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Impact of mentorship on African-American title of student satisfaction: a case study at Kappa State University

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Clark Atlanta University

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ABSTRACT

AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES

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IMPACT OF MENTORSHIP ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT
SATISFACTION: A CASE STUDY AT KAPPA STATE UNIVERSITY

Advisor: Professor Josephine Bradley

Thesis dated July, 2010

This research study was conducted over the course of a year and a half. The researcher attempted to draw parallels between mentorship, student satisfaction, and retention. The researcher surveyed 40 African-American students at a predominantly white university (PWI) in Pennsylvania. The 40 African-American students were divided into two groups of 20 with students assigned to a mentoring program at the university and the other 20 remained as general members of the student body. The goal of the survey was to garner the levels of satisfaction experienced by African-American students pertaining to a number of issues that make up their student experience and how that relates to their re-enrollment. The results of both groups’ surveys were compared to demonstrate the impact, or lack thereof, of mentorship on satisfaction, academic success, their re-enrollment. The conclusion drawn from the findings of this research indicate mentorship has little impact on the satisfaction levels of African-American students at Kappa State University.
IMPACT OF MENTORSHIP ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT SATISFACTION: A CASE STUDY AT KAPPA STATE UNIVERSITY

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES

BY
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DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

JULY 2010
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<tr>
<td>CMARC</td>
<td>Carnegie Mellon Advising Resource Center</td>
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<td>EOP</td>
<td>Educational Opportunities Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBCUs</td>
<td>Historically Black Colleges and Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSU</td>
<td>Kappa State University (fictional name of actual university)</td>
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<td>OAMMP</td>
<td>Office of Minority Affairs Mentoring Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASSHE</td>
<td>Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWI</td>
<td>Predominantly White Institution</td>
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<td>UMMP</td>
<td>University Minority Mentorship Program</td>
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to investigate the impact of mentorship and satisfaction on African-American undergraduate students at a single, Predominantly White Institution (PWI), Kappa State University *(KSU). Also, the investigation considered how levels of academic performance and retention rates might be dependent upon active mentorship and satisfaction levels students experienced within their formal learning environments.

African-American students are enrolling in America's colleges and universities in greater numbers every year. 1 African-American students have two main choices to fulfill their educational needs, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and PWIs. HBCUs make up 4 percent of American colleges and universities, but produce 23 percent of all African-American graduates each year. On average, HBCUs graduate 75 percent more African-American students than PWIs. 2 Even with the success of HBCUs, most African-American college students attend PWIs and most African-American high school seniors will go on to attend a PWI. However, the issue is too few African-American students enrolled in America's PWIs are graduating.


* Not the actual name of the university
The high attrition rate among African-American student populations has always been a problem and continues to persist today. Researchers such as Tracy Robinson and Joe Feagin have offered numerous potential explanations for high attrition percentages in African-American student populations. Their studies have credited issues of class, academic preparedness, campus racism, and professorial discrimination as possible factors that lead to high attrition among African-American students at PWIs. However, on campuses where African-American student satisfaction is highest, researchers note a greater prevalence towards retention and graduation.

The Problem

The high attrition rate among African-American student populations is a national problem impacting every sector of American society. Colleges and universities are confronted with institutionalizing measures to ensure that their African-American student populations have needed resources at their disposal to ensure their retention. While this problem is most prevalent at PWIs, HBCUs are confronted with similar attrition challenges. However, the challenge is an honest acknowledgement of a commitment to resolving attrition-based problems.

The education of African Americans has been a point of contention for scholars for many years. Carter G. Woodson, in his groundbreaking text, *The Mis-Education of The Negro*, argues that educated African Americans benefit society and a lack of quality education for African Americans can prove detrimental to not only them, but also society.

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as a whole. The education of African Americans has always been a point of discussion for those interested in improving the condition of the African-American community.

Further, educational attainment, defined as any level or type of post secondary education, is central to the continued progress of African Americans. Educational attainment for African Americans is more pronounced in major urban centers such as Cleveland, Ohio; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Atlanta, Georgia than in rural America. In East Cleveland the population is over 90 percent African American and the average income is approximately $21,000 per family. Over 30 percent of the families within the city live under the government’s designated poverty line. A possible explanation is that only 8 percent of East Cleveland’s residents hold a bachelor’s degree. The African-American population in Pittsburgh is only 27 percent of the total population. Roughly 26 percent of Pittsburgh residents hold a bachelor’s degree. More telling is the fact that median family income of Pittsburgh residents is $28,588. That figure comes from the 2000 census so one would assume it has risen some, but the reality is $28,588 is not very high. As in the case of Pittsburgh, the need for educational attainment is not reserved for only African Americans, but educational attainment is central to improving one’s conditions whether or not one is black or white; in Atlanta, one of our nation’s largest cities, African Americans make up 61 percent of the total population. Only 34 percent of Atlanta residents hold a bachelor’s degree.¹

Atlanta is a city that has a reputation of being home to some of the most educated and affluent African Americans in our country. Almost a quarter of Atlanta’s population lives below the government’s designated poverty line and the median income of Atlanta

residents is approximately $35,000. These figures are not an isolated statistical commentary on the plight of Cleveland, Pittsburgh, or Atlanta. To the contrary, these figures are comparable to various other lower-income, predominantly African-American cities nationwide.

For example, in a study investigating issues faced by disadvantaged student populations in postsecondary institutions, it was suggested that residents from economically and educationally disadvantaged areas are less likely to have attended or earned degrees at institutions of higher education. The statistics from East Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Atlanta suggest some correlation between postsecondary education and living conditions. These figures reveal the importance of academics for African Americans and demonstrate a direct correlation between educational attainment and income earning potential.

In addition to academics, education at postsecondary institutions should also focus on the personal growth of African-American students. Whether the student in question is attending a HBCU or a PWI those personal needs should be met. African-American students bring diverse experiences and varied cultural identities to the classrooms of both HBCUs and PWIs. Therefore, diversity should be considered invaluable and perhaps serve as an incentive in the recruitment, admission, and most importantly, the retention of African-American students.

Moreover, the issue of African-American student satisfaction at PWIs is relevant because this researcher experienced first hand, as an African-American undergraduate at

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a PWI, the consequences of low-levels of student satisfaction. During his junior year as the Political Action Chair of the Black Student Union, the researcher fielded complaints and concerns expressed by members of the African-American student population.

The constant complaints identified by African-American students ranged from their dissatisfaction with everything from their professors and classes to their social interactions with their white peers. Many of this researcher’s undergraduate peers failed to graduate within six years or many did not graduate at all. African-American student retention at the university suffered because dissatisfaction was an overwhelming issue evident among many of this African-American cohort, which was not addressed initially by the administration.

However, from personal observations, the African-American students involved in The Educational Opportunities Program (EOP), an academic enrichment program, designed to provide a comprehensive four-year academic experience, seemed more satisfied with their learning experience. Similar mentorship programs can be found at PWIs nationwide. For example, Carnegie Mellon University offers the Carnegie Mellon Advising Resources Center (CMARC), The Ohio State University offers the Office of Minority Affairs Mentoring Program (OAMMP), and the University of Florida has the University Minority Mentorship Program (UMMP). Minority mentoring programs are becoming more commonplace at PWIs nationwide. Amongst the EOP participants involved with mentorship, the typical dissatisfaction voiced by other KSU African-American students, seemingly did not manifest itself in the same way. This observation

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prompted this researcher to investigate the potential impact of mentorship on student satisfaction.

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it adds to the scholarship related to African-American student experiences and retention at PWIs. Many PWIs do not foster the development of African-American students, and as a result, the retention of African-American students suffer. However, when students' satisfaction levels are high, there is a greater tendency toward success and retention. A satisfied student is more likely to matriculate and graduate within four years of college. Research suggested that most successful African-American college students were able to find a mentor (or group of mentors) who encouraged them, critiqued their work, and guided them through their undergraduate careers.8

This research investigated whether or not students from the mentorship program, EOP, would indicate through their responses on satisfaction surveys whether or not they were satisfied with their collegiate experiences. The EOP program was founded at KSU in 1975 with a desire to provide a highly structured program with the intent to accomplish specific program objectives for students, such as high academic achievement and the identification of strengths and weaknesses. The goal for EOP is for student's academic skills and abilities to be enhanced as a result of their participation in the program. The program is open to all students, but target minority and economically disadvantaged

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students. During both the summer and academic year, support services offered include financial aid counseling, individual analysis of study habits, and assistance in career planning and decision making. Finally, the program sponsors extracurricular activities intended to enrich the student's total learning experience.

This research then compared the responses on the same satisfaction survey of a comparative group of non-mentored African-American students at the same school, KSU. With researchers drawing correlations between satisfaction levels and retention, one would assume if mentorship’s impact could be determined as a critical component to African-American students’ satisfaction and retention, then required mentorship programs for all African-American students at PWIs could be a potential suggestion.

**Conceptual Framework**

The two frameworks that were used for this research were William Cross’ *Nigrescence* theory and Leon Festinger’s theory of *Cognitive Dissonance*. *Nigrescence* is a French word that means the “process of becoming black” and the theory evolved in the late 1960s as researchers and psychologists tried to explain the identity transformation that accompanied many African Americans participation in the Black Power Movement which began in the late 1960s and ran through the early 1970s. Ultimately, Cross and this researcher both agree that *Nigrescence* is no more than a resocializing experience, which seeks to transform a preexisting identity (a non Afro-centric identity) into one that is Afro-centric. The *Nigrescence* theory explains the development of identity in many

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10 Ibid., 190.
African Americans. Nigrescence is characterized by five identity stages that correlate with seven racial identifiers.

The five identity stages are the Pre-Encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-Commitment stages and they correlate with seven racial identifiers termed Assimilation, Anti-Black, Intense Black Involvement, Anti-White, Black Nationalist, Bi-culturalist, and Multi-culturalist. Cross suggests that African Americans find themselves mirroring one of these identity stages and dependent upon their identity stage, the corresponding racial identifier. Cross puts forward the idea that African Americans can move through all five stages, and the ideal stage to be in is the Internalization stage or the very similar Internalization-Commitment stage and the corresponding Multi-cultural racial identifier. This stage and racial identifier suggest an understanding of racial identity and appreciation of cultures.  

Stage I: Pre-Encounter

The Pre-Encounter stage is characterized by the identities Assimilation and Anti-Black. Individuals with the Assimilation identity and the Anti-Black identity can be described as very pro-American, and the issue of race is a non-issue, so much so, that they distance themselves from their own racial identity. The “physical” fact about their skin complexion is an insignificant role in their everyday lives. Being black and having knowledge about the black experience have little to do with their perceived sense of happiness and well-being. These preexisting identities, Assimilation and Anti-Black, are

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the identities to be changed. African Americans with an Assimilation identity can in some cases view race as a hassle or an imposition. In many cases, such people may have an interest in African American causes, but not as a way of supporting black causes and culture, but to join those trying to destroy the social relevance that is often associated with being of African descent. Further, African Americans in the Pre-Encounter stage often are mis-educated about the significance of the African-American experience.

Pre-Encounter African Americans are frequently products of a formal education system that is both white and western dominated in its emphasis. Pre-Encounter African Americans suffer from such extreme mis-education that it can lead to a distorted image of the historical, cultural, and economic history and, furthermore, potential of African Americans. Finally, Pre-Encounter African Americans have a different value structure when it comes to issues that are relevant to African Americans from those in the other stages of Nigrescence; they often stress individualism over communalism. However, it is important to note that it is very possible for an African-American person to be socialized from childhood through their adolescence to have a strong black identity. Such a person is not likely to be in need of Nigrescence.

Stage II: Encounter

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12 Cross Jr., *Shades of Black*, 191.
13 Ibid., 193.
14 Ibid., 196.
15 Ibid., 190.
The Encounter stage is characterized by an event or a series of events that motivates an individual to examine their identity, not an identity in itself. The event is often an experience that lifts the mask of “whiteness” and points out the significance of racial categories. Typically, the encounter shatters the person’s worldview. The death of Dr. Martin Luther King in 1968 sent thousands of Pre-Encounter African Americans into a search for a deeper meaning of what was going on. Furthermore, being personally assaulted, watching a televised incident of a racial incident, or even speaking with someone who is further along in their journey through Nigrescence can push someone in the Pre-Encounter stage towards the Encounter stage and further self discovery.16 In an article by Anthony Walton written in 1989 for the New York Times entitled “Willie Horton and Me” the author writes about a series of encounters, a slight at an American Express office, a temporary doorman at his apartment refusing to let him pass, and his inability to catch a cab while standing in the pouring rain in New York City. All of these encounters led Walton to write:

I have a white education, a white accent, I conform to white middle-class standards in virtually every choice, from preferring Brooks Brothers oxford cloth to religiously clutching my gold cards as the tickets to the good life. I’m not really complaining about that. The world, even the white world, has been, if not good, then acceptable to me. But as I get older, I feel the world closing in. I feel that I failed to notice something, or that I’ve been deceived. (Anthony Walton, “Willie Horton and Me,” New York Times Magazine, 20 August 1989, 53)

For many, as was the case of Anthony Walton, it is not a single event, but a series of events that slowly chip away at a person’s worldview that defines their Encounter stage. It is important to note that the encounters do not have to be negative and could very well be a powerful experience that radically forces someone to rethink his or her conception of

16 Cross Jr., Shades of Black, 199.
what it means to be African American. If the psychological and emotional discomfort produced from and during the encounter stage is great enough, the Pre-Encounter identity dies and a new more African centered identity begins to emerge and the individual progresses to the Immersion/Emersion stage.

**Stage III: Immersion-Emersion**

Similarly to the Pre-Encounter stage, the Immersion-Emersion stage is characterized by two identities: Intense Black Involvement and an Anti-White identity, an Intense Black Involvement describes an African American’s over-romanticized immersion into the African-American experience, such as feeling the need to be attracted to symbols of this new identity. For instance, particular styles of dressing, hairstyles, and the wearing of Africa’s national colors are all examples of this. The Anti-White identity is a rejection of everything associated with European culture, to the point of demonizing whites and their culture. In this stage, everything of value in life must be African or related to Blackness. The leveling off of these feelings begins when a person can meet or read about a person such as Malcolm X, who describes moving beyond a rigid sense of Blackness as a consequence of his experiences in Mecca.

The Internalization stage begins when one discovers that their first impression of Blackness was in fact romantic and symbolic, not substantive, textured, and complex.

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17 Cross Jr., *Shades of Black*, 200.
18 Ibid., 200-1.
19 Ibid., 201.
20 Ibid., 207.
However, there are cases when instead of moving forward from Immersion-Emersion towards Internalization one becomes fixated with the ideas associated with the Anti-White identity. In many cases, those closest to some of the most brutal forms of racism and poverty tend to get trapped in this stage, those being African Americans who live or are familiar with life in the inner city or life in remote rural southern communities. College students, the middle class, and working African Americans have greater access to insight that point to progressive attitudes and tend to avoid being consumed by Anti-White attitudes. Once one’s attitude becomes more expansive, open, and less defensive, and one begins to understand that continued growth lies ahead, he or she is truly ready for the Internalization stage.  

**Stage IV: Internalization**

The Internalization stage is characterized by three identities: Black Nationalist, Bi-culturalist, and Multi-culturalist. In the Internalization stage, one is given a sense of belonging and social anchorage and is provided a foundation or point of departure for carrying out relationships with people, cultures, and situations beyond the world of African Americans. The Black Nationalists concentrate their energies on empowering the African-American community, but still maintaining respect for others. The Bi-culturalist has a strong sense of African-American self-acceptance, but also has a strong interest in at least one other cultural orientation, such as gender or sexual orientation. The Multi-culturalist has a very positive African-American identity, but he or she wants to

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21 Cross Jr., *Shades of Black*, 207-209.

22 Ibid., 210.
focus on several other cultural orientations. The Bi-culturalist and the Multi-culturalist want to build coalitions beyond the African-American community. The Internalization stage is a balancing of the other demands that one faces and the identities that one has, such as sexual identity, occupational identity, and religious identity. In some cases, these other identities may be very race sensitive or un-impacted by race, but in the Internalization stage this is a welcomed balancing act. The best example of what the Internalization stage looks like is painted by Cross in his characterization of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King:

When Malcolm X returned from Mecca, he was no less committed to Black people; however, his "tunnel" vision had been expanded, enabling him to see Blackness and Black people as but one cultural and historical expression of the human condition. His new vision did not question the basic integrity of the Black experience, rather it made Blackness his point of departure for discovering the universe of ideas, cultures, and experiences beyond Blackness, in place of mistaking Blackness for the universe itself. It is often assumed that ethnicity acts as a barrier to humanism, but in its highest expression Black identity functions as a window on the world. The humanism, ever present in the life of Martin Luther King and increasingly apparent in the final period of Malcolm X's life, did not represent a contradiction to their Blackness; it was a product of Blackness. (Cross Jr., Shades of Black, 218-219)

Stage V: Internalization-Commitment

The Internalization-Commitment stage is characterized by the same three identities as the Internalization stage. However, for some African Americans, they fail to sustain a long-term interest in Black issues, for others, Black issues and Black affairs
become a lifestyle. For those African Americans for which this is true, they are described as reaching the Internalization-Commitment stage.\textsuperscript{23}

As has been stated, the \textit{Nigrescence} theory is characterized by an individual's evolution over four to five stages in concert with seven African-American identities to be characterized within. \textit{Nigrescence} is relevant to this research because there is a parallel between what \textit{Nigrescence} insists is undertaken by African-Americans over four to five stages and the four to five years or levels of the undergraduate experience. If a series of racial charged or rooted encounters, the type that define the Encounter stage, has not yet taken place in the life of an African-American college student who has chosen to attend a PWI prior to their matriculation, they will at some point during their time on campus.

According to the \textit{Cognitive Dissonance} theory, there is a tendency for individuals to seek consistency among their cognitions (i.e., beliefs, opinions). When there is an inconsistency between attitudes or behaviors (dissonance), something must change to eliminate the dissonance. In the case of a discrepancy between attitudes and behavior, it is most likely that the attitude will change to accommodate the behavior. Two factors affect the strength of the dissonance: the number of dissonant beliefs, and the importance attached to each belief.\textsuperscript{24} There are three ways to eliminate dissonance:

(1) Reduce the importance of the dissonant beliefs

(2) Add more consonant beliefs that outweigh the dissonant beliefs.


(3) Change the dissonant beliefs so that they are no longer inconsistent.

Dissonance occurs most often in situations where an individual must choose between two incompatible beliefs or actions. The greatest dissonance is created when the two alternatives are equally attractive. Furthermore, attitude change is more likely in the direction of less incentive since this results in lower dissonance. In this respect, dissonance theory is contradictory to most behavioral theories that would predict greater attitude change with increased incentive.²⁵

This research took the theoretical perspective that the presence of a mentoring relationship allows an African-American student to stay in the early phases of Nigrescence for a shorter period of time allowing, thereby, for their progression into the final phase of Nigrescence to occur sooner. In the final phase, or the Internalization phase, an African-American student is aware of their own identity and the issues that come along with being a minority in a majority setting. However, being aware and reaching the Internalization phase earlier in their collegiate experience will allow African-American students to experience higher levels of satisfaction and the greater likelihood of re-enrollment during college. High levels of student satisfaction are often coupled with student success, which inevitably increases the likelihood of students' decision to re-enroll.

The theory of Cognitive Dissonance suggests people, in this case African-American students, have internal struggles when they have two warring opinions,
opposing attitudes, conflicting beliefs, or an awareness of opposing behaviors. Dissonance creates a tendency to change one’s attitudes to match one’s behaviors. Dissonance is a theory that is relevant when it comes to making a decision or solving a problem. African-American students often are placed in several situations, daily, such as if they go to class to whether or not to sit in the front of the lecture hall. They have to make a decision that may impact how they are perceived and ultimately treated in predominantly white environments. Many African-American students struggle with the idea that they often have to represent their race. This expectation creates a self-imposed censoring where students’ own opinions and personalities can be muted, further supporting the potential internal conflict already present in African-American students at PWIs.

Both theories suggest that African-American students face enormous challenges when they decide to enroll in a PWI. Thus, this research attempted to examine the impact that mentorship may or may not have on African-American student’s satisfaction. *Nigrescence* and *Cognitive Dissonance* are offered as conceptual frameworks of the African-American student experience.

**Methodology**

A case study research strategy was chosen because of the limited available sample size. This approach is, therefore, an exploratory study designed to access the impact of a designed mentorship program on the achievement level of African-American students at a PWI. The researcher utilized a multiple-choice survey to determine the satisfaction

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26 Ibid., 4.
levels of two groups of students. It can be utilized to add to the academy’s knowledge related to groups, organizational and related phenomena. The satisfaction survey was an effort to garner feedback from students in a systematic way. The case study strategy is being used to describe KSUs EOP as an interceptive method of retaining students, especially African-American students.

Components of the research design are as follows:

1) Assumptions

Based on personal communication with faculty members at KSU and the Director of EOP, the researcher initiated the research with certain assumptions. The assumptions were:

a) Many African Americans have rejected the idea of doing well academically as it was closely associated with being white or “acting white.”

b) Attrition of African-American students can be reduced based on the level of positive support received from faculty and other resources.

c) Mentorship could be effective given a mentor who understands the culture of the individual and respects the student for what he or she brings to the campus.

d) A student’s level of satisfaction is impacted by the level of support received from the campus community.

e) EOP participants would feel a sense of attachment to a university that was instrumental in a period of personal growth.

f) Non-EOP participants not receiving mentorship would be less satisfied with their college experience.

g) The five stages identified by William Cross will correspond with the years of attendance at KSU.

2) The instrument of analysis includes seven questions presented to 40 African-American students.

3) Components related to the assumptions are rooted in the data related to success levels of students and the levels of satisfaction.

4) The criteria for interpretation of the data collected includes:
   a) Percentages related to the students’ responses to the satisfaction survey.
   b) The reported findings on levels of satisfaction, G.P.A., performance, and involvement in EOP.

Sample:

This researcher surveyed 40 African-American students from the campus of KSU. The overall undergraduate student population at KSU is 5,873 on a campus of 128 acres. Roughly 60 percent of KSU's population is female, 92 percent of the population is white, 5 percent African American, and 96 percent of all the students are from the state of Pennsylvania. The student to faculty ratio is 19:1 and there are over 130 clubs and organizations for students attending KSU to choose from.

Instrument:

The instrument was taken from a similar student satisfaction survey produced in 2004 by Pennsylvania State University and adjusted and shortened to be relevant for this research. The survey was comprised of the following seven questions:

1) Are you involved with the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP)?
2) What is your college of enrollment?
3) How many credits of coursework are you currently taking?
4) What is your academic goal?
5) What is your ethnic background, academic classification, and G.P.A.?
6) How satisfied are you with the overall quality of your formal academic experiences, your out-of-class experiences (attending plays, hearing speakers, having informal student discussions), your sense of belonging at KSU, and if you were starting college again, would you choose to attend KSU?
7) If you are or have been a member of a club or organization to what degree did/does your participation contribute to your overall satisfaction with your KSU experiences, communication skills, interpersonal skills, interpersonal effectiveness, self-reliance skills, leadership, conflict management, and time management skills?

Procedure:

The researcher:

1) Forwarded the survey in a link to 20 African-American students involved with EOP and 20 African-American students not involved with EOP. Students responded by computer.
2) Information was analyzed and presented using descriptive data. Descriptive data is data presented through graphic representation either by pie charts, tables, or tube graphs.

**Location:**

KSU is located in the northern state of Pennsylvania in a city and county that has an African-American population of less than one percent. The African-American student population at KSU is about 5 percent (350) with the majority of the African-American students coming either from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania or Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. KSU is one of the 14 Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools.

**Research questions for this study were:**

a) What issues confront African-American students enrolled at KSU?

b) What factors contribute to the retention/attrition of African-American students at KSU?

c) In what ways does the implementation or greater emphasis on mentorship increase or decrease the retention or attrition of African-American students?

**Chapter Organization**

This research is organized into five chapters. Chapter I, the Introduction, describes the background of the problem, establishes the significance of the study, highlights the conceptual framework, and describes the study’s methodology. Chapter II, the Review of the Literature, provides a detailed review of the supporting and consulted
literature related to African-American students and education at PWIs. Chapter III discusses the historical and present day issues of African-American students at PWIs. Chapter IV presents the overall findings and analysis of the data collected from the surveys and the final chapter, Chapter V provides the conclusion of the work, limitations, and offers recommendations for change.

**Glossary of Terms**

**afro-centric.** Regarding African or black culture as preeminent

**cognitive dissonance (Leon Festinger).** The state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes as relating to behavioral decisions and attitude change.

**educational attainment.** Any level or type of post secondary education, is central to the continued progress of African Americans

**nigrescence (William Cross Jr.).** A French word for becoming black. A theory designed to explain the process of identity transformation in African Americans.

**resocializing.** The transformation of a preexisting identity into one that is Afro-centric.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review is separated into four sections. It will discuss both journal articles and books that have attempted to explain the high attrition rates among African-American students at PWIs and a host of other issues related to this specific population. This literature review will focus on student satisfaction as a key variable in determining if African-American students will continue their matriculation and complete their education at PWIs.

Researchers Debra Lett and James Wright, in their work found in the *Journal of Instructional Psychology* explain that for African-American students at PWIs, the issues faced such as isolation, alienation, racism, discrimination, intimidation, and problems acquiring adequate financial aid have plagued this population for decades. Lett and Wright state that African-American students face many obstacles, both blatant and subtle, when seeking to obtain academic and social acceptance while attending PWIs. These researchers also show that African-Americans often share sentiments of exclusion and rejection that are fostered by a lack of diversity, in regards to faculty, administrators, counselors, and mentors/role models.¹

In "*Black Encounters of Racism and Elitism in White Academe: A Critique of the System,*" Talmadge Anderson asserts that it was not until the Supreme Court ruling in the

¹Debra Lett and James Wright, "Psychological Barriers Associated with Matriculation of African-American Students in PWIs," *Journal of Instructional Psychology* 30, no.3 (September 2003) : 189.
1954 case of *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka Kansas*, that a significant number of African-Americans began to seek admission to PWIs.2

Joy Ann Williamson in her work, "*In Defense of Themselves: The Black Student Struggle for Success and Recognition at Predominantly White Colleges and Universities*" supports Anderson’s claims that it was not until the 1960s that historically white southern institutions of higher education would admit African-American students.3 However, some scholars have been hesitant to agree with the totality of both Anderson’s and Williamson’s claims. In fact, Berea College in Kentucky was a PWI and one of the few southern colleges admitting African-American students into their student body before the 1960s. Williamson notes that enrollment of African-American college students doubled between 1964 and 1970, with the greatest increase observed at PWIs.

Legislative changes did not mean attitude adjustments, and Williamson insists that despite PWIs admitting African-American students in greater numbers, the new law did not mean that these students would be socially accepted. In many cases, African-American students had to face racially hostile campus environments comprised of students, professors, and administrators who challenged their rights, safety, and intellectual abilities.4 Both Anderson and Williamson would agree for more than a century and a half little has changed in regards to race relations and black and white

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4 Ibid.
student interaction at PWIs. From the time the first African-Americans were admitted to PWIs to the present, racism has been the most formidable factor they have faced.\(^5\)

In 1992, Joe Feagin created a theory to describe the cumulative effects of contemporary discrimination. He describes his theory in his journal article *"The Continuing Significance of Racism: Discrimination Against Black Students in White Colleges;"* his theory considers three factors. The first factor described is the location of the discriminatory action. The second factor is the type of person discriminating (i.e. students, faculty, staff, or alumni). The third factor refers to the type of discriminatory actions directed at African-American students.\(^6\) Based on his research, Feagin found that established barriers impacted African-American student’s experiences on white college campuses.

Anderson offered similar viewpoints to what Feagin’s research presented highlighting five key racial conditions blacks continue to encounter. The conditions are as follows:

1) A physical environment and social culture alien to their own background and tradition.

2) Racially tense or strained relationships with whites due to conflicting lifestyles, interests, and activities.

3) Apprehension and uneasiness from white faculty who share a common attitude that black learning capabilities are marginal, especially in the


quantitative and technical fields. As products of a racist society, they cannot adjust to or familiarize themselves with black faces in their classrooms.

4) Textbooks that reflect ethnocentric and racist ideologies of white supremacy and cultural dominance.

5) Isolation by white students and faculty based on racist perceptions.⁷

Overt and covert forms of racism and discrimination forced African-American students in PWIs to create their own social domains.⁸ In an effort to make campus environments more welcoming and responsive to their needs, numerous black students organized against racist and discriminatory school policies and worked to create social and academic support systems whose goals ensured their survival and success at predominantly white colleges and universities.⁹ This cultural organization was a necessary response to continued alienation, isolation, and cultural dominance afflicted on them by white students and faculty.

A research study conducted by Chalsa Loo and Gary Rolison entitled "Alienation of Ethnic Minority Students at a Predominantly White University" found that feelings of alienation and isolation among African-American students attending PWIs have in the past been a significant barrier to their matriculation.¹⁰ These researchers discovered socio-cultural alienation was much higher in blacks at a particular university than whites. Minority students felt as though the school did not reflect their values. Additionally, the

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⁷ Anderson, Black Encounters, 264.
⁸ Ibid.
⁹ Williamson, In Defense of Themselves, 94.
majority of white and minority students felt minority students faced greater socio-cultural barriers on campus than whites. Though this study was conducted two decades ago, its results are still relevant today as many African-American students at PWI are still battling feelings of alienation and isolation in 2009. The table below shows the number of minority and white students who reported experiencing socio-cultural difficulties. Loo and Rolison state that these socio-cultural factors are more likely to influence minority student’s thinking and deliberation about dropping out.\textsuperscript{11}

Table 1. Issues Minority Students Face that White Students May Not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why Minority Students Face More Sociocultural Difficulties than Whites</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minority (%)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Whites (%)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural domination</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice/discrimination</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic unpreparedness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial difficulties</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Researcher Tracy Robinson claims at PWIs nationwide, increased attention is being paid to the retention levels of students, in particular, African-American students. African-American student enrollment at PWIs has increased, but fewer African-American students are re-enrolling and/or graduating from these institutions.\textsuperscript{12} The retention of African-American students at PWIs is important for numerous reasons, for example, the image of PWIs suffer when the attrition percentage of their African-American student

\textsuperscript{11} Loo and Rolison, *Alienation of Ethnic*, 66.

\textsuperscript{12} Robinson, *Understanding*, 207.
population is significantly higher than that of the white student population. Noted researcher Jacqueline Rowser offers an interesting perspective on the potential result of the continued retention issues of African-American students. She emphasizes the negative socioeconomic impact on African-American communities as long as their educational pipeline continues to deliver young undereducated and ill-prepared African Americans back into the community.13

The degree completion rates in the United States are discouraging for students in general, however, Bruce Frey and Cornel Pewewardy feel the situation is particularly dire for African-American students who suffer from the highest collegiate attrition rate of any race or ethnic group.14 In recent years, retention studies have attempted to provide causation for the high rates of attrition among African-American students. Researchers Bradford Chaney, Lana Muraskin, Margaret Cahalan, and David Goodwine suggest that students who are educationally or economically disadvantaged in high school are less likely to enroll in postsecondary education, and if they do enroll, they are even less likely to receive a degree.15 Similar research indicates many African-American students are first-generation college attendees and/or from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. While class is a factor, in some cases, there are several other issues that aid in a student’s choice towards attrition. For African-American students who attend PWIs, racism, elitism, discrimination, the absence of an identifiable community, and the

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15 Chaney, Muraskin, Cahalan, and Goodwin, *Helping the Progress*, 197.
lack of a viable minority mentorship/support system all contribute to high attrition rates in African-American student populations.

The retention problem of African-American students is a continuing issue. African Americans began attending PWIs in large numbers in the early 1960s, dealing with racism, elitism, and discrimination in their personal, social, and academic space. With those types of pressures, attrition was often a solution to the problem.

John Monroe, an English professor with experience in both HBCU and PWI settings, suggests attrition rates among African-American students can be reduced dramatically if these students are given “careful instruction.” For Monroe careful instruction includes:

1) Close professional scrutiny of the skills, information, and attitudes that each student brings to college.

2) A program of teaching and learning that deals directly and efficiently with the needs of students in a firm and supportive way.

3) A competent faculty interested in teaching students rather than just teaching subjects.

4) A management team that monitors administrative processes and knows what works well and what does not.16

Tracy Robinson’s study determined that one of the most important factors that will distinguish graduates from non-graduates after four years is based largely on the students’ experiences during college, not before college. This makes the case for effective mentorship and faculty involvement even stronger.

16Robinson, Understanding, 217.
Researcher Laird Townsend argues that despite the apparent need for structured programs to promote the retention of African-American students, such programs are often not available. When they are made available, they are often under-funded and do not have the full support and commitment of the institution.17 Lois Gallien Jr. states that African-American college students who have had the greatest success typically have a mentor (or group of mentors) who encouraged them, critiqued their work, and guided them throughout their undergraduate years.18

Researcher Wynetta Lee understands mentorship to be loosely defined as a relationship between a senior person (mentor) who knows and understands the culture and a junior person (mentee) who wishes to enter and participate successfully.19 She further states that mentors act as examples of what to do and what not to do. Additionally, mentors give advice and support to the mentees and in the academic setting provide a consummate emotional support system. The benefit of this to the student is obvious: greater attainment in educational and career goals, stability, and an ever-present resource.20

Various studies have been conducted to determine if mentoring does in fact help increase retention of African-American and other minority students at PWIs. David and Toni Campbell conducted a study in 1997 to determine whether meetings with a mentor during a student’s freshman year would have an effect on grade-point average, units


18 Gallien Jr., The Historical and Cultural, 9.


20 Lee, Striving Toward, 31-2.
completed, and retention in subsequent years.\textsuperscript{21} In this study, they found that when compared to a control group, students enrolled in a mentorship program completed more credit hours per semester and had higher GPAs. This study also shows the dropout rate among mentees was substantially less than that of students who did not participate in mentorship (14.5 percent versus 26.3 percent).

Studies abound showing the correlation between student satisfaction and greater prevalence towards retention. To gain an historical perspective of the issues of retention, in 1985, Mike Nettles researched the attrition and retention of both African-American and white students at institutions of higher education. Nettles' research, "The Causes and Consequences of College Student Performance: A Focus on Black and White Students' Attrition Rates, Progression Rates and Grade Point Averages," offers many of the potential factors that effect student retention rates. The most relevant information gathered from Nettles' study is the idea that success in college is highly predicated on the student in question being a representative of the majority race on their campus. Additionally, Nettles concluded that success in higher education has strong correlations to the racial makeup of the campus and the individual. However, the racial makeup of the campus and of the individual has just as much impact on the failure of the person when they do not belong to the majority race.\textsuperscript{22}

HBCUs were established to serve the educational needs of African-Americans post Reconstruction period. Prior to their establishment and for many years afterwards,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} David Campbell and Toni Campbell, "Faculty/Student Mentor Program: Effects on Academic Performance and Retention," \textit{Research in Higher Education} 38, no.6 (1997) : 727.
\end{itemize}
African-Americans generally were denied admission to traditional PWIs. As a result, HBCUs became the principal means for providing postsecondary education to African-Americans.\textsuperscript{23} Former President George Bush described the unique mission of black colleges as follows: "At a time when many schools barred their doors to black Americans, these colleges offered the best, and often the only, opportunity for a higher education. Today, most of those barriers have been brought down through laws, and yet HBCUs still represent a vital component of American higher education."\textsuperscript{24}

HBCUs make up only 4 percent of all American colleges and universities, as well as producing only 23 percent of all African-American graduates each year.\textsuperscript{25} African-Americans have the option to go to HBCUs, and the results from Nettles’ 1985 study suggest they should, but the numbers suggest African-Americans enroll in PWIs at greater percentages. Thus, if African-American students are enrolling in PWIs, there needs to be persistence by the PWIs in question to improve the retention percentages of their African-American students, because of both the real and assumptive effects of educational attainment.

Loo and Rolison found “positive student-faculty relationships and satisfaction with the academic quality of education were balanced against socio-cultural alienation, academic un-preparedness, and isolation for minority students, thereby precluding a

\textsuperscript{23} \url{www.ed.gov} accessed 7/13/2007.


\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
higher proportion of minority students from thinking of dropping out." The study also found that a greater proportion of minority students, compared to whites, felt comfortable participating and making contributions in classes led by ethnic minority faculty. This study provides additional support for the need for a supportive mentoring relationship between African-American students and faculty at PWIs. Loo and Rolison wrote:

... among those students who said there was a supportive faculty member, 93 percent of the white students identified their supportive mentors as white, and 45 percent of the minority students identified their supportive mentors as ethnic minority. Faculty-student mentoring, then, was significantly race matched. Given the tendency of both white and minority students to identify with faculty of their own race, the importance of increasing the proportion of ethnic minorities on the faculty cannot be overstated.

Over the course of the last several decades, many researchers and observers have attempted to develop models to explain why African-American students at PWIs succeed or fail. As discussed above, there are many historical factors related to racism, discrimination, isolation, and alienation that all can lead to high rates of attrition among black students. Models that seek to describe how students react and adapt to such barriers may be classified as non-cognitive models. The proceeding section will briefly highlight the main points of several such models and will pay particular attention to Cross's Nigrescence theory which seeks to explain the process of how blacks adapt to being placed in predominantly white settings.

Bruce Fretz and Chalmer Thompson used what they termed bi-cultural adaptive variables to predict levels of academic and social adjustment among African-American

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27 Ibid., 67.
students attending PWIs.\textsuperscript{28} These researchers hypothesized that among African-Americans attending PWIs, four variables significantly predict levels of social and academic adjustment. These are:

1) Higher levels of communalism.

2) Higher levels of cognitive cultural schema; defined as the tendency to recall Black-related stimuli (cultural content) more often than "universal/white" stimuli.

3) Positive attitudes toward cooperative classroom situation.

4) Negative attitudes toward individualistic classroom situations.\textsuperscript{29}

These adaptive variables are related to Cross's theory of \textit{Nigrescence} in that they suggest African-American students who form social networks and bonds with others of the same race are more likely to be able to adjust to the issues they face at PWIs.

William Sedlacek hypothesized that seven non-cognitive variables are critical in the lives of minority students. Success or failures of minority students may be determined by how well these students adjust to the surroundings and how faculty and staff encourage this adjustment.\textsuperscript{30} Researchers have demonstrated the validity of these seven variables plus an eighth, non-traditional knowledge acquired, by showing the usefulness of a brief questionnaire (the Non-Cognitive Questionnaire [NCQ]) in predicting grades,

\textsuperscript{28} Bruce Fretz and Chalmer Thompson, "Predicting the Adjustment of Black Students at PWIs," \textit{The Journal of Higher Education} 62, no. 4 (July 1991): 438.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 441.

retention, and graduation for black students for up to 6 years after initial matriculation. These non-cognitive variables are important because four of them relate directly to the experiences of African-American students in the fourth and fifth phase of Nigrescence. The non-cognitive variables of the NCQ are presented below. Variables 1, 2, 3 and 6 each relate to the Internalization phase of Nigrescence.

1) **Positive self-concept or confidence.**

Possesses a strong self-feeling, strength of character, determination, and independence.

2) **Realistic self-appraisal.**

Recognizes and accepts any deficiencies and works hard at self-development. Recognizes need to broaden his or her individuality; especially important in academic areas.

3) **Understands and deals with racism.**

Is realistic based on personal experience of racism. Not submissive to existing wrongs, nor hostile to society.

4) **Demonstrated community service.**

Is involved in his or her cultural community.

5) **Prefers long-range goals to short-term of immediate needs.**

Able to respond to deferred gratification.

6) **Availability of strong support person.**

Individual has someone to whom to turn in crisis.

7) **Successful leadership experience.**

Has experience in any area pertinent to his or her background (e.g., gang leader, sports, and non-educational groups.

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31 Ibid., 542.
8) Knowledge acquired in a field.\textsuperscript{32}

Researchers have asserted that an increasing presence of mentoring relationships, more tolerant campus communities, a more caring administration, faculty and staff all would impact the retention of African-American students. There is no one cause to explain the historically high attrition challenges facing the African-American community, but while the challenges have been great there has also been great accomplishments. The history of African Americans and education is one highlighted with achievement and obstacles.

\textsuperscript{32} Sedlacek, \textit{Black Students}, 538-50.
CHAPTER III

CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

There is a fraying thread that is currently running through the tapestry of African-American higher education. Too many students are dissatisfied with their educational experience. These sentiments may date back to African-American students’ first real introduction to an integrated structural dynamic within their educational system. African Americans have fought since slavery for the right to education and the life that seemingly is associated with it. In the 1950s and 60s, both laws and individuals reflect discontent with segregated schools and under-funded institutions.

However, this researcher does not contend or suggest educational integration was disadvantageous for American or African Americans. It is apparent that if integration had not become the law of the land, many African Americans would not be attending PWIs or may not even have the privilege of being college students. Very real academic development and growth is being experienced among African-American students in the diverse settings of some of the nation’s top schools. Further, the researcher has not experienced imposed segregation during one’s education experience and has no first hand knowledge of the term “separate, but equal.” Yet from academic readings, personal conversation, and research, the researcher asserts prior to government-sanctioned integration, African Americans viewed and thought of education and educational attainment very differently than many of our most at-risk African-Americans students do now. Within the last 30 to 40 years, too many African-American students have begun to
associate academic success with “acting white,” a detailed chronology of some of the major education events in the lives of African-Americans is provided in Appendix B. This thinking about education and black appears to have its origins in and is first mentioned shortly after the integration of America’s public schools as a result of the Supreme Court ruling in the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision. The Brown decision was the legal end to segregation in public schools. This law put many African-American teachers and principals in all-black schools out of work. Further, the educational examples that African-American students were interacting with went from faces that resembled their own and people who offered compassion and encouragement, to a completely different environment, surrounded by people who questioned their academic worth and personal value.

As if the radical disruption and immediate change from a familiar teacher-student dynamic to integrated classrooms was not enough, African-American students were subject to diminished academic expectations or no academic expectations at all. With virtually no transition time into a new environment, whether or not on a college campus or at a desegregated high school, African-American students were made to feel intellectually inferior, grouped in lower academic tracks, and debased in a disenfranchised educational system all while cementing their lower status in society.

Education for some African Americans gradually became an additional reminder that society viewed them as stupid, lazy, and overall intellectually inferior to whites. Anytime an African-American student did not understand a math problem or new scenario presented in an integrated classroom, this only strengthened the racial bias
already had by the teacher and students, but confirms for the African-American student, unconsciously, their intellectual inferiority. Not surprisingly, for many African-American students the actual act of going to school became less attractive, doing well in school became less of a concern, and the basketball courts and playing fields, where African Americans were told they were good and where they were showered with praise, became the refuge for many, the place where they were valued and encouraged.¹

This lack of desire for educational achievement was not the case in the years during slavery and following the emancipation of slaves, as evidenced by the chronology presented in the appendix, the drive toward education could not be satisfied. The struggle for literacy during slavery was one of intense and insatiable hunger. The thirst for education can be seen in early African American participation in schools created by the Freedman’s Bureau and other northern missionaries.

However, with the integration of classrooms and the discrimination that followed, even intellectually gifted African-American students were made to feel academically inferior. Many African-American students began to reject the idea of doing well academically as it was closely associated with being white or “acting white.” For many African Americans the insistence on academic achievement so often associated with African-American families was no longer stressed, but instead it was rejected and avoided.

At the same time that the majority of America’s public school districts were desegregating their schools, PWIs were desegregating as well and began admitting

African-American students into their student bodies. Historically, African Americans were educated, for the most part, solely in the classrooms of HBCUs. The environment established and fostered at HBCUs closely mirrored what was found at or in African-American segregated high schools. The idea of an intellectual African-American student was not unique, but in fact was the norm. HBCUs challenged their students to be positive representatives of black culture.

Racial exclusion in higher education was a national rather than a regional phenomenon. While research has been critical of southern white universities and their insistence on keeping qualified African-American students from within their ranks, in many cases, this racist mindset fostered opportunities for African-American students to study at northern colleges. Because in an effort to demonstrate some level of compliance with the “separate but equal” doctrine, many southern state governments established scholarships for African-American students to study outside of the state at northern colleges. Some of the nation’s top schools were major beneficiaries of these scholarships, schools such as the University of Chicago, Indiana University, and the University of Michigan all benefited.²

However, while many northern PWIs benefited from the scholarships that southern states were offering, northern campus communities were in many cases just as intolerant of African-American students as their southern counterparts. In 1940, the University of Michigan had practices in place that forbade African-American students from staying in on campus housing. At Ohio State University, Jesse Owens, the gold

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medalist from the 1936 Olympic games was not allowed to stay on campus while he attended. However, despite the challenges African Americans faced on college campuses, few African-American students could resist the lure of the accolades and the activities of college life.3

Looking through a historical lens of how educational success became equated with the white majority, one may offer a causal link to some societal issues in the African-American community. While there is no sole variable, we cannot discredit the potential impact of devaluing education in an already underrepresented and subjectified group. Higher rates of unemployment, homelessness, teenage pregnancy, and incarceration among the African-American community are all interconnected and relatable on every level to education.

Research indicates that there is a connection to the lack of educational attainment and unemployment. Many African Americans were only eligible for certain jobs because their educational level excluded them from other opportunities, keeping them constrained to menial employment with sub-standard pay. The undereducated do not always see the intersections between their educational achievement and career options. With limited skills and education, these people have no chance of promotion. If replaced by someone with more skills, education, and experience, they risk losing everything.

The undereducated have little chance to be hired, and if so, can only operate laterally within their fields, oftentimes without growth as an option. Thus, African Americans are going to deal with the issues of unemployment, homelessness, teenage pregnancy, and incarceration on a larger scale. If a young woman becomes pregnant

3 Thelin, A History, 209.
while in high school often the only option was to drop out of school and work to support the child. This scenario leads to a double-edged sword of both limited opportunities for this new mother because of her lack of education, in addition to producing another single parent home. These children grow up and have trouble becoming acclimated to the classroom structure their own parents devalued and are totally disinterested in the educational process. This cycle will continue as long as, on every level of education, the pattern is not altered. If some sort of transformation does not occur by the secondary school level, these negative ideas could persist into college, if they desire to go at all, where they can manifest themselves in destructive ways resulting in greater instances of attrition.

When PWIs desired to integrate their campuses, the decision came with a host of issues attached. While discrimination, racism, and isolation were all factors impacting African-American student success, this researcher feels one of the often overlooked issues was the institution’s underlying opinions that African-American students were not intellectually ready for higher education. This thinking fostered the development of a plethora of programs established to support the African-American student. In many cases, this added support was welcomed programming for minority students who felt they needed a greater level of support from the administration. However, many of the programs were instituted seemingly to bring students “up” to the standards of the university, ignoring the cultural and intellectual diversity African-American students brought with them to school. Often this engrained institutional thinking impacted African-American student development at PWIs.
When Cross theorized *Nigrescence* as a process of development undertaken by minorities, particularly African-American, he drew a strong parallel to incidents that may take place in one’s life and how they impact personal development and identity. This researcher parallels the four to five years of college with the five phases of *Nigrescence*.

Just as some African-American students have rejected and avoided educational success, those that embraced educational success have the constant reiteration of this rejection of “blackness” and an acceptance of “whiteness.” Further, decisions such as choice of a major, affiliation with clubs and organizations, and even social relationships are a result of their experiences. Their development on a collegiate level is now affected by and will come under scrutiny of those who possess antiquated attitudes of the value of education.

This researcher theorizes that during a student’s freshman year, he or she can justifiably be placed in the Pre-Encounter phase of *Nigrescence*. After a year of social experiences, this same student now a sophomore will have transitioned, unknowingly, into *Nigrescence*’s Encounter phase. Ultimately, with this type of timeline, an African-American student would not reach the Internalization phase, or the desired destination, until his or her senior year. However, this matriculation is an arduous task, especially when undertaken unaided, as evidenced by the high attrition percentages of African-American students. In many cases, the African-American student in question has had some assistance in the form of outside mentorship or sustained parental involvement.

This researcher would like to suggest an African-American student is at their finest during the period of their senior year, resting in *Nigrescence*’s Internalization stage.
The African-American student is at their most confident, self-aware, focused, involved, and committed while in *Nigrescence*’s final stage. However, this researcher argues that mentorship may expedite an African-American student’s travel through the stages of the *Nigrescence* theory. Instead of the slow struggle to reach the Internalization-Commitment phase, or their senior year, an African-American student involved with mentorship may reach the Internalization-Commitment phase a year or two ahead of “schedule” because of their very involvement in a mentoring relationship. Within a mentoring relationship, an African-American student will discuss the issues they are facing and how they are feeling as a result of these issues. Mentorship does not allow African-American students to be unaware of or fail to address the issues that African-American students face on the campuses of PWIs.

The presence of a mentoring relationship allows for an African-American student’s stay in the early phases of *Nigrescence* to be shorter, which allows their progression into the final phase of *Nigrescence* to occur sooner. In the final phase, or the Internalization-Commitment phase, an African-American student is aware of their own identity and the issues that come along with being a minority in a majority setting. The earlier awareness will allow African-American students to experience higher levels of satisfaction during college. High levels of student satisfaction are often coupled with student success, which inevitably increases the likelihood of the student’s decision to re-enroll. Thus, satisfaction levels need to be kept high and consistently measured.
The purpose of this research was to investigate the impact of a mentoring program at a single PWI on the satisfaction levels of 20 of its African-American student participants versus 20 African-American students not involved with the program. However, the findings of this research differ from research that has been done by other scholars on mentorship and student satisfaction. This research was structured for an equal examination of the satisfaction levels of African-American students who were not a part of the structured mentoring program the university offered. Further, this study examined how levels of academic performance and retention are dependent upon the satisfaction of student experiences. Ultimately, this research wanted to draw parallels between mentorship, student satisfaction, and retention.

The conclusion was thought to be a given, as a result of the personal conversations had by the researcher, research, and this researchers own satisfaction levels after becoming involved with a mentor. However, the research results from the surveys are not as one may think.

This chapter will provide the results of the student satisfaction survey administered over the course of two weeks. The survey was sent to a total of 40 students. The survey was sent to 20 African-American students who were a part of EOP and an additional 20 African-American students not involved with the program. The results will
be presented to show any correlation between respondents involved with EOP, those respondents not involved with EOP, and satisfaction levels. The respondents were all undergraduate students attending KSU. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 18 to 22. The majority of the respondents identified themselves as African American. The sample size was small, with a deliberate total population of 40.

Respondents' academic majors included everything from the humanities to the natural sciences. Many of the questions on the survey allowed for the respondents to select from a list of four choices when determining their level of satisfaction with certain issues or facets of their collegiate experience. The respondents were asked to select very satisfied, satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or dissatisfied in relation to a particular issue. The researcher interpreted that the selections very satisfied and satisfied were indications of a more favorable position and somewhat satisfied and dissatisfied were indicative of negative feelings. The university and the town the university is located within is 99 percent white and 1 percent non-white.

**Review of the Research Questions**

1) What issues are African-American students at KSU dealing with?

2) What factors contribute to the retention or attrition of African-American students at KSU?

3) In what ways does the implementation or greater emphasis on mentorship increase or decrease the retention or attrition of African-American students?
Summary of the Research Questions

1) What issues confront African-American students enrolled at KSU?

The surveys provided sufficient data to draw some conclusions as a result of the answers provided by each group. The issues African-American students at KSU were dealing with were similar to the issues previous research had suggested. This research discovered that African-American students at KSU were typically somewhat satisfied or dissatisfied with the following issues: their formal academic experience, their out-of-class experiences, their sense of belonging, their overall KSU experience, the development of effective leadership skills, and the development of effective communication skills.

2) What factors contribute to the retention or attrition of African-American students at KSU?

This researcher believes the factors acknowledged as issues African-American students at KSU are facing contribute to the attrition of the African-American student population. However, this researcher also feels that the commitment of KSU towards issues of diversity seem to impact African-American students and their desires towards re-enrollment.
4) In what ways does the implementation or greater emphasis on mentorship increase or decrease the retention or attrition of African-American students?

Over 50 percent of EOP respondents suggested they would re-enroll at KSU and 45 percent of non-EOP respondents suggested they would re-enroll, leading this researcher to believe that mentorship could perhaps play a role in the retention of African-American students. However, with such a small difference between the two populations at KSU this researcher cannot say for sure what impact a greater emphasis on mentorship at KSU would have on the African-American student population.

In general, the majority of the respondents were enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences (46 percent) or the College of Education and Human Services (24 percent). Further, over 60 percent of the respondents said they were currently taking twelve or more credit hours. At KSU, one class is equal to three credits hours. Over 55 percent of the total respondents suggested their educational attainment goal was to earn a baccalaureate degree and about 39 percent said they wanted to ultimately earn a masters degree at either KSU or some other institution. Over 80 percent of the total respondents identified themselves as African American and over 40 percent of the total respondents said they were either sophomores or juniors at KSU.

The data presents some interesting findings. The following pie-graphs depict the home colleges of the surveyed respondents. As Figures 1 and 2 indicate, a large portion (65 percent) of the EOP respondents have a major housed in the College of Arts and Sciences and the non-EOP respondents seemed more varied in their majors.
Figure 1. Home College of Non-EOP Respondents

Figure 2. Home College of EOP Respondents
It is interesting to note over 65 percent of the EOP respondents have a major that falls under the liberal arts umbrella. Additionally, it is interesting to note the more varied home colleges of non-EOP students. While this information does not impact theories in regard to mentorship, it may speak to the impact mentorship has on the values of what defines a thorough interdisciplinary education. Further, it was essential to compare the EOP students in the liberal arts majors against the non-EOP liberal arts majors in order to ensure major did not play a part in student satisfaction levels.

Some of the responses varied very little from the EOP group against the non-EOP group. For instance, the number of credit hours taken varied very little, more so because credit hours are very standard and not truly impacted by one’s satisfaction level. Figure 3 shows over 70 percent of the EOP respondents were taking at least 12 credit hours or more and Figure 4 illustrates over 65 percent of the non-EOP respondents were taking at least 12 credits hours or more. The reason a percentage of non-EOP respondents did not know at all how many credit hours they were taking may be that the apportioning of credit hours to the courses may not be the same in some professionally oriented degree programs.
Figure 3. Number of Credits taken by Non-EOP Respondents

Figure 4. Number of Credits taken by Non-EOP Respondents
However, some of the overall group response totals were surprising because research has suggested the impact mentorship has on a student’s level of satisfaction, desires, and retention. This researcher took this to mean that the responses to the question: “What is your academic goal?” would have trended more towards the EOP respondents indicating a desire to attain a master’s degree. However, the responses did not suggest an increased desire to obtain a master’s degree, only 20 percent of EOP, but suggests that graduating with a bachelor’s degree (50 percent) was most important. Just as important, as Figure 6 demonstrates, 50 percent of the non-EOP respondents desired the master’s degree while 45 percents desired the bachelor’s degree.

However, many of the students that participate in the program are admitted on a conditional basis because they were flagged as struggling academically, or coming from lower economic communities and schools. Perhaps many of the EOP students are already academically at-risk when they decide to enroll at KSU.

Figure 5. Highest Desired Degree by EOP Respondents
Perhaps, the idea with EOP at KSU is to graduate from college and the mentors and administrators use that as a very singular goal for participants, but it is interesting to note that the non-EOP group seemed more ambitious in their educational desires. Just about 50 percent of the non-EOP respondents wanted to get a master’s degree. Further, suggesting the idea that students in EOP are students admitting and aware that they need assistance or some form of help to graduate.

Figure 6. Highest Desired Degree by Non-EOP Respondents

Students were asked to select their grade point average from a list of four ranges, 2.0 and below, 2.0 to 2.5, 2.5 to 3.0, and 3.0 to 4.0. From previous research, one would conclude the higher GPAs would be reported by the EOP group. However, higher GPAs were not selected by the EOP students. This contradicts contemporary research because the mentored students should be performing at a higher level than the non-mentored students. Non-EOP respondent’s GPAs fell in the higher ranges. Almost 80 percent of the non-mentored students had GPAs of at least a 2.5, while only 45 percent of the EOP
respondents had at least a 2.5 GPA. However, with new understanding in regard to some of the student populations involved with EOP, the figures make sense.

Figures 7 and 8 illustrate the grade point average ranges of both the EOP and non-EOP students.

![Figure 7. GPA Range for Non-EOP Respondents](image1)

![Figure 8. GPA Range for EOP Respondents](image2)
In terms of satisfaction levels, three important questions were posed to the respondents in an attempt to garner their levels of satisfaction. This researcher assumed the mentored students would indicate greater levels of satisfaction in comparison to the non-mentored students. The first question that dealt with satisfaction levels was what is your overall satisfaction at KSU? About 55 percent of the EOP surveys indicated either satisfied or very satisfied. While 80 percent of the non-EOP surveys indicated either satisfied or very satisfied. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate the overall satisfaction levels of the non-EOP students and the EOP students.

Figure 9. Non-EOP Respondents Overall Satisfaction at KSU
Further, the responses to the question posed to the students to garner a sense of their feeling of belonging at KSU, contrasted with this researcher’s original theory about the impact of mentorship on student satisfaction at KSU. This researcher had the expectation that the mentored respondents would feel some sense of attachment to a university that was instrumental in a period of personal growth. About 60 percent of EOP respondents indicated they were either somewhat satisfied or dissatisfied with their sense of belonging at KSU. Approximately 40 percent of non-EOP students indicated they felt either somewhat satisfied or dissatisfied with their sense of belonging at KSU.
Figure 11. Non-EOP Sense of Belonging at KSU

Figure 12. EOP Sense of Belonging at KSU
Responses that met my expectation were the responses to the question “If you were selecting a college again would you choose KSU?” Around 55 percent of the non-EOP respondents answered no, while only 47 percent of the EOP respondents said they would not choose KSU again.

Figure 13. Non-EOP Re-enrollment Chances

Figure 14. EOP Re-enrollment Chances
It was important to do further assessment and evaluation of the findings. In an effort to see if mentorship was having any real impact on a student's sense of belonging or their desires towards re-enrollment, this research felt it essential to compare the responses of EOP students in the Arts and Sciences against non-EOP respondents in the Arts and Sciences. The same comparisons were evaluated, but not graphed for the other three colleges at KSU. The researcher only graphed two questions in this manner because of the significance of these two questions to the researchers understanding of the impact of mentorship on student retention and satisfaction.

**Survey Questions**

1) How satisfied are you with your sense of belonging at KSU?

2) If you were starting college again, would you choose to attend KSU again?

**Arts and Science Respondents**

The mentored EOP students who selected Arts and Science as home to their major responded very similarly to the non-EOP Arts and Sciences students in regards to their sense of belonging at KSU. Figures 15 and 16 depict those results. The same group of students was also close in terms of their desires towards re-enrollment. Figures 17 and 18 depict those results. Thus, leading this researcher to further surmise the surveyed African-American EOP students at KSU display little difference in opinions and satisfaction levels versus the non-EOP students. Not to say mentorship has no impact on student satisfaction, but at KSU, further research should investigates the manner in which mentorship is implemented and delivered.
Figure 15. EOP Arts and Sciences Students and Overall Satisfaction with their Sense of Belonging

Figure 16. Non-EOP Arts and Sciences Students and Overall Satisfaction with their Sense of Belonging
Figure 17. EOP Arts and Science Students Re-enrollment

Figure 18. Ncn-EOP Arts and Science Students Re-enrollment
College of Business Administration

The number of EOP and non-EOP respondents who chose the College of Business Administration was too small to effectively distinguish any real difference between the two groups.

The College of Education and Human Services

Similarly, to the College of Business Administration, The College of Education and Human Services respondent numbers were too small to realistically state the potential impact that mentorship may or may not have.

The School of Nursing and Allied Health

The numbers for The School of Nursing and Allied Health were too small to give an accurate reading on mentorships impact.

While this researcher felt it would be inaccurate to present the comparative results of the three remaining colleges, it was clear that for all the colleges, Arts and Sciences included, one main parallel could be found. No matter if the African-American student in question was a part of EOP or not, they all had one thing in common, this was best seen in the smaller response numbers of the colleges of Nursing, Education, and Business. If the student in question was dissatisfied with their sense of belonging at KSU, in turn, they were more apt to have also responded negatively to the yes or no question of “If they would re-enroll at KSU if they had to do it over again.” Research has supported the theory a more satisfied student is more likely to re-enroll at their institution.
Nigrescence and African-American Students at KSU

The researcher theorized that the stages of Nigrescence parallel most African-American students’ matriculation through college. This researcher still feels the theory plausible. Cross’ theory suggest that individuals in the Pre-Encounter stage have assimilated to the world and are unaware of the issues associated with being African American in predominantly white environments. Perhaps, the students who indicate they are satisfied with their out-of-class experience and their sense of belonging at KSU are in the Pre-Encounter phase. Because they are unaware and have yet to have an encounter or a series of encounters that push them into the Encounter phase and through to the Immersion/Emmersion phase. Thus, they will be content, especially if the environment they find themselves in currently is no different then the environment they came from.

Further, students in the Immersion/Emmersion stage may be the students who indicate they were satisfied with their interpersonal effectiveness and their leadership effectiveness. Individuals in the Immersion/Emmersion stage are identified by Cross as having characteristics such as a greater desire for leadership roles and greater involvement with African-American clubs and organizations. Thus, this may be the students in the Black Student Union on campus and involved with historically black fraternities and sororities.

The same students who could be identified as possibly being in the Pre-Encounter stage could also be in the final stages of Nigrescence, the Internalization and Internalization-Commitment stages. The suggestion is that individuals in the Internalization or Internalization-Commitment stages are developed in such a way that
they appreciate other races and understand they are minorities in majority environments. They understand their individualistic experiences can add to any given situation, attitudes and opinions are more positive in nature in the Internalization stage and those in the Internalization stage are pro-black, but not anti anyone else. Thus, an African-American student at KSU in the Internalization stage may indicate being satisfied with their sense of belonging or academic experience because of where they are in their identity and personal development.

Additional research is necessary to investigate further the impact that mentorship has on African-American students at PWIs. Future surveys should include questions pertaining to respondent’s high school GPAs, the location of their high school, and what distinct cultural clubs or organizations they are affiliated with while currently enrolled in college for both EOP and non-EOP participants.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

It was exciting and difficult for me to go to Harvard and Princeton. I became part of the first generation of young black people to attend Princeton’s lily-white institution in significant numbers. Owing to my family, church, and the black social movement, I arrived at Harvard unashamed of my African-Christian-militant-decolonized outlook.

Cornell West

The mindset Cornell West describes is not a common one for African-American undergraduate students. Most African-American students entering PWIs are not embracing the one thing that separates them from the rest of the student body. West’s attitude encompasses an incredibly powerful concept, one not usually embraced by most African-American students entering PWIs.

The overall purpose of the study was to investigate the importance of mentorship on African-American student satisfaction at a PWI. This study was important because retention of minority populations should be high on the agendas of PWIs, regardless of the number of enrolled African-American students on campus. In addition, academic performance may also be dependent upon active mentorship. The question posed as a result of the findings of this study is what is different about the EOP students, that would make most of their responses be the opposite of what past research would predict? What about the non-EOP students is different?

As Dr. Marilyn Haring suggests, there are mentoring programs at PWIs that are successful in recruiting and retaining minority students and others that are not so
successful, thus making it difficult to evaluate the success of mentoring programs. In this particular research it appears that mentorship’s impact does not manifest itself in the same manner amongst the surveyed African-American students involved with EOP as previous research has suggested. The students in this study involved in a mentorship program performed at a lower level academically than their non-mentored peers, reported a lower sense of belonging, and lower overall satisfaction with their experience at KSU.

This study’s results may differ from other scholarly work for a number of reasons, but perhaps one main reason. After examining the results of the student surveys, this researcher inquired in greater depth about the EOP program at KSU and its participants. It appears that at KSU the EOP program serves the general student body, but also a population of students who are admitted conditionally into the university, requiring they take part in EOP.

Many universities have conditional admission programs and often require those students admitted in this manner to take part in summer programs prior to the start of college. These programs often give opportunity to prospective students who may need English as a Second Language (ESL) or students who may not meet the traditional admissions criteria, but demonstrate a certain level of potential.

With the understanding that surveyed EOP students may have been admitted conditionally to the university, this new knowledge makes the responses to the surveys more understandable and the academic related responses more comprehensible. In most cases the likelihood of the surveyed respondents being ESL students is minimal. If the surveyed students were admitted conditionally to KSU, they in all likelihood did not meet the initial admissions standards. KSU is a state school and does not have the same
admissions standards as some of the nation’s top tier institutions. Thus, leading one to believe that a student conditionally admitted to an institution with already lower admission standards perhaps struggled in high school academically. Perhaps mentorship is most impactful, from an academic improvement standpoint, for African-American students who need greater encouragement, motivation, and an identifiable community in order to limit their bouts with *Cognitive Dissonance* issues and aid in their progression through *Nigrescence*, but who already possess a strong academic aptitude.

This researcher would ask a number of different questions if similar research were conducted again. However, one of the most important new questions would be framed in such a way as to allow the researcher a greater sense of the impact mentorship has on student satisfaction and subsequently their academic achievement, thus it may be beneficial to ask the respondents their high school GPAs prior to entering the university. This researcher believes students who are already strong students prior to matriculating to college may benefit more, academically speaking, from mentorship than a student without the same foundational knowledge.

Based on this research study, mentorship seems to have very little effect on the academic success of the mentee, if, in fact, the mentee is lacking the foundational knowledge to succeed in college. Mentorship, as the research has proven, in fact, appears to impact one’s opinions and views on the campus, their affinity for the college, and their identity development. However, most African-American students both mentored and non-mentored struggle, socially and academically, initially, when they enter PWIs. So while mentorship aids in the social and identity development of African-Americans at PWIs, and their improved social outlook impacts their desires to improve academically
and continue matriculation, researchers will only see high levels of achievement during
and post mentorship in students who, while struggling initially, had the foundational
knowledge to do well academically. Further, the researcher has deduced from research
previously conducted that mentorship for African-American students at PWIs provides
what HBCUs do naturally, that is to foster a personal sense of self worth and create some
semblance of an identifiable community.

It would be beneficial to conduct the same research study with students who are
active participants in the CMARC program at Carnegie Mellon University. Carnegie
Mellon University was recently ranked the 23rd best college in the annual “Best Colleges
and Universities” rankings provided by US News and World Report. Their admission
standards are incredibly high and the average student was in the top 10 percent of their
graduating class. This researcher believes the results may be distinctly different when
dealing with a group of African-American students who in many cases graduated high
school within the top 10 percent of their class. This group of African-American students
enter a predominantly white environment fully capable, and with a history, of academic
success. This researcher would suggest mentorship for this group is still very useful, but
in a way that supports the student’s personal growth and identity development as opposed
to focusing on academic support. At Carnegie Mellon, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Cornell,
and the like, African-American students are equal to their counterparts intellectually in
contrast to African-American students at other institutions who may have been
conditionally admitted. Not to say the conditionally admitted African-American student
does not have the intellectual capacity to succeed at a top ranked institution because they
do, they simply, for whatever reason, may have not recei/ed the foundational knowledge or the academic support of another.

Louis Gallien suggested in his research that most African-American students who found success at PWIs either had a mentor or a group of mentors who encouraged them and helped them through their undergraduate careers. Then what would explain the success of the non-EOP respondents? Possibly, and most likely, mentorship can be provided and found in other areas on-campus either through participation in athletics, clubs, or organizations.

One can hypothesize the identity development of African-American students at PWIs is altered as a result of their experiences at the university level. An African American’s identity development will be based on collegiate environment, HBCU versus PWI, the support received in those environments, and past experiences in their communities growing up. PWIs and HBCUs should also determine the current stage of identity development. According to this researcher, the presence of a mentoring relationship allows for African-American students to progress to the final phase of Nigrescence sooner. An African-American student entering a top-tier institution from an economically privileged background may have different identity development needs versus an African-American student from an economically disadvantaged background entering a state institution upon conditional admission. An African-American student entering a PWI may also struggle with cognitive dissonance scenarios, which could impact academic success, especially if the student lacks a strong academic foundation. Mentorship may help a student work through cognitive dissonance issues.
Ultimately, mentorship programs have a place at all institutions; it is the mentor’s role and function that vary. Ideally, institutions would have the resources and programs in place to meet each student where they are individually, addressing both personal and academic development. In this particular study, academic preparation and admission policies may have influenced the surprising responses associated with the mentorship program at KSU. Future research on mentorship programs could include surveying students at a top-tier institution, analyzing the social or academic focus of the mentoring programs, and determining if having a strong academic background changes the effectiveness of mentorship programs for better or worse.

**Limitations**

Limitations are focused on the exploratory nature of this research. The limitations of this study were the student satisfaction survey utilized in this research offers a broad overview of students’ experiences at KSU. General questions about satisfaction do not provide this researcher with data on how to improve satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or retention. Additionally, demographics were not sought and therefore were not inclusive of gender, family background, socio-economic status, and geographic region. The exclusion of these variables did not allow for an analysis of them in relationship to the levels of satisfaction. Questions for further study need to include ones which address Nigrescence in a manner in which each stage and stage movement can more precisely be measured. The present research cannot adequately determine the level and depth of movement through the Nigrescence theory because of the sample size and the inability to study students over a four year period.
APPENDIX A

2008-2009 African-American/Black Student Satisfaction Survey

The purpose of this Student Satisfaction Survey is to gather feedback from African-American/Black undergraduate students from Clarion University about their experiences at Clarion, including their use of and satisfaction with various student services, their progress on specific learning outcomes, and their campus involvement. This survey provides the researcher with information regarding the effectiveness of services and programs.¹

Are you involved with the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP)? (choose one)

Yes

No

What is your college of enrollment? (choose one)

Arts and Sciences

The College of Education and Human Services

College of Business Administration

School of Nursing and Allied Health

¹ 2004 Pennsylvania State University Student Satisfaction Survey
How many credits of coursework are you currently taking? (choose one)

1-11

12 or more

Not Sure

What is your academic goal? (choose one)

2-Year Associate Degree

Baccalaureate Degree

Master’s Degree

What is your? (actual survey provided a list to choose from)

Racial/Ethnic Background

Current Academic Classification

Cumulative Grade Point Average

How satisfied are you with the overall quality of? (respondents were asked to check either very, somewhat, or not at all)

Your formal academic experiences

Your out of class experiences

Your sense of belonging at Kappa State University
If you were starting college again would you chose to attend Kappa State? (choose one)

Yes

No

If you are or have been a member of a club or organization to what degree did/does your participation contribute to your overall satisfaction with your: (respondents were asked to check either very, satisfied, somewhat, or not at all)

Kappa State University experience

Communication Skills

Interpersonal effectiveness

Self-reliance skills

Leadership

Conflict Management

Time Management
APPENDIX B

A History of African-American Educational Accomplishments, 1823-2005

1823: Alexander Lucius Twilight becomes the first known African American to graduate from a college in the United States. He graduated from Middlebury College in Vermont.

1837: What is now Cheyney University in Pennsylvania is established for free blacks. It does not become a degree-granting institution until 1932.

1854: Ashmun Institute (now Lincoln University) is founded as the first institute of higher education for black men.

1868: Howard University opens a medical department, becoming the first school to have a medical program for blacks.

1868: Passing for white, Patrick Francis Healy becomes the first black faculty member at one of the nation’s highest-ranked and predominantly white universities when he joins the Georgetown University faculty to teach philosophy.

1870: Harvard College graduates its first black student, Richard Theodore Greener, who goes on to a career as an educator and lawyer. After graduating from Harvard, Greener becomes a faculty member at the University of South Carolina. He is the first known black to be hired to the faculty of a flagship state university.

1872: Charlotte Ray graduates from Howard University Law School in Washington, D.C., becoming the first African-American woman to do so.

1874: Edward Bouchet, the son of a university janitor, graduates from Yale College.

1877: Iman Page, a former slave, is elected student body president at Brown University. He is believed to be the first black to be elected student body president at any of the nation’s highest-ranked and predominantly white universities.

1880: At this time 45 black colleges and universities are in existence.

1881: Spelman College, the nation’s first historically black college for women, is founded in Atlanta, Georgia.
1892: Robert Robinson Taylor is the first black graduate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He spent more than 40 years on the faculty of the Tuskegee Institute and designed most of the campus’ buildings.

1900: More than 2,000 blacks have earned higher education degrees by this time, approximately 390 from white colleges and universities.

1907: Alain LeRoy Locke of Harvard University becomes the first black Rhodes Scholar. Evidence shows that the Rhodes committee did not know Locke was black when he was offered the scholarship.

1912: Carter G. Woodson becomes the second black in the U.S. to earn a doctorate in history. His Ph.D. is from Harvard. He goes on to found the Journal of Negro History in 1916 and inaugurates Negro History Week in 1926.

1921: Eva B. Dykes from Radcliffe College, Sadie T. Mossell Alexander from the University of Pennsylvania and Georgiana R. Simpson from the University of Chicago are the first African-American women to earn doctorates.

1931: Jane Matilda Bolin is the first African-American woman to graduate of Yale Law School. She becomes the nation’s first black woman judge in 1939.

1932: At this time there are 117 historically black institutions of higher education, 36 public and 81 private. Seventy-four are affiliated with religious organizations. Five are devoted to graduate level education.

1932: The Journal of Negro Education begins publication at Howard University.

1933: Harvard Business School graduates its first black MBA student, H. Naylor Fitzhugh, the founder of Howard University’s marketing department.

1934: George Maceo Jones, an architecture professor, is the first black to earn a Ph.D. in civil engineering. He completed his doctorate at the University of Michigan.

1936: The Maryland Court of Appeals rules that the University of Maryland Law School must admit black applicant Donald Gaines Murray after previously denying him admission based on his race.

1938: Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada is decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. The ruling required the state to either allow Lloyd Lionel Gaines to attend the University of Missouri School of Law or create another school that would provide the same education for him. In response, the university builds a black law school. Three months after the ruling, Lloyd Gaines left his apartment to buy some postage stamps. He was never seen again.
1941: A Harvard University black lacrosse player, Lucien V. Alexis Jr., is forced to sit on the sidelines in a game against the U.S. Naval Academy, which refused to allow blacks on its field. Protests erupted at Harvard, resulting in the university’s stating it would ban any games with similar requirements.

1941: The “Cocking Affair” in the University of Georgia system leaves two white professors, Dean Walter D. Cockling and Dr. Marvin S. Pittman, without jobs for promoting equality.

1944: The United Negro College Fund is established to raise money for private historically black colleges. Frederick Douglass Patterson is the founder.

1945: Adelaide Cromwell becomes the first black faculty member at a highly selective liberal arts college when she joins the sociology department at Smith College, her alma mater in Northampton, Massachusetts.

1947: W. Allison Davis, a professor of education at the University of Chicago, becomes the first black faculty member to be appointed to a tenured position at one of the nation’s highest-ranked universities.

1947: John Leroy Howard, Arthur Jewell Wilson Jr., and James Everett Ward are the first black students to graduate from Princeton University. Princeton is the last Ivy League institution to admit black students.

1948: The U.S. Supreme Court rules in Sipuel v. University of Oklahoma that Ada Sipuel be admitted to the law school at the University of Oklahoma. The ruling states that blacks have the right to a legal education of the same quality as whites.

1949: Wesley A. Brown becomes the first black to graduate from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis. Brown survived ridicule during his college years and served in the Navy’s civil engineering corps for 20 years.

1949: Sherrill D. Luke of UCLA becomes the second black to serve as student body president at a top university.

1950: Ralph J. Bunche, officially a member of the Harvard University faculty although he never taught there, is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in the 1948 Arab-Israeli peace settlement, becoming the first black to receive this distinction.

1950: The Supreme Court rules in McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education that black students admitted to the previously all-white graduate institution must not be segregated within the institution and must receive equal treatment in all aspects of the education process.

1950: The first Ph.D. in metallurgy is awarded to a black, Frank Alphonso Crossley, at
the Illinois Institute of Technology.

1951: Princeton University awards its first honorary degree to an African American, Ralph Bunche.

1952: The first black student is admitted to the University of Tennessee.

1952: Joseph T. Gier, an engineering professor at the University of California at Berkeley, is the second black faculty member to become tenured at a predominantly white university.

1954: The University of Florida is ordered to admit black students by the Supreme Court.

1954: In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that racial segregation in schools is unconstitutional.

1956: Autherine Lucy is the first African American to enroll at the University of Alabama. After riots engulfed the campus, she is expelled for "her own safety."

1956: Lila Fenwick graduates from Harvard Law School, the first black woman to do so. Fenwick later led the United Nations’ Human Rights Division.

1960: Four black students from North Carolina Agricultural & Technical College hold a sit-in at the lunch counter of an F.W. Woolworth in Greensboro, North Carolina. This spurs a series of sit-ins in the South to demand racial equality.

1961: The term “affirmative action” is coined by Hobart T. Taylor Jr., a black Texas lawyer, who edits President Kennedy’s Executive Order 10925, which created the Presidential Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity.

1961: Riots and protests by white students greet the University of Georgia’s first black students, Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes, when they arrive on campus to register. Hunter and Holmes are suspended until court orders allow their return.

1962: Riots erupt at the University of Mississippi when James Meredith arrives as the school’s first black student. Federal troops and U.S. marshals are sent in by President Kennedy to ensure Meredith’s entry. Two people are killed in the rioting on the Ole Miss campus.

1963: President Kennedy sends troops to the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa to ease the admission of its first two black students, Vivian Malone and James Hood.

1963: Joseph Stanley Sanders and John Edgar Wideman become the first black Rhodes scholars since Alain LeRoy Locke first received this honor in 1907.
1963: Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes graduate from the University of Georgia.

1963: James Meredith graduates from the University of Mississippi.

1963: The first three black students graduate from the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. They are Charles Vernon Bush, Isaac Sanders Payne IV, and Roger Bernard Sims.

1963: New Orleans' Tulane University admits its first black students, five students in all.

1964: John Hope Franklin joins the history department at the University of Chicago.

1965: Vivian Malone becomes the first black graduate of the University of Alabama.

1966: The Citadel admits its first black student, Charles DeLesline Foster. The university asks the media not to make a fuss about the event.

1968: Students at Howard University stage a sit-in in the school's administrative offices to demand a more black-oriented curriculum.

1968: Boston University administration building is shut down by a student sit-in demanding a black history major and better treatment for black students.

1969: Armed black students at Cornell University demand an African-American studies program. The "Willard Straight Hall Takeover of 1969" evolved into larger arguments over equality. Administration officials gave in to the students' demands. Pictures of the armed students exiting the building grace the covers of major magazines and newspapers.

1969: Black students at Brandeis University take over the administration and communications building.

1969: Clifton R. Wharton Jr. becomes the second black president of a predominantly white school, Michigan State University.

1969: The African-American studies program is established at Harvard.

1970: Protests are held by students at Ohio State University to demand the enrollment of more black students. The National Guard is called in to restore order.

1970: Yale University Corporation has its first elected black woman, Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund.

1971: Over 2,000 students at the University of Florida, Gainesville protest to demand the admission of more black students. The administration's refusal to meet demands results
in 100 black students leaving the university.

1975: W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research is established at Harvard University as a center for studying black history, culture, and social institutions.

1975: Eileen J. Southern is the first black woman tenured as a full professor at Harvard University.

1978: Regent of the University of California v. Bakke rules that while race can be used as a factor in university admissions, quotas are not allowed. Race can be used only as a factor in admission when all other factors are equal.

1979: Sir Arthur Lewis, a black economics professor at Princeton University, wins the Nobel Prize in Economics.

1980: President Jimmy Carter signs Executive Order 12232, a federal program to strengthen HBCUs and increase funding.

1981: President Ronald Reagan signs Executive Order 12320 which creates the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities and encourages federal support for HBCUs.

1982: Annette Gordon becomes the first black woman editor on the Harvard Law Review.

1984: The U.S. Supreme Court rules in the case of Grove City College v. Bell that even though it is a private institution, it has to abide by anti-discriminatory laws since students receive federal financial aid. As a result, the school ends its participation in federal financial aid programs.

1988: Some 200 students take over the New Africa House at the University of Massachusetts to protest racial incidents on campus. After six days, the university administration establishes new procedures to expel students who are found guilty of racial violence and to promote a more diverse curriculum.

1990: Marguerite Ross Barnett is named president of the University of Houston, making her the first black woman to lead a major university.

1990: A group called the Harvard Law School Coalition for Civil Rights files a suit against Harvard Law School saying it does not comply with Massachusetts’s law in its hiring women and minorities.

1993: Princeton University professor Toni Morrison becomes the first African American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.
1993: Condoleezza Rice is appointed provost at Stanford University, making her the first black chief academic officer at Stanford.

1995: Ward Connerly, an African American and regent of the University of California, pushes through a ban abolishing all racial preferences in admissions to the university. Ban takes effect for graduate programs in 1997 and for undergraduates in 1998.

1995: Ruth J. Simmons is elected president of Smith College making her the first black woman in this position at a highly selective liberal arts college.

1996: In Hopwood v. State of Texas, Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals rules that the University of Texas School of Law cannot consider race as a factor in its admissions decisions. Ruling has the effect of law in the states of Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. As a result of the ruling, Texas attorney general suspends race-sensitive admissions at all state-operated institutions of higher education. Lawyers at Rice University, a private institution in Texas, also recommend that Rice abandon race-sensitive admissions and the university ends its affirmative action admissions program.

1996: California’s Proposition 209 is passed by California voters, banning the use of race in admissions to state universities. As a result, the number of black freshmen accepted at the University of California at Berkeley is down 57 percent in 1998, the first year the ban goes into effect.

1997: In an effort to offset the effects of the Hopwood decision outlawing race-sensitive admissions, the Texas state legislature passes a law that automatically qualifies the top 10 percent of all high school graduating classes for admission to the University of Texas. By 2001, blacks are 3.5 percent of the entering class, up from 2.5 percent in 1997.

1998: Proposition 200 is approved by Washington State voters, banning racial preferences in admissions decisions at public universities. One year later, black applicants to the University of Washington are down 17 percent.

1998: The Shape of the River, by William G. Bowen and Derek Bok, a landmark study examining the use of race in college and university admissions, is published.

1998: Federal judge in Ohio rules that minority set-aside program at Cuyahoga Community College is unconstitutional. Ruling warns college trustees that they may be personally liable if they continue to practice racial preferences.

1999: After threats of litigation, the University of Virginia admissions office ends a six-year-old scoring system that gave two extra bonus points (on a scale of eight) to black applicants. As a result, black enrollment in the freshman class drops from 11.2 percent in 1999 to 9.9 percent in 2004.

2000: Mount Holyoke College drops requirement for SATs in admission, causing a 50
percent increase in black applications and first-year enrollments.

**2001:** Ruth J. Simmons becomes president of Brown University, the first African American to lead an Ivy League institution.

**2001:** The U.S. Supreme Court rules that states, including their public colleges and universities, cannot be sued for policies that may have a discriminatory effect. The ruling requires plaintiffs to show a deliberate attempt to discriminate against blacks.

**2001:** In a private meeting, Harvard president Lawrence Summers questions the academic scholarship of African-American professor Cornel West. West and Professor K. Anthony Appiah leave Harvard for Princeton.

**2002:** Seven black women are the first African-American women to earn diplomas from The Citadel.

**2005:** Bush administration changes the formula for Pell Grant eligibility. About 89,000 low-income students will no longer receive a Pell Grant.

**2005:** Bush administration proposes to eliminate the Perkins loan program for low-income students. Congress rejects the proposal and funds the program.¹

BIBLIOGRAPHY


