learning experience. In creating a comfortable learning environment instructors must put forth effort to foster a respectful learning environment. They must ensure

that their classrooms are filled with students who fully understands and respects differences. This starts by instructors addressing and educating their classes in a way that meets this objective. Students are more comfortable in their learning environment when instructors create lesson plans or activities that require students to interact with other students different from them and when instructors strive to get to know their students. An open-ended question on the survey entitled “What Do You Know?”asked questions pertaining to the rights and protections their institution’s diversity policy provided. This open-ended question encouraged students to make positive or negative comments concerning this. Survey participant UNCG001 indicated that although their institution did not have a formal diversity policy in place, one of his instructors addressed issues of diversity in his course syllabus. His instructor demanded mutual respect of other in the classroom and warned of the repercussions of this does not happen. Participant UNCG001 expressed how he felt like he had the freedom to be himself without being looked down upon.

Equitable access. Equitable access involves providing equitable access to all information, resources, and services. Every student, regardless of their nationality or race, should receive the same amount of access to information, resources, and services as the majority population. To promote equitable access “most countries have set goals to increase the share of the population with higher education and/or broaden access to higher education for individuals that are underrepresented because of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, disability or location” (International Association of Universities, 2008).

When participants were asked if they had any additional comments concerning their institution, majority of them made favorable remarks. To support this theme, Braylon Collins

(fictitious name), a junior at UNC-Chapel Hill; Jeanine Collins (fictitious name), a sophomore at Duke University; William Johnson (fictitious name), a senior at Duke University; and Joyce Jones (fictitious name), a senior at East Carolina University expressed their pleasure with how their institution made it easy for them to find and gain access to the information needed. They expressed how their needs were treated as top priority and how their instructors and administrators did their part in assisting them with their transition.

Equitable recruitment and hiring procedures. This theme involved the presence of minority instructors and administrators on campus. It encourages the recruitment and hiring of employees regardless of race, color, creed, etc. All of the six institutions in this study had a policy in place that promotes equitable hiring standards. These institutions' Equal Employment Opportunity/Nondiscriminatory Policy Statement addressed their efforts in preventing discrimination against current and future employees because of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, and disability.

Having the presence of instructors that look like them was very important to the interview participants. Braylon Collins (fictitious name), a junior at UNC-Chapel Hill and Jeanine Collins (fictitious name), a sophomore at Duke University indicated that they prefer being taught by an instructor they could relate to versus an instructor who was knowledgeable of the subject matter, but clueless of who they are. Jeanine Collins (fictitious name) specifically stated that "she was surprised when someone of a mixed nationality was teaching African American History" (DU023, personal communication, December 6, 2014). Although she passed this class, she felt that she would have done much better if this class was taught by an African American instructor.

Educational and professional development. This theme focuses on the important role diversity should play during educational and professional development. Since the student population at predominantly White institutions continues to be more diverse, instructors and administrators need educational and professional development that will give them the skills needed to increase their cultural awareness. Although educational and professional development was not specifically addressed, comments were made concerning the training and sensitivity of instructors and administrators to their needs as minority students. Jeanine Collins (fictitious name) indicated that some of her instructors and administrators she interacted with on a daily basis were not sensitive to her socioeconomic background. Whenever she had issues, they felt that she was making up an excuse or feeling entitled to some form of sympathy. They never took the time out to determine if there was any truth behind what she was saying. This made her feel as if she was not trustworthy resulting in her keeping a lot of things to herself. In reviewing Ms. Collins' experiences, the researcher created the theme of educational and professional development. Educational and professional development can be used to address affirmative action, diversity, equal employment opportunity, and excellence.

Diversified resources. This theme focuses on the need for predominantly White institutions to enhance and diversify resources that supports emerging and existing areas of diversity. This theme was evident in the open-ended survey responses and interview transcriptions. Braylon Collins (fictitious name) indicated that "one of his White teachers complained about not being compensated for new tasks she learns or any professional development she completes causing her to do the bare minimum" (UNC-CH015, personal communication, December 6, 2014). This lack of incentives, whether in the form of additional

resources or monetary compensation, has prevented her from wanting to broaden her knowledge in any subject matter other than what she was hired to teach. Mr. Collins expressed that if teachers were awarded some form of incentive then they will be motivated to willingly participate in ongoing training opportunities. These types of trainings will assist White instructors and administrators in providing African American students with the appropriate guidance through their four years of college.

Collaborative relationships. Establishing collaborative relationships with other University departments and organizations is important to be aligned with the University's mission of diversity. Participant UNCW001 complained of the lack of collaboration between departments. In this participants' open-ended question response he expressed how some departments give conflicting information when addressing issues of diversity. This conflicting information frustrated the student resulting in him considering transferring to another institution. He lost confidence in the competence of the various departments and did not feel like he had anyone he could confide in.

To increase retention of African American students at predominantly White institutions, they must strive to engage and connect with students, the community, and their agencies. They must put forth conscientious effort to pool resources and share expertise to better serve their students.

Integration of findings. This case study consisted of both a quantitative and qualitative analysis. Both of these methods coincided with each other by providing evidence that participants were aware of their institution's diversity policy and satisfied with the protection it provides. For example, 81% of the 68 students aware of their institution's diversity policy

indicated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with its organization. The quantitative findings provide statistical proof that coincides with the qualitative themes evident in the three institution's diversity policy. One theme that the statistical analysis supported the most was providing a comfortable learning environment fostering a respectful and comfortable learning environment.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

In this section, I will present concluding statements and recommendations concerning diversity and diversity policies at the six predominantly White institutions in my study. These conclusions are based on the findings and data analysis and will highlight my knowledge gained. I will take these conclusions and compile recommendations that will better assist each institution in creating a clearly defined diversity policy.

Discussion and Conclusion

Through the thorough analysis of survey responses, transcription of interviews, and researching each institution's website for its clearly defined diversity policy, I have concluded that three of the six institutions do not have a policy outlining diversity. With the presence of offices promoting diversity, such as the office of institutional equity and diversity, the majority of the policies on the institutions' websites are centered on equal opportunity and non-discrimination; resolution procedures for discrimination, harassment, and retaliation complaints; and discrimination and harassment prevention and response. The office of institutional equity and diversity at all of the institutions in this study strive to provide equal opportunities for all faculty, staff, and students, but three of the institutions did not have a policy in place that addresses how they strive to create a diverse campus for their students; the measures set forth to assist African American students to easily matriculate in their new environment; enforcement measures set in action to ensure the protection of African American students; and any disciplinary measures that will be used against any student not abiding by the policy.

The data presented indicated that more emphasis and efforts need to be placed on developing a diversity policy at UNC-Greensboro, UNC-Wilmington, and North Carolina State University. The absence of this diversity policy has caused African American students to remain mute about discriminatory issues they encounter. Although the omission of this policy does not have a significant effect on graduation and retention rates among African American students, it has made it difficult for them to fit into this new environment.

The findings casually addressed all of the research questions, but left some gaps warranting further research. The quantitative analysis addressed the research question concerning the participants' decision to attend a predominantly White institution by specifically asking this question in the survey entitled "Decisions, Decisions". The descriptive statistics showed that the 107 participants were satisfied with their decision to attend their predominantly White institution.

The chi-square test of students' awareness of their institution's diversity policy addressed the research question concerning the current level of awareness concerning diversity policies among predominantly White institutions and African American students attending predominantly White institutions. This test was used to analyze statistical data from the survey entitled "What Do You Know" which asked specific questions concerning their institution's diversity policy. The researcher drew the conclusion that if participants were able to answer these questions they indicated their awareness of the diversity policy. The statistical data to support this research question indicated that 63.5% of the sample answered questions concerning their institution's diversity policy indicating their awareness.

The qualitative analysis indicated the presence of a diversity policy at three of the six institutions in this study, but placed little emphasis on the research question concerning the current level of comfort for African American students attending a predominantly White institution. This analysis allowed participants to elaborate on their institution's diversity policy and any additional comments and concerns they may have had concerning their institution. There were statements made during a couple of interviews and open-ended questions that could be interpreted in a way that addresses African American students' level of comfort at their predominantly White institution. For example, the survey entitled "Decisions, Decisions" asked questions concerning students' satisfaction with the environment their institution provides; their satisfaction with the diverse environment their institution provides; and their level of satisfaction with their decision to attend this institution. It can be assumed that since approximately 80% of the 107 survey participants answered "very satisfied" or "satisfied" to these question, that they are comfortable attending their institution. Several responses to the open-ended question asking participants' their reasoning behind attending their predominantly White institution suggests a high level of comfort at their institution. One particular response indicated that their institution's customary rituals made them feel like they were home. Although their statements could be generalized to address the research question, no question was specifically asked that catered to the participants' comfort level. This gap prevented the researcher from accurately gauging participants' level of comfort at their predominantly White institution.

Recommendations Based on Findings

Based on the findings, it is recommended that African American faculty, staff, and students become more involved with compiling ideas for and composing a diversity policy that

fits their specific needs. When discussing involvement, African American faculty, staff, and students need to exert a substantial amount of physical and psychological energy to this policy writing experience. These individuals should discuss any issues and concerns they may have encountered at their predominantly White institution and use this brainstorming process to compose a diversity policy that addresses them. This diversity policy should clearly define diversity; set reachable goals; establish measures set forth to assist African American students to easily matriculate in their new environment; how they plan on enforcing this policy; and any disciplinary actions that will be imposed on those not abiding by it. Once approved, the institutions should place this policy in their Faculty and Staff Manual, Student Manual, and Academic Catalog/Bulletin and the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity should make this policy easily accessible on their website.

Further Research as It Informs Practice

This research study used the opinions and experiences of students attending predominantly White institutions concerning the climates their institution provides and if a diversity policy was in place that specifically addresses their needs. It focused on how these various experiences were related as it pertains to diversity on campus. It has been determined that many of the students' perceptions were based on a much broader context that includes politics, culture, religion, economics, societal norms, and the way those involved affect and interpret diversity. These things need to be taken into account when addressing the perceptions of diversity and diversity policies, thus recommending continued research on this issue. When discussing diversity and the implementation of a diversity policy, further research must be

conducted to find ways to connect all of the social and historical contexts in a way that assists African American students in adjusting to their predominantly White institution.

Further research also must be conducted to assist predominantly White institutions in understanding how their African American students' interactions with other diverse populations affect their educational outcomes. Although the value of diversity can be found throughout course and program offerings, studies need to be conducted to determine how these educational outcomes can be linked with each campus's efforts to better prepare their students for the diverse society they are becoming a part of.

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Appendix A: Surveys

Introduction to the Survey

The purpose of the study will be to explore the perceptions of African American students' attitude towards their institution's diversity policy, and to determine if any changes need to be made to better fit their needs. This study will also examine the difference between the predominantly White institution's perception of what African American students need and what these students highlighted that they require to be successful.

Participation in the study involves completing either a phone or one-on-one interview and typically takes 15-20 minutes or less to complete. Your opinions and responses are highly valued and will remain confidential. You will begin by answering a series of descriptive questions about yourself, after which you will be asked to respond to 4 statements to determine your reasoning in attending a predominantly White institution; 4 statements to determine your awareness and knowledge on your institution's diversity policy; and 4 statements to determine if the current policy is working for you and if any changes need to be made to make the policy more conducive to your needs.

Thank you for participating in this study.

Your Institution's Diversity Policy Survey

Please describe yourself.

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Are you currently a student at a predominantly White institution in the state of North Carolina?

- Yes
- No

If yes, did you transfer to this predominantly White institution from an historically Black college and university?

- Yes
- No

Which institution are you currently attending?

What is your classification?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

“Decisions, Decisions”

This section of the survey consists of 4 questions based on your reasoning behind choosing to attend this institution. Please read each statement and indicate your level of satisfaction with the following scale:

1. Very Dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
4. Satisfied
5. Very Satisfied

Please also respond to the open-ended question at the end of this section of the survey.

1. How satisfied are you with the environment this institution provides?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

2. How satisfied are you with the cost to attend this institution?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

3. How satisfied are you with the diverse environment that this institution provides?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

4. How satisfied are you with your decision to attend this institution?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

I am attending this institution because

“What Do You Know?”

This section of the survey consists of 4 questions based on your current knowledge on your institution’s diversity policy. Please read each statement and indicate your level of satisfaction with the following scale:

1. Very Dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
4. Satisfied
5. Very Satisfied

Please also respond to the open-ended question at the end of this section of the survey.

1. If your institution has a diversity policy in place, how satisfied are you with its organization?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

2. If your institution has a diversity policy in place, how satisfied are you with the protection it provides you?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

3. If your institution has a diversity policy in place, how satisfied are you with how it outlines your specific needs?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

4. If your institution has a diversity policy in place, how satisfied are you with how the majority population treats you?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

My institution’s diversity policy provides me with the following rights and protection_____

“Is It Working For You?”

This section of the survey consists of 4 questions highlighting any changes that need to be made to the current diversity policy. Please read each statement and indicate your level of satisfaction with the following scale:

1. Very Dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
4. Satisfied
5. Very Satisfied

Please also respond to the open-ended question at the end of this section of the survey.

1. The existing diversity policy outlines the stiff penalties that will occur to those individuals not abiding by it.

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

2. The existing diversity policy covers all past and current issues that I have encountered at this institution.

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

3. The existing diversity policy outlines the stiff penalties that will occur to those individuals not abiding by it, but the penalties are not enforced.

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

4. Although the existing diversity policy outlines the stiff penalties that will occur to those individuals not abiding by it, the majority population continues to treat me like a cultural outsider.

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

The current policy is or is not (circle one) conducive to my learning environment and the following things need to be changed
