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Personal and Institutional Factors: Relationship to Self-Efficacy of Persistence to the Senior Year in College among Self-Identified Black Undergraduate Students in a Hispanic Serving Institution

Sandra E. Fletcher
Florida International University, sandra.fletcher@fiu.edu

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

PERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS: RELATIONSHIP TO SELF-EFFICACY OF PERSISTENCE TO THE SENIOR YEAR IN COLLEGE AMONG SELF-IDENTIFIED BLACK UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN A HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION

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Sandra Fletcher

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To: Dean Delia C. Garcia
College of Education

This dissertation, written by Sandra Fletcher, and entitled Personal and Institutional Factors: Relationship to Self-Efficacy of Persistence to the Senior Year in College among Self-Identified Black Undergraduate Students in a Hispanic Serving Institution , having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

_____
Patricia Barbetta

_____
Tonnette Rocco

_____
Linda Spears-Bunton

_____
Adriana McEachern, Major Professor

Date of Defense: July 13, 2012

The dissertation of Sandra Fletcher is approved.

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Dean Delia C. Garcia
College of Education

_____
Dean Lakshmi N. Reddi
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2012

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Oswald and my three young, adult children: Oswald, Oswashane, and Yoshae. My persistence to the completion of this work was largely dependent on your diligent prayers, tolerance, encouragement, and love throughout my long educational career.

Also, to my late parents, Henry and Ira Drummond and to my six siblings. It was our mother's belief in me and your willingness as a family to let me go off to college at a young age that propelled me to this academic success.

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Finally, thanks to my network of family, friends, colleagues, pastors, brethren, and my students who have cheered me along, prayed for me, and challenged me to finish this project. Most of all, I thank God for His guidance and provision throughout this life-changing experience.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

PERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS: RELATIONSHIP TO SELF-EFFICACY OF PERSISTENCE TO THE SENIOR YEAR IN COLLEGE AMONG SELF-IDENTIFIED BLACK UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN A HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION

by

Sandra Fletcher

Florida International University, 2012

Miami, Florida

Professor Adriana McEachern, Major Professor

While undergraduate enrollment of all racial groups in United States higher education institutions has increased, 6-year graduation rates of Blacks (39%) remain low compared to other races; Asians (69%), Whites (62%), and Hispanics (50%; NCES, 2010). Women's graduation rate is higher than men's; 58% compared to men's at 53% in public institutions (IPEDS, 2011). Retention literature does not address the perceptions of Black ethnic groups' experiences in college, particularly in Hispanic serving institutions.

Informed by Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) student academic and social integration model, Guiffrida's (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006) model of relationships while at college, and ex-post facto research design, the study investigated personal and institutional factors that relate to Black students' self-efficacy and persistence to the senior year in college.

Data about Black ethnic undergraduate seniors' ($N = 236$) academic and social experiences in college were collected using the Student Institutional Integration Survey

(SIIS), an online questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to collect background information about the sample, correlation was calculated to indicate the degree of relationship between the variables, and multiple linear regressions were used to identify variables that are predictors of self-efficacy of persistence. Independent samples *t*-test and analyses of variance were computed to determine whether differences in perceptions of personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college could be identified between gender and ethnicity.

Frequency was summarized to identify themes of participants' primary motivation for finishing undergraduate degree programs. These themes were: (a) self-pride/personal goal, (b) professional aspiration/career (c) motivation to support family, (d) desire to have financial independence/better job, (e) to serve community, (f) opportunity to go to college, (g) being first-generation college student, and (h) prove to family the value of higher education.

The research findings support the tenets of academic and social integration theories which suggest that students' interaction with peer and faculty, relationships with family and friends, and involvement in institutional activities and organizations influence their persistence in college.

Implications based on the findings affect institutional policy, curriculum, and program improvements that relate to Black undergraduate students' academic and social support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This ex post facto study investigated the relationship between personal and institutional factors and self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students in a Hispanic serving institution (HSI). For the purpose of this study, Black refers to students having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System [IPEDS], 2011). It includes students who self-reported their ethnicities as Black: African American, Cuban, Bahamian, Haitian, Jamaican, Kenyan, Nigerian, Puerto Rican, South African, Trinidadian & Tobagan, and others. This chapter includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, and purpose of the study. In addition, the research questions, significance of the study, theoretical frameworks, delimitations, and definition of terms are discussed. The chapter concludes with the organization of the remaining chapters.

Background of the Study

Undergraduate enrollment of all racial groups attending United States public and private institutions of higher education has increased by 39% between 1999 and 2009 and was: (a) 62.3% White, non-Hispanic, (b) 14.3% Black, non-Hispanic, (c) 12.5% Hispanic, (d) 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, (e) 6.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, and (f) 3.4% nonresident alien (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011). Based on the NCES (2011), women made up 58.8% of the undergraduate enrollment and men made up 41.2%. During this same period, the percentage of Black undergraduate

student enrollment rose from 9% to 14%. Black women made up 16% of undergraduate enrollment and Black men made up 10.3% (NCES, 2011).

The increase in enrollment is attributed to the rising numbers of non-traditional students now attending college (Barton, 2002). This nontraditional population of students includes Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, women, students age 25 and over, students with low income, students with disabilities, part-time, working, and commuter students (Barton, 2002). Between 1999 and 2009 enrollment of all students under aged 25 increased by 41% and students over the age of 25 increased by 27% (NCES, 2011). During this same time period, full-time and part-time students showed increased enrollment; men 36% and 14%, respectively and women 63% and 26%, respectively (NCES, 2011).

In 2010, 6-year undergraduate degree attainment rates in both public and private 4-year institutions of higher education was 69% Asian Pacific Islander students compared with 62% White, 50% Hispanic, and 39% each Black and American Indian/Alaskan Native students (IPEDS, 2011). With the exception of American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black students continue to have the lowest 6-year graduation rate of all racial groups. Women's (58%) graduation rate was higher than men's (53%) in each of the public, private, and private not-for-profit institutions (IPEDS, 2011). During this same time period, Black women earned 60.6% and Black men earned 55.5% of all bachelor's degrees awarded (NCES, 2011).

In spite of increases in undergraduate enrollment and graduation rates across all racial/ethnic groups, Black students still face a number of personal and institutional challenges that relate to their social and academic well-being (Tinto, 1993) which can

hinder their persistence in college (Guiffrida, 2006). Even though Blacks students have many identifiable ethnicities such as African American, sub-Saharan African (e.g., Kenyan and Nigerian), and Afro-Caribbean (e.g., Haitian and Jamaican; IPEDS, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), the retention literature does not distinguish between the different Black ethnic groups, and often refers to them as Black and African American.

Rich (2009) found six barriers that relate to persistence among racial and ethnic minority students enrolled in undergraduate programs. They are: (a) communication (college personnel giving incomplete information regarding campus resources and ignoring inquiries altogether); (b) financial resources (limited availability of money to pay for tuition, books, and fees and lack of scholarships); (c) family responsibilities (students are single parents and care-givers for ailing parents); (d) difficulty connecting with same ethnic group (underrepresentation of minorities); (e) inadequate high school preparation; and (f) prejudices in classroom and residence halls.

Eunhee, Newton, Downey, and Benton (2010) identified three categories of variables described as personal factors that relate to persistence in college:

1. Academic achievement and aptitude (e.g., high school GPA and SAT/ACT scores).
2. Circumstance variables (e.g., being first-generation college, SES, ethnicity, geographic location, and demographics).
3. Attitudes (motivation and work ethics); self-perceptions (confidence and self-efficacy); behaviors (work organization and study habits); problem-solving (critical thinking and decision making); and values (beliefs and personal preferences).

Adding to the combination of factors in an examination of degree attainment patterns among socioeconomically disadvantaged students and their better off peers, Cabrera, Burkum, and La Nasa (2003) found that degree completion is most affected by SES, high school based academic resources, degree aspiration, enrollment patterns, taking college courses in math and sciences, financial aid, and having children while attending college. Cabrera et al.'s study addressed three major shortcomings to socioeconomically disadvantaged students' path to a 4-year degree. The shortcomings were (a) the effects of financial aid on persistence, (b) the way institutions comprehensively have defined persistence (i.e., focusing on degree completion rather than persistence to just the end of freshman year, and (c) how determinants of degree completion vary across socioeconomic levels. The researchers found two contrasting pathways of great significance. The pathway most likely to lead to 4-year degree completion was high school academic preparation (e. g., 12^{th} grade completion, high SAT scores) and entering a 4-year institution after high school completion. Students from families with high SES followed this path and had an 81% graduation rate. The other path was identified as having poor to moderate academic preparation in high school, and after high school completion, opting to first enroll in a 2-year college rather than a 4-year institution. Students from families with low SES, who journeyed on this path, had only a 3.3% graduation rate. Many African American students are from low SES families and have unmet financial needs that grants, waivers, awards, and work study are not able to always fulfill (Schmidt, 2007). Clearly, there is a 78% SES-based degree completion gap that separates the low SES students from the high SES students.

Other variables related to persistence among African American college students are negative self-ratings on (a) leadership, (b) social and intellectual confidence, and (c) drive to achieve and competiveness as evidenced by students' difficulty in adjusting to their learning community (Schmidt, 2007). Some African American students experience negative self-rating because they do not have the skills needed for the demands of college, lack mentorship, have poor academic preparation, and weak family structure (Wilson, 2007). In reference to weak family structure, more than 64% of African American students come from single-parent homes and are 5% more likely to stop-out, that is to leave school for one or several semesters and then return to finish their program of study, than African American students from two-parent homes.

African American students who persisted and completed undergraduate degrees had higher high school grade point averages, scored higher on the SAT, came from two parent households, and came from families with higher family incomes than those who stopped out (Wilson, 2007). Students, who are successful, begin their college careers with the skills and ability to meet the academic demands placed on them by colleges and universities. These students also begin college with a family structure that is more conducive to staying enrolled and completing their degrees. Conversely, students who stop-out and do not complete degrees are from low SES family backgrounds, tend to be raised by parents not involved in school activities, and have parents who have less knowledge of college and less academic preparation (Cabrera et al., 2003). In general, weak family structure, lack of mentorship, and poor academic preparation negatively influence student self-rating and persistence in college.

Some Black students, particularly men, dropped-out of college due to their apprehension of fulfilling negative stereotypes regarding their aptitude, intellectual abilities, and the need to adjust to overall high expectations set by them, their families, college, and community in order to succeed (Guiffrida, 2004; Harper, 2010; Orr, 2004). Other Black students were faced with the separation of off-campus friends and relatives while on campus (Bowen & Bok, 1998). Still, others left college due to circumstances in the environment of Historically White Institutions (HWIs) that included lack of role models and mentors among staff and faculty as well as the presence of a small enrollment (20%) of racial/ethnic minority students (Dastmozd, 2007). In addition, African American students viewed early departure from college as related to inadequate orientation about the college environment and faculty expectations for course participation and institutional involvement (Derby, 2007). Black mens' underachievement in college is coupled with their perception of lacking in intellectual skills and the association of White dominated supremacy (Harper, 2010). Clearly, the literature suggests a variety of obstacles that inhibit Black students' social and academic integration into institutional life. This group of students faces personal as well as institutional challenges that may affect the completion of undergraduate studies and degree attainment. Therefore, a gap exists in the retention literature on the perceptions of Black ethnic groups to factors that relate to their retention in college and persistence to undergraduate degree completion.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of increases in enrollment in college, Black students leave college at a higher rate than most racial counterparts. While in the U.S. in 2010 degree attainment

rate was 58% among all undergraduate students who enrolled in higher education institutions, when calculated by race Black students (39%) had a marked difference compared to the highest groups: Asian Pacific Islander, 69% and White students, 62% (NCES, 2011). Similarly, at FIU, Black students made up 8.8% of the graduating cohort compared to Hispanic (49.1%), Asian Pacific Islander (33.3%), and White students (37.6%; FIU Access and Equity Report, 2011). Non-persistence of Black students in college to the completion of baccalaureate degrees has implications for both students and higher education institutions.

For the student, persistence in college to the earning of a college degree is the mainstay for economic self-sufficiency and responsible citizenship. It is not only linked with cognitive and intellectual benefits, but there are also social and economic benefits to the individual, a family's quality of life, the community in which they live, and the larger society (Crow, 2007). Colleges and universities also have the responsibility to mediate between students' academic and social experiences (McLeod & Young, 2005) and find ways to keep students in school and reduce the degree attainment gap between Black students and their Asian and White peers. Educational stability, student satisfaction, and student success are the basic building blocks of higher education institutions' retention processes (Demaris & Kristsonis, 2006).

Most studies on Black students' persistence/attrition are conducted during or just after the students' undergraduate freshman year in PWIs and predominantly Black institutions (PBIs). Very few studies have been conducted on Black undergraduate seniors (students with 90 or more college credits). The literature is void of Blacks attending HSIs. Institutions are identified as HSIs if the full-time equivalent

undergraduate enrollment of racial/ethnic minorities is equal to or larger than 25% of the student population. Unlike PWIs and PBIs, HSIs are usually determined by the need for service based on the Hispanic population in a geographic location (Benitez, 1998). Such is the case at FIU which is located in a predominantly Hispanic populated area where the demographics of the institution are similar to the South Florida population where the University resides. FIU has a student population of 47,966 students; 8,101 (18%) at the graduate level and 39,147(82%) at the undergraduate level. Of the total student population, 26, 922(56%) are women and 20,977(44%) are men. Generally, 60% attend full-time while 40 % attend part-time (FIU Fact Book, 2011). The University has two main campuses, the Modesto M. Maidique campus in southern Miami-Dade County and the Biscayne Bay campus in Northeast Miami. In addition, FIU has two main instructional centers, the Metropolitan Center in downtown Miami and the Pines Center in Broward County. The demographics of the institution are 61.3% (29, 413) Hispanic, 13.1% (6, 272) White, non-Hispanic, 13.3% (6, 381) Black, 3.5% (1, 688) Asian, 0.4% (191) Native American, and 8.4% (3, 098) other students (FIU Fact Book, 2011). Similarly, of the 2,496,435 population of Miami-Dade County 65% are Hispanic, 15.4% are White, non-Hispanic, 73.8% are White, 18.9% are Black, 1.5% are Asians and 0.2% are American Indians (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose for this study was to investigate how Black seniors at FIU, an HSI, perceive their academic and social experiences as they persist toward degree attainment. Specifically, this study investigated the relationship between personal and institutional factors and self-efficacy of persistence in college among self-identified

Black undergraduate seniors at FIU. Using academic and social integration theories (Guiffrida, 2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006); Tinto, (1975, 1987, 1993) and self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1982, 1986, 1997) as the foundation, this study examined Black students' perceptions of (a) personal factors (background characteristics and family support) and (b) institutional factors (peer group interactions, interactions with faculty, faculty concerns for student development and teaching, academic and intellectual development, institutional and goal commitment, and self-efficacy) and their relationship to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college. In addition, the study investigated whether students' perceptions differ on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college, based on gender and ethnicity.

Research Questions

The primary research question addressed in this study was: What factors, personal and institutional, relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students? Subsidiary questions were:

1. What personal factors as measured by the SIIS are related to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students?
2. What institutional factors as measured by the SIIS are related to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students?

3. Are there differences between self-identified Black men and Black women on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college?
4. Are there differences among the Black ethnic groups identified on the SIIS on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the literature on Black undergraduate student retention by building on the role that social and academic integration plays in college persistence, particularly among Black ethnic students in a largely HSI. Further, this study presents additional information about factors that relate to persistence in college among Black undergraduate seniors and between Black men and Black women at FIU. Based on these findings, the study proposes practical applications for instructions, policies, and social activities at the institution to support Black students' needs, interests, and goals as they pursue their academic studies.

Theoretical Frameworks

Academic and social integration theories, particularly Tinto's (1975, 1993, 2006) Student Integration Model (SIM) and Guiffrida's (2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006) model of how culture affects relationship while in college, informed this investigation. Tinto's model is frequently cited in the literature pertaining to how academic and social interactions promote learning and persistence in college. Guiffrida critiqued and expanded Tinto's model showing how cultural differences affected students' relationships with others at college and their persistence. Persistence in college has been

described as "a match between an individual's motivation and academic ability and the institution's academic and social characteristics" (Ellison, 2002, p. 43). Students' success, Tinto (1987) posited, is essentially related to their integration into the academic and social systems of the institution. Academic integration is determined primarily by three variables: a student's (a) academic performance, (b) educational and career goals, and (c) intent to persist. Academic integration is displayed in in-class and out-of-class learning experiences and collaborative learning activities. Social adjustment is primarily a function of meaningful interactions of (a) students with other students, (b) students with faculty, (c) involvement in campus activities, and (d) adjustment to the institutional culture. Tinto (1987) affirmed that social adjustment is the most predictive of retention. Since academic and social interactions are central to persistence, this study addressed the relationship between Black students and peers, faculty, and family and institutional community and persistence.

Tinto's (1993) SIM also acknowledged that students' persistence relates to their involvement in the learning community. He described many variables that relate to the process of involvement:

1. Students enter college with background characteristics that are essential to their initiation with the institution.
2. While in college, they interact with other students, faculty and staff, and the system of the institution.
3. These experiences influence their commitments and intentions.
4. As the level of commitment increases there is a likelihood of continuance in the institution.

The "fit" between the individual and the institution, Tinto (1975) argued, is a good predictor of student persistence behavior. The strength of the student-institution match is influenced by variables such as background characteristics (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity, SES, financial aid status, marital status, mother's education, father's education, levels of family support), individual attributes (e.g., levels of self-efficacy), and pre-college academic achievement (e.g., high school GPA, ACT/SAT scores, and prior schooling) which form the basis of students' initial contact with the institution. These characteristics combine to influence students' commitment to the institution and to their academic goals. These identified variables are critical to this study because they provide insight into the potential academic performance of students and have a positive relationship to persistence.

Other variables central to persistence are peer group interactions and contact with faculty (Tinto, 1975). The SIM sees students' withdrawal from postsecondary education as analogous to suicidal behavior and is due to a lack of integration into the academic and social systems of the institution. Engagement in the community of the classroom is the first step toward students' involvement in the wider academic and social communities of the institution (Tinto, 1998).

As indicated earlier, there is a relationship between students and the institution and the role that each plays is significant in the process of persistence (Tinto, 1987). When students interact with the institutional environment, these experiences influence their institutional and goal commitments. Institutional and goal commitments are attained when students are able to understand how academic expectations are achieved. For example, detailed orientation in the processes of the institution, in-class instructions

on course requirements, and availability of institutional and curricular resources help to increase students' integration in the culture of the institution and foster their continued enrollment and academic progress.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) suggest that diversity initiatives in the curricular and social context of institutions contribute to the increase in undergraduate enrollment. Consequently, the demographics of students in higher education include increased numbers of older students, women, and minorities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Tinto's (1975) SIM was originally applied to "typical" college students who were primarily White, middle to upper class. Tinto (1975) did not generalize beyond the traditional student. This was a limitation to the 1975 SIM. Bean and Metzner (1985) challenged Tinto's model of student departure because his research relied heavily on samples drawn from the ideally full-time, residential student population. Later, to Tinto's (1993) credit, the SIM was used to address students of different sex, race, ethnicity (Blacks, Latinos/Hispanics), and social class (first generation students and students with financial aid difficulties who are more likely to leave college before graduation; Fischer, 2007). Tinto (1993) elaborated on the importance of supportive student communities for students of color and adult students who may experience difficulties making the transition to college and becoming incorporated into the college environment. Tinto (1993) also expressed the need to build inclusive campuses, explaining that "to be fully effective, college communities, academic and social, must be inclusive of all students who enter" (p. 187). It is important that the events and circumstances that emerge from the university forge connections to these individuals and groups in an environment that is characterized by high trust, interaction among racial/ethnic groups, and positively

impacts the academic self-esteem of students from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds (Tinto, 1987, 1993).

Although Tinto's model has been used by many researchers, it lacked applicability to the Black students' experiences in college. Tinto (1993) extended his research to more fully explain the need for higher educational institutions to establish policies to serve students of color, those academically at-risk, older students, those who commute, those who attend part-time, and or those who work to support families. The theory focuses on the selection of programs to meet individual group needs (e.g., those who come from poorer backgrounds and have experienced inferior education compared to Whites), and to provide academic and social support such as advising and counseling. The theory also emphasizes that students' academic and social success in college are demonstrated by their involvement in the learning environment with faculty and peers as evidenced by participation in collaborative learning groups and in co-curricular activities. Tinto's (1975) SIM guided the development of Pascarella's and Terenzini's (1980) Institutional Integration Scale (IIS) that was used to collect data to measure Tinto's dimensions of persistence. Likewise, Tinto's SIM guided the adaptation and development of the SIIS that was used in this study to collect data.

Guiffrida's (2003, 2006) model seeks to understand how cultural differences affect relationships with others at college. He found that motivational orientation influences the ways students form social, cultural, and academic connections while in college. His research supports Black students need for nurturing and cultural connection with their home communities (Guiffrida, 2004). In a qualitative study of high-achieving African Americans at a PWI, Guiffrida (2005a) found experiences with faculty,

relationship with family and friends, and involvement in African American student organizations influenced their persistence. Black students reported that it was difficult to ask White faculty for help because they perceived White faculty as insensitive as evidenced by their racial stereotypical comments (such as praising Black students for speaking well), and the faculty's inability to connect teaching with Black culture, history, and ideas. Black students' participation in African American student organizations helps them to bridge these cultural gaps and provides them with a venue where they are able to be themselves, dress, talk, and socialize together without fear of reprisal or bias (Guiffrida, 2004). Tinto's theory, Guiffrida's model, and the corresponding SIIS give a broad view of the factors relating to undergraduate students' academic and social interaction and persistence in college. It was appropriate for this study to be guided by these factors as the researcher investigated self-identified Black undergraduate students' self-efficacy of persistence in college.

Delimitations of the Study

This study investigated Black undergraduate college seniors at FIU, a Hispanic serving university. This study is void of experimental control by the researcher. Using the ex post facto research design, the researcher could only investigate the relationship between one variable and another and one group of variables to another group of variables (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalized to other student populations or universities, although the findings can be used to inform practices at HSI institutions.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are operationally defined:

Academic and intellectual development. Academic and intellectual development refers to the symmetry and congruence between the intellectual development of the student and the academic environment of the institution, as evidenced by academic performance, active participation in the learning process, and meaningful performance with faculty regarding learning (Astin, 1993; Dalrymple, 2000; Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993). This study used the SIIS to obtain measures of students' academic and intellectual development.

Academic success. For the purpose of this study, academic success refers to having a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher on a 4.0 point scale and achieving senior status at FIU (Ellison, 2002).

Background characteristics. Background characteristics include students' self-report on the SIIS of gender, ethnicity, SES, age, marital status, and parents' academic preparation based on Tinto's SIM (1975, 1987, 1993).

Black. Black refers to a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (IPEDS, 2010). It includes students who self-reported their ethnicities as Black/African American, Black/Bahamian, Black/Cuban, Black/Haitian, Black/Jamaican, Black/Kenyan, Black/Nigerian, Black/Puerto Rican, Black/South African, Black/Trinidadian & Tobagan, and other.

College senior. A college senior is a student who self-reports on the SIIS the completion of 90 credit hours or more in a major with an average grade point average of 2.0 or higher on a 4.0 point scale.

Faculty concern. Faculty concern refers to faculty members' interaction, interests and willingness to spend time with students inside and outside of class as self-reported by students on the SIIS.

Family support. Family support refers to the psychological, social, and financial help (visits, letters, e-mails, prayer, gifts) that college students get from parents, immediate relatives, and community members as self-reported on the SIIS.

Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs). Institutions are identified as HSIs if the full-time equivalent undergraduate enrollment is equal to or larger than 25% of the student population. Unlike PWIs and PBIs, HSIs are usually determined by the need for service based on the Hispanic population in a geographic location (Benitez, 1998).

Institutional and goal commitment. As self-reported on the SIIS, institutional and goal commitment refers to students' having certainty of their college major, are getting good grades, and having made the decision to persist in completing academic requirements for their career goal and to graduate from FIU.

Institutional factors. Institutional factors according to Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) SIM include peer group interactions, interaction with faculty, faculty concern for student development and teaching, academic and intellectual development, and institutional and goal commitment as self-reported on the SIIS.

Non-traditional students. Non –traditional students include Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, women, students age 25 and over, students with low income, students with disabilities, part-time, working, and commuter students (Barton, 2002).

Peer group interactions. Peer group interaction refers to the social exchanges that occur between students within groups as self-reported on the SIIS.

Persistence. Persistence, used interchangeably with retention, is the continuous pursuit and matriculation in an academic program of study up to the senior year in college and is self-reported on the SIIS.

Personal factors. Personal factors, according to Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) include background characteristics (e.g., sex, ethnicity, family social status, marital status, parents' academic preparation) and pre-college characteristics (e.g., high school GPA, ACT and SAT scores, self-efficacy, financial aid status, prior schooling, skills, and abilities) as self-reported on the SIIS.

Pre-college characteristics. Based on Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) SIM, pre-college characteristics include, but are not limited to high school GPA, ACT and SAT scores, self-efficacy, financial aid status, prior schooling, skills, and abilities as self-reported on the SIIS.

Retention. Retention is the process of engagement in pursuing academic goals and or a degree over a period of time (Tinto, 1975, 1993) as self-reported on the SIIS.

Self-efficacy. For the purpose of this study, self-efficacy refers to a student's belief in his competence and motivation to complete a college degree as self-reported on the SIIS.

Social integration. Social integration refers to the congruence between the student and the social systems of the institution, evidenced through meaningful interactions with peers, faculty, and staff; involvement in extracurricular activities; affiliation with the campus community; perceived support from institutional agents; and satisfaction with programs and services of the campus environment as measured by the

IIS (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993) and self-reported on the SIIS.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

This research study includes four other chapters. Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature pertaining to personal and institutional factors that relate to Black/African American undergraduate students' retention/attrition. The chapter contains the background to undergraduate students' enrollment and graduation rates, description and critique of academic and social integration theories and their contribution to minority and Black ethnic students' college experiences and success. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and includes the research design, setting, participants, and instrumentation. The results and data analysis are presented in Chapter 4. Lastly, Chapter 5 discusses the results of the study, including the implications of the research for Black undergraduate seniors, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provides the following: (a) a background to undergraduate student enrollment and degree attainment, particularly Black/African American pursuing undergraduate degrees in institutions of higher education across the U.S.; (b) the theoretical frameworks that provide the foundation for this investigation, (c) background characteristics among Black racial/ethnic groups, (d) personal, and (e) institutional factors related to Black/African American undergraduate students' experiences as they persist in college, and (f) gender and persistence. The chapter ends with an overview of Chapter 3 of this dissertation study.

Background to Undergraduate Student Enrollment

Undergraduate enrollment of all racial/ethnic groups attending public and private institutions of higher education in the U.S. has increased by 39% between 1999 and 2009 and was: 62% White, non-Hispanic, 14.3% Black, 12.5% Hispanic, 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, 6.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3.4% nonresidents alien (NCES, 2011). The increase in undergraduate enrollment is greatly impacted by the introduction of diversity initiatives in the curricular and social context of higher education institutions (e.g., college attendance of non-traditional students who are aged 25 or older, students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, and women; Barton, 2002). The term "nontraditional" commonly refers to undergraduate students who are 25 years of age or older, who are employed full-time or part-time, who typically enroll in college on a part-time basis (Bean & Metzner, 1985), have adult commitments (jobs and family), seek out more flexible programs, and are more likely to enroll in distance education than other

students (Hagedorn, 2005). The differences of race, class, cultures, gender, and sexual orientation in connection with the issue of voice, power, and knowledge characterize the diversity of students attending higher education institutions (Tanaka, 2002).

However, in spite of increases in undergraduate enrollment, degree completions remain low. In 2009, only 51% of the students who enrolled in college in fall 2004 graduated; 49% left college before completing an undergraduate degree (NCES, 2010). Further, 18.7 million undergraduate students enrolled in the fall 2007 in 6,500 postsecondary institutions that participate in Title IV federal student financial aid programs; of these, 36.2% completed a bachelor's degree in four years at the institution where they began their studies; 52.6% in five years; and 57.3% in six years (IPEDS, 2008). In 2010, among racial/ethnic groups, 69% Asian Pacific Islander students compared with 62% White, 50% Hispanic, and 39% each Black and American Indian/Alaskan Native students attained bachelor's degrees within six years in both public and private 4-year institutions of higher education (IPEDS, 2011). With the exception of American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black students continue to have the lowest 6-year graduation rate of all racial/ethnic groups. Based on gender, female students graduation rate was higher than male students in each of public, private, and private not-for-profit institutions; 58% women compared to 53% men attending public institutions (IPEDS, 2011). During this same time period, Black women earned 60.6% and Black men earned 55.5% of all the degrees awarded (NCES, 2011).

The Theoretical Frameworks

There are several variables that are related to Black students' persistence in college. In this section, theories that have been known to support the idea of students'

experiences while in college will be discussed. Among these are Tinto's student integration model (1975, 2006) and Guiffrida's (2003, 2005a, 2006) model of understanding how cultural differences affect social and academic relationships with others while at college.

Tinto's Student Integration Model

Tinto began to study retention and persistence approximately 40 years ago when student attrition was perceived as being a reflection of the student rather than any environmental factors in the institution. Later, he found that institutional variables, the social systems, and individuals with whom students connected had an effect on their staying or departing the institution. Tinto's (1975) theory was born from Durkheim's (1951) work on suicidal behavior. Durkheim posited that suicidal behavior was the result of one's inability to integrate socially and intellectually into society. Tinto likened withdrawal from college and universities to suicidal behavior and postulated that students' lack of persistence is due to inadequate social and academic integration with the institutional culture. Tinto's (1975) SIM was originally applied to "traditional" college students who were primarily White, middle to upper class, and residential students, and social integration was based on informal interactions with faculty and peers.

In 1987, Tinto added the following additional tenets to his theory:

1. Students' interactions with the college environment are not independent of students' background characteristics (age, sex, parents' income, and family support).
2. Precollege characteristics (high school achievement-GPA, SAT scores, number of high school extra-curricular activities, and academic self-concept) are potentially

important correlates of persistence. Academic performance is determined by the student's prior academic preparation, and his or her level of intellectual development.

3. Social integration is primarily a function of peer group interactions, students' interaction with faculty, students' level of commitment to the institution, and goals associated with graduation and career. As the student's level of commitment increases there is a corresponding increase in the likelihood of persisting at the institution.
4. Tinto (1987) concluded that while attachment to the college is essential, social adjustment is the most predictive of retention.

Tinto (1993) found that the "fit" between the individual and the institution is a predictor of student retention behavior. Motivation and academic ability were found to be personal factors related to students' responsibility for the acquisition of their own knowledge, their academic performance, and their academic involvement with faculty and peers as evidenced by participation in collaborative learning groups and involvement in co-curricular activities. Institutions' academic and social characteristics are demonstrated by students' institutional involvement and their academic and social integration within a learning environment. Students' motivation, academic ability, and the institution's academic and social characteristics form the basis for students' academic success in college. Based on the assimilation and acculturation framework, Tinto's (1993) SIM discussed the need for students of color to separate themselves from their cultural groups and to take responsibility to become more integrated in the academic and social fabric of the college they attend. For example, Black/African American students

should participate in educational experiences and extracurricular activities with students of other ethnic and racial groups besides their own.

Later, Tinto (1993) expanded the SIM to include Blacks, Latinos/Hispanics, first-generation students, and students with financial aid difficulties who are more likely to leave college before graduation (Fischer, 2007). Tinto (1993) expressed the need for colleges and universities to build inclusive campuses, stating that "to be fully effective, college communities, academic and social, must be inclusive of all students who enter" (p. 187). He expressed the belief that the events and circumstances occurring within the university environment help to build connections between students and institutional members and groups in an environment that is characterized by high trust, interaction among racial/ethnic groups, and that positively impacts the academic self-esteem of students from diverse ethnic and racial background. Tinto asserted that faculty-student relationships affect student retention. Similarly, he identified three major reasons for student departure: (a) academic difficulties, (b) the inability of individuals to resolve their educational and occupational goals, and (c) their failure to become or remain incorporated in the intellectual and social life of the institution. When students dropout from higher education it is seen as an individual and institutional failure.

Nearly half of all leavers depart from college before the beginning of the second year (Tinto, 1997). Tinto's research supports the premise that student involvement matters most during the first year of college. Hence, he elaborated on the importance of building supportive learning communities for students of color while making their transition into college. Effective institutional retention programs are committed to: (a) the education of all, not just some, students, (b) the development of supportive social and

educational communities in which all students are integrated as competent members, (c) having the same expectations of achievement and behavior for all students, and (d) putting student welfare ahead of other institutional goals.

Tinto (1998) believed that student academic success is essentially related to students' ability to integrate into both the academic and social systems of the institution. Academic integration is displayed through in-class and out-of-class learning experiences and collaborative learning activities. Three variables related to academic integration are students' (a) academic performance, (b) educational and career goals, and (c) intent to persist to degree completion. Social adjustment is primarily a function of meaningful interactions of (a) students with other students, (b) students with faculty, (c) involvement in campus activities, and (d) adjustment to the institutional culture. College classrooms are small academic and social communities that are influenced by faculty pedagogy and link students to the broader academic and social systems of their universities. Following a series of reports from the National Institute of Education (1984), the Association of American Colleges (1985), and studies in the 1980s (Astin, 1984; Boyer, 1987; and Tinto, 1987) many institutions began reform in educational practices and restructuring classrooms to actively involve students in learning communities. In supportive learning communities:

1. Students co-register or begin block scheduling so that they take classes/courses together.
2. The entire first semester curriculum is the same for all students in the learning community or two courses with similar theme or problem may be linked together to give meaning to the linkage.

3. Faculty, classroom, and syllabi are coordinated to promote shared collaborative learning experiences among students. This encourages students to work together and be responsible for themselves and their peers.
4. Nearly all learning communities have three things in common: shared knowledge, shared knowing, and shared responsibilities that invariably shape learning and persistence in college (Tinto, 1998).

Finally, Tinto (1998) found that the more students interact with other students and faculty academically and socially, the more likely they are to persist. Further, the more they see those interactions as positive and see themselves as integrated into the institution and as valued members of it, the more likely it is that they will persist. Tinto (2006) believed that learning communities contributed to student persistence and identified their benefits: (a) students form supportive peer groups that extend beyond the classroom, (b) students become actively involved in learning after class as they spend more time in academic work, and (c) as students learn more, they gain a voice in the construction of knowledge. Students work interdependently when they are assigned projects in learning communities that cannot be completed without the responsible participation of each group member. Learning communities can help foster a learning environment that is conducive to Black students' persistence to degree completion.

Guiffrida's Model of Black Student Persistence

Guiffrida added to the discussions on students', particularly Black/African American, involvement in college and its relationship to their retention and academic success. In an investigation of Black/African American students, Guiffrida (2003) found that involvement in African American organizations such as the Black Student

Movement, local advocacy groups, (e.g., National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP]), and Black Greek organizations while in college minimized the size of the campus environment into ethnic enclaves. Thus creating:

1. Professional connections and opportunities for Black students to interact with Black professionals who may provide mentorship and support for them in the future.
2. Outlets of comfort and respite from the White world and venues for forming out-of-class relationships as they share experiences and frustrations (i.e., dress, parties, talk without fear, and providing help to one another).
3. Exposure and connection to Black culture and social integration while in college. Many students reported that they had not been immersed in all Black experiences and events such as parties and organizations before coming to college.

Also, Guiffrida (2004) addressed the issues of Black college students and their connection with friends from home. He found that friends from home can be both liabilities and assets to college bound students. As liabilities, they are found to express fear and disapproval of students' adaptations to college life, maybe because of their inexperience of not having gone to college. As assets, friends, family, and home community have provided strong emotional, academic, and financial support to college students' persistence. The researcher concluded that the relationship with the latter should be strengthened.

Another variable that Guiffrida (2005a) found lies in the theoretical framework that identified the needs, expectations, and experiences of African Americans attending PWIs and faculty relationships called "othermothering". Othermothering dates back to

the time when slaves entered the United States and women assisted blood-mothers, by sharing mothering responsibilities (Collins, 2000). African American students defined student-centered faculty as practicing othermothering. In Guiffrida's (2005a) study, student-centered faculty, both White and Black, were those who incorporated Black history, culture, and ideas in the curriculum. Black faculty were considered to be realistic role-models who understood Black students' sensitivity and supported them through extra tutoring, located money, talked to families on their behalf and who went "above and beyond" to give holistic advising in career guidance, academic issues, and personal problems.

Critique of Tinto's Student Integration Model

Tinto's SIM (1975, 1987, and 1993) has been tested empirically and has received varying degrees of support. Research findings have largely supported the predictive validity of the model, particularly, in the role of precollege variables. However, Tierney (1992), Attinasi (1989, 1994), and Kraemer (1997) questioned the validity of Tinto's (1975) model to fully and appropriately capture the experiences of non-Whites given that that model is based on an assimilation and acculturation framework. Tinto's (1993) SIM discussed the need for students of color to "break away" from their cultural groups and to take responsibility to become more integrated in the academic and social fabric of the college they are attending. Researchers have challenged the relationship between this concept and minority retention in college believing that total assimilation is not always a practical solution because students of color also need support and affiliation with those with whom they can readily identify (Tierney, 1992). The core of Tinto's SIM is commitment to the university, but what is missing is the recognition of how supportive

relationships from outside the university, for example, families and friends (home social system) relate to minority student population commitment and persistence in college (Guiffrida, 2006). Meanwhile, Nora, Cabrera, Hagedorn, and Pascarella (1996) agreed with Tinto's model in finding that maintaining active ties (family and work obligations) off-campus helps to pull students away from integrating into the social life on a college campus.

Bean and Metzner (1985) argued that Tinto's (1987) model is only applicable to traditional students, who are 18 to 21 years old, White, middle class, full time males which is contrary to the changing demographics of the U.S. student population. Metzner and Bean (1987) in their Student Attrition Model (SAM) have suggested that most adult students experience environmental pressures that are different from traditional-aged students. For example, adult students' social interaction through campus activities is limited since many are mostly commuter students whose time on campus is often constricted to class attendance, and who maintain multiple roles influenced by family, career, and community responsibilities.

Guiffrida (2006) opposed Tinto's (1993) argument that minority students need to "break away" from their environment, cultural norms, and supportive relationships on the premise that research (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Delgado, 2002; Guiffrida, 2004, 2005) supports minority students' need to retain and nurture cultural connections with home communities. Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson (1997) indicated that Tinto's (1993) theory needs to include psychosocial (e.g., motivational orientation, mentoring, and self-concept) and cross-cultural factors (e.g., teaching cultural knowledge, working harder academically than White peers, and to cope without

complaining) that are more descriptive of minority students (Rendon, Jaloma, & Nora, 2000). In summary, Tinto's theory is not effective in explaining the retention of non-traditional, minority, part time, and non-residential students or the influence of external environmental variables. It is this gap in Tinto's (1993) theory that forms one of the objectives of this study. The review of persistence literature revealed that external factors play a critical role in shaping students' perceptions, commitments, preferences, and persistence in college to degree attainment. This study addressed these variables to include Black/African American students who may be described as non-traditional.

Other Interaction Theories

Students' actions and involvement influence their development and persistence in college. Astin's (1984, 1993) Involvement theory (IT) postulates that the physical and psychological energy that students devote to the academic experience, their actions and involvement, rather than their perceptions, influence persistence. Astin has identified some basic principles of involvement: (a) involvement can be generalized or specific, (b) involvement occurs along a continuum which is distinct for each student at any given time, and (c) involvement possesses qualitative and quantitative aspects, and time in the program (Astin, 1984). Additionally, Astin (1993) warns that there is a negative correlation between full-time employment and students' persistence. While employment may encourage responsible behavior, it often interferes with academic commitment and out of classroom involvement. Metzner's and Bean's (1987) SAM included variables from the external environment (e.g., problems with transportation, childcare, or work). If a student's academic variables (e.g., good grades) are strong, but external environmental variables (e.g., family support, transportation, and working) are weak, the student is more

likely to depart from the institution. If the academic and social integration is weak, but the external environment variables are strong, then the student is more likely to persist. Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1993) supported Metzner and Bean's (1987) SAM. Their model found that the interplay of the individual, institutional, and environmental factors shape the students perception, commitments, preferences, and persistence in college. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) affirmed that when students perceive themselves to have meaningful interactions with significant individuals in the learning community, they are more likely to persist and graduate. In confirmation, Guiffrida (2006) found that African American students' academic achievement and persistence in PWIs were impacted by relationships with faculty, involvement in African American student organizations, and relationship with families and friends from home.

Along with support from family and friends from home, students' self-reliance encouraged persistence in college. Hines' (1997) interviewed 10 African American, upper-class men at a predominantly White, coeducational, research university that were majoring in natural science and other related disciplines. Methods of naturalistic inquiry were used to question the possibility of uniformly shared understanding. In naturalistic investigations, the researcher is the primary data-gathering instrument whose listening, observing, and understanding skills are crucial to the results of the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In Hines' (1997) study, students were questioned about their experiences and affective (e.g., beliefs and attitudes) factors that influence their persistence in college. Three general themes emerged from the data: (a) the importance of the development of self-reliance and autonomy to persist, (b) the role of uncomfortable environments, and (c) the emphasis on the product (career prospect) rather than the process of science

education. According to the students sampled, factors that influenced their persistence were (a) a strong support system such as family, friends, and home community members, (b) parental expectations of success in college, (c) a desire to not disappoint their parents, (d) the focus on the quality of educational opportunities offered by the university, and (e) the need for students to take advantage of these opportunities. The authors reported that those students practiced self-reliance, and they planned how to react to uncomfortable college environments that they felt powerless to change (e.g., unfriendly faculty, limited technology and other instructional tools). For those students, having access to excellent quality education was more important than their personal comfort.

Likewise, Sondgeroth and Stough (1992) found that motivational and achievement factors interact and affect persistence in minority, undergraduate, engineering students; 38 of the participants in that sample who entered a large southwestern university in the fall of 1990 were Mexican and African American students. The students completed questionnaires and telephone interviews over three semesters on how they negotiated their way through the engineering program. An analysis of the students' perceptions revealed that successful students described what specific learning strategies they used and offered details about what they should do and why, in relation to persistence. Both poor achievers and successful students sampled in that study indicated that poor teaching, program difficulty, pressure to keep up and obtain good grades, and a system characterized by hostility were hindrances to their academic success. That study introduced a specific minority group (Mexicans) that has not been seen in the persistence literature review until the 1990s. Sondgeroth's and Stough's findings contributed to identifying the factors (hostile environment, poor teaching, program difficulty) that relate

to Mexican and African American college students' departure and persistence. However, the sample only included 38 Mexican and African American students in only one specific discipline (engineering) which limits generalizing to other groups.

MacKinnon-Slaney (1994) combined student development and adult development theories to present a holistic approach to adult student persistence. The Adult Persistence in Learning (APIL) model addressed adult student persistence through a process of assessing three components of adult development: (a) personal issues, (b) learning issues, and (c) environmental issues. Personal issues relate to both internal and external factors affecting the individual and include five factors: (a) self-awareness, (b) willingness to delay gratification, (c) clarification of career/life goals, (d) mastery of life transitions, and (e) a sense of interpersonal skills. Learning issues deal with students' interaction with the institution such as their educational, intellectual, and political competence. Environmental issues refer to the institution's interaction with the individual in such ways as sharing information, awareness of opportunities and impediments that influence persistence, and students' environmental compatibility with the institution. These three components and 10 factors in the APIL model apply to adult students, Black seniors included, and influence their decision to persist or depart from higher education. The factors configure and recycle, emerge and recede as worries and concerns appear and are resolved. The model requires assessing all 10 factors that affect the adult student when seeking to understand, explain, or predict adult student persistence. The model has an APIL scale that provides an assessment tool for determining persistence factors and a planning tool for developing and implementing appropriate program interventions for adult student persistence (Dalrymple, 2000). Evidence of this model overwhelmingly

supports that attention should be given to the holistic development (academic, social, cultural, etc.) of the adult student (age 18 and beyond), students of all ethnic/racial groups, both genders, and in all major field of studies to encourage college persistence and academic success.

Self-Efficacy

The human agency, self-efficacy, according to Bandura (1982, 1986, 1997) may be considered in terms of a person's belief in his or her ability to accomplish a task. A persons' belief about their capabilities influences their future-oriented behaviors and produces outcomes that self-fulfill their beliefs. Self-efficacy may be considered as academic self-efficacy, which is measured by students' confidence in and ability to carry out specific academic tasks or behaviors (e.g., writing a research paper and preparing for an exam). Further, Bandura (1997) found that college outcomes are affected by self-efficacy beliefs, such as: (a) students' motivation to master challenging academic tasks and to foster efficient use of acquired knowledge and skills, (b) students employing effective learning strategies when they believe that actions will produce outcomes, (c) perceiving performance accomplishments whether personally or vicariously, and (d) perceiving a task as a challenge rather than a threat; one is more likely to select an effective coping strategy and to persist in managing the task. Bandura (1997) posits that students work diligently to accomplish tasks that have short-term rather than long-term goals. This being so, students are encouraged to set short-term goals that may help in the development of academic self-efficacy. Equally, Bandura urged higher education institutions to consider strategies that may encourage the development of students' self-efficacy.

Supportably, in their meta-analytical investigation, Moulton, Brown, and Lent (1991) found a positive, statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and academic performance and college persistence. In their prior research (1987), self-efficacy beliefs were found to be more useful in predicting grades and persistence in technical/scientific majors than other variables (interest congruence and congruence thinking).

Further, Zajacova, Lynch, and Espenshade (2005) investigated the joint effect of self-efficacy and stress on academic outcomes (e.g., first year GPA, accumulative credits, and retention after the first year in college) among 107 non-traditional, largely immigrant and minority college freshmen at a large urban institution. Stress was referred to as internally-perceived emotions that result when external demands exceed a person's adaptive abilities (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and identified to negatively affect persistence among college freshmen (Perrine, 1999). Zajacova, et al. (2005) found that academic stress may depress self-efficacy judgments, but self-efficacy is a stronger predictor of first year college GPA, accumulated credits, and college retention after the first year.

Reid (2007) conducted a quantitative survey study of 190 Black males attending five PWIs with the hope of producing a multi-dimensional model for explaining within-group academic disparity among Black males by integrating three theories: (a) institutional integration, (b) academic self-efficacy, and (c) racial identity. Reid hypothesized that racial identity attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs influences Black men's level of institutional integration and later influences their academic achievement. In a correlation analysis of three variables (high school GPA, combined SAT scores, and self-

efficacy) on college achievement, the author found that the most academically successful Black men in college also scored higher on levels of academic self-efficacy ($B = .291$, $t = 4.34$, $p < .001$) than high school GPA ($B = .205$, $t = 2.83$, $p < .005$) and combined SAT scores ($B = .274$, $t = 3.60$, $p < .001$). Combined SAT scores were significant and positively related to academic self-efficacy. In addition, on a social integration construct, faculty interactions ($r = .259$, $p < .001$) were also significant to academic self-efficacy. Reid concluded that confident students who are more likely to approach faculty, or be approached by faculty and students with strong faculty connections, become more confident in their academic abilities. The most academically successful Black men have a heightened sense of self-efficacy (report high GPAs) and better relationships with faculty.

In a thesis to gain insight into the confidence level of student athletes, Ayiku (2005) investigated the relationship of college, academic, and athletic self-efficacy among 37 African American football players in a Mid-Atlantic, comprehensive public institution. A review of the literature on African American men athletes revealed that this group of students experience high levels of stress during the athletic seasons and are (a) prone to be loners on campuses, (b) more likely than their White counterparts to report negative feeling about stressful events (Smallman, Sowa, &Young, 1991), and (c) may have more to adjust to by leaving home and culture to attend predominantly White schools (Hawkins, 1999). These issues challenge the students' self-efficacy.

That study used three scales (a) College Self-Efficacy Inventory, (b) College Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, and (c) Trait-Sport Confidence Inventory to measure levels of self-efficacy in each construct. Pearson's R correlation coefficients were

conducted to test the relationship among the variables (college and academic self-efficacy, college and athletic self-efficacy, and academic and athletic self-efficacy). First, there was a large positive correlation ($r = .77$, $p < .001$) between college and academic self-efficacy. Second, a high level of college self-efficacy moderately correlated ($r = .42$, $p < .011$) with a high level of athletic self-efficacy. Finally, a high level of academic self-efficacy moderately correlated ($r = .44$, $p < .01$) with a high level of athletic self-efficacy. The results revealed statistically significant relationships among college, academic, and athletic self-efficacy. These findings may show that as students' level of college self-efficacy increases so does their academic self-efficacy. Also, as students' athletic self-efficacy improves so can their academic self-efficacy.

Building on the background of the underrepresentation of women in physics, Sawtelle (2011) sought to understand the role of self-efficacy in retaining students in college, particularly women in physics. The investigation used a mixed-methods approach; qualitatively, the study explored the development of self-efficacy and quantitatively, the influence of self-efficacy in predicting success. The results showed that self-efficacy is a significant predictor of success for all students. However, women develop differently from men; each draw from different sources of self-efficacy. Among women, self-efficacy is positively impacted by a model instruction learning environment (e.g., interaction with instructor and cooperative group work). Meanwhile, self-efficacy among men is positively impacted by social persuasion, vicarious learning, and mastery experiences. All of these research results support Bandura's (1997) theory that states that academic outcomes are largely affected by feelings of self-efficacy.

Characteristics of Black Ethnic Groups

People of Black ethnicity, living in the Americas, have distinct characteristics that make them both similar and different. Blacks share (a) the African legacy, rich in culture, customs, and achievement; (b) feelings of racial discrimination; (c) denial of access to opportunities of advancement and achievement, and (d) the ability to preserve themselves and their communities as they sustain the family and kinship groups (Black, 1996). Blacks are different in cultural practices, histories, educational attainment, and diverse influences and circumstances of survival based on the regions from which they originated. For example, African Americans are different from Black people from Haiti, Central and South America, and those from the Caribbean. Like African Americans, Haitians and Caribbean Islanders generally mistrust Whites and White teachers, with foreign-born Haitians expressing the most mistrust and United States-born Caribbean Islanders being the least mistrustful of Whites (Phelps, Taylor, & Gerard, 2001). Like African Americans, Jamaicans are sensitive to exploitation and colonization from large nations. However, these two groups differ in that most African Americans came to the Americas as slaves and experienced long histories of hardship, whereas Jamaicans have come to the Americas looking for educational advancement (Brice-Baker, 1996). In essence, it is the Blacks' ability to cope with adversity and diversity that becomes their strength to succeed.

In the past, Rennalls (2006) found that African Americans valued work and education as critical to success. African American parents generally expect their children to pursue careers, earn an honest living, and become self-supporting, and the successful African Americans often felt responsible to "give back" to their community. These

values, she continued, have gradually degenerated due to treatment of inequality (less pay for same work and underemployment) and the feeling of exclusion from realizing the American dream. Contemporary Black Americans, contrary to individualistic view of the educational system, have a collective view of success, that is, they succeed as a people, not as individuals; demonstrating mastery in academics and any fields outside of formal school settings (Rennalls, 2006). Consequently, many young African Americans resort to some creative ways of survival (e.g., the sale of drugs and violence) that destroy themselves and others (Hines & Boyd-Franklin, 1996).

Haitians are trained to achieve their goals despite obstacles (Bibb & Casimir, 1996). Though from modest educational backgrounds (4 - 6 years of formal education) prior to arriving in the United States, Haitians' positive drive and ambition account for their 50% enrollment in education courses (English improvement, vocational-technical, high school, and college) during the first two to three years of arrival in the United States (Portes & Stepick, 1987). Parents of Haitian children have stringent alternatives for poor academic performance; they even threaten to send the children back to Haiti, where things are hard (Rennalls, 2006). Most Haitians (90%) have social relations with other Haitians due partly to limited English, lack of understanding and the feeling that American Blacks and Cubans discriminate against them, calling them low status immigrants or "boat" people (Portes & Stepick, 1987; Stepick, Brott, Clapp, Cook, & Megi, 1982). Typically, Nigerian families are patriarchal. The men are providers and the women are nurturers. Similar to Nigerian men, Nigerian women seek out educational opportunities and engage in business ventures and in gainful employment (Nwadiora, 1996).

Personal Factors and Black Students' Persistence

The strength of the student-to-institution match is influenced by variables identified as background characteristics (Tinto, 1975). Examples of background characteristics are gender, age, ethnicity, SES, financial aid status, marital status, mother's education, father's education, levels of family support, individual attributes (e.g., levels of self-efficacy), pre-college characteristics and academic achievement (e.g., high school GPA, ACT/SAT scores, and prior schooling). These background characteristics provide the basis for students' initial contact with the institution. When combined with interactions and connections with other students, faculty and staff, and the system of the institution, the background characteristics students bring with them influence their commitment to the institution and their academic goals (Tinto, 1993).

When studying African American students' college persistence, Tinto (1987) has contended that persistence rates between African Americans and non-minorities were due primarily to prior elementary and secondary educational experiences that have favored the educational achievement and persistence of non-minorities above minorities. Guiffrida (2003) pointed out that Black students are less academically prepared from high school than their White peers. Fischer (2007) supported that contention by stating that the relatively low 6-year completion rate for most African American students, compared to their White and Asian counterparts, appears to be attributable to their lower level of academic preparedness.

The results of standardized test and high school grades are positively correlated with Black students' persistence in college. Finn (2006) has asserted that a "central challenge is to harmonize what high school expects of their graduates with what

universities expect of their entrants" (p. 40). The admission process into most colleges and universities relies heavily on standardized test results such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Testing Program (ACT) and high school grade point average (GPA) to determine which students qualify for acceptance (Noble, Roberts, & Sawyer, 2001). Students from low socioeconomic families, Blacks included, encounter the problem of high school academic under-preparedness (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). According to Cabrera, Burkham, and La Nasa (2005), 22% of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds enter college with low academic resources (e.g., SAT, ACT, and GPA) compared to 7% of students that come from high socioeconomic backgrounds.

Black students continue to lag behind all other racial/ethnic groups. An investigation by Evangelauf (1988) found that while most minority groups continued to show improvement on standardized aptitude tests used for college admissions, Blacks scored an average 353 on the verbal portion of the SAT, 75 points below the national average. They scored 384 on the mathematical portion of the test, 92 points lower than the national average. A study, at a HBI, was conducted by McDaniel and Graham (2001) on 1,949 first year students. Students were asked to complete an entry survey which included demographic and academic information related to their high school experience and their semesters in college. After students completed their first year, the predictor variables for persistence with the highest correlation coefficients were their ACT test scores, ACT math sub scores, their perceptions of prior high school achievement or preparation, high school GPA, and high school rank. More recently, Anne Godlasky (2010) reported through the Associated Press that when compared to all other races/ethnicities (Asians, 23.4%; Whites, 22.3%; American Indians, 19.0%; and

Hispanics, 18.6%) Blacks (16.9%) continue to have the lowest ACT scores. Wilson (2007) found that African American students who had a B to C (75 - 84) high school grade average were less likely to graduate in six years than those with an A to B (85 - 100) high school grade average. Since high school grades and standardized test scores remain significant predictors of academic performance in college, these pre-college variables will be investigated in this study because they are likely to provide insight into Black/African American students' past academic performance in relation to college persistence.

Generally, Black/African American students face unique personal issues that are critical to their academic and social adjustment and to their future success in college (Guiffrida, 2003). Fischer (2007) highlighted three prominent factors that may affect these students' adjustment and subsequent success in college: (a) minority status on predominantly White (PW) campuses, (b) socioeconomic disadvantages, and (c) being a first generation college student. Terenzini and Pascarella (1994) confirmed that Black/African American students are more likely to be the first generation in their family to go to college, a situation which demands high expectations set by both students and their family not only to succeed in college, but also for students to retain their connections with off-campus friends and relatives while on campus. Later, Ishitani (2006) found that first generation (Blacks included) students had a greater risk of departure during their college careers than students whose parents graduated from college. In addition, Bowen and Bok (1998) confirmed Steele's (1997) findings that Black students, on average, who have lower high school grades which may result in their academic underperformance in college, fulfill their fears of negative stereotypes about

their intellectual ability compared to their White peers. Schmidt (2007) has indicated that Black students' lack of academic performance in college is related to prior academic under-preparedness, but added that their low academic performance may be partly due to financial or personal problems such as the negative impact of outside work while trying to take a number of courses per semester and the impact of family circumstances (e.g., parents' unemployment, divorce and single-parenthood, and death) that often also account for students' departure from college.

Adding to the concerns of minority students' under-achievement in college, Orr (2004) stated that educational achievement cannot be left to chance. If students are going to remain sane and succeed in academia, they have to be well prepared. Besides institutional resources, knowledge, and services in diversified learning communities, students need loving relationships, stable families, and overall high expectations set for them in order to succeed. Pollard's (1990) study of Black women found that the women sampled identified personal support to be crucial to their persistence in college. The women reported that most of their support came from off-campus sources, namely, relatives and friends. Guiffrida (2005b), in a qualitative study, found that family support was a strong predictor of Black student academic achievement and persistence in college. The results showed remarkable differences between how high achievers and low achievers, and leavers described the influence of their families on their academic achievement and persistence. High achievers perceived their families as the most important assets at college, providing emotional, academic, and financial support, and encouraging them to make healthy separation when transitioning to college. Meanwhile, low-achievers and leavers saw their obligations to their families as contributing to their

poor academic performance and attrition. In view of the research cited above, this study investigated financial issues and family support in relation to college persistence.

Institutional Factors and Black Students' Persistence

As indicated earlier, the relationship between students and the institution and the role that each plays is significant in the process of persistence. Tinto (1987) stated that when students interact with the institutional environment these experiences influence their institutional and goal commitments. Institutional and goal commitments are achieved when students are able to understand how academic expectations are achieved. For example, detailed orientation in the processes of the institution, in-class instructions on course requirements, and availability of institutional and curricular resources help to increase students' integration in the culture of the institution and foster their continued enrollment and academic progress. Supporting the discussion, Moore (2006) addressed the reasons why underrepresented minorities do not complete science, technology, engineering, and mathematics higher education degrees. The author found that many schools provided counselors and coordinated multifaceted activities for students, but failed in the promotion of career knowledge, planning, and exploration among Black/African American students and men in particular. The inadequacy of this kind of exposure and services, Moore (2006) continues, hinders Black/African American men from expanding their career horizons and interests beyond traditional to non-traditional occupations such as engineering, science, and technology. However, the findings also revealed that quality school experiences positively influenced the participants' educational interests and career aspirations for engineering.

Thus, classroom experiences impact Black/African American students' persistence in college. Tinto (1997, 2006) found that students who are actively engaged in the classroom environment through collaborative learning experiences and positive interaction with peers and faculty are more likely to persist. Since engagement in the community of the classroom and institution is a predictor of college persistence, this study also investigated Black students' perceptions of their peer group interactions and connections with faculty.

Curricular Offerings

Curricular offerings have been shown to affect Black students' persistence in academic programs. Adams (2005) conducted a study on Black students' experiences at a PW border state university in Louisville, Kentucky. The purpose of that study was to determine if Black students enrolled in a Black studies program performed better both socially and academically at a PW university. The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase had one hundred and fifty-five participants with a mean age of 22 years. There were 34% men and 66% women; 55% being Black, 38% White Non-Hispanic, and 7% other. The Black Ideology Scale (BIS) with its six factors: (a) Black Heritage, (b) Identity Integration, (c) White culture, (d) Black defensiveness, (e) Acceptance of white authority, and (f) Militancy was the instrument used to measure Black consciousness among students. The BIS was given to students enrolled in the Department of Pan-African Studies during the spring of 2003. Of the Black population, few of the students (n = 20) were not enrolled in any Pan-African Study (PAS) courses, but the majority (n = 51) reported that they were enrolled or at least had taken one PAS class.

The second phase of the study had six focus groups of 28 students, comprised of six men and 21 women with one data missing. From this phase, 14 students had taken or were enrolled in courses related to Black studies and 13 students were never enrolled in Black studies courses. Three of the focus groups were students who were or had taken Black studies, and the other three groups were students who had never taken these courses. In this phase, students were asked to express their opinions about their participation in PAS classes. Findings indicated that Black students who were enrolled in Black studies were more likely to progress and persist in their academic studies. There was a significant relationship between students who took Black studies courses and their academic performance and persistence at this PWI. Further, the results increased the awareness of the impact of a more liberating educational experience for Black students on PW campuses. When students had access to Pan-African studies and opportunities to learn about the African Diaspora, they performed differently across academic disciplines, they were more able to focus on their work, increase their identity development, and improve their academic performance.

Likewise, to lessen the pressure of Blacks and minority segregation on HW campuses with diverse student populations, there is a need for multicultural programming, which includes redefining campus norms that have been barriers to integration (MacKinnon, 2004). Equally important, Hurtado (as cited in Smith, Altbach, & Lomotey, 2002) described the need for universities to provide a "sense of home" (p.130), opportunities for interaction with other ethnic groups, a cultural space, and an overall inclusive learning environment for students. The author also indicated that student affairs staff has the responsibility to eliminate barriers to inclusion, modify

hierarchies that perpetuate majority viewpoints, and recreate programming, and create advisory boards to encourage diverse representation.

In support of this argument, Smith et al. (2002) added a new dimension to improving the retention of minority students; that is to use the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum is defined as the unwritten and unspoken rules that govern the successful negotiation of the academic culture in order to help mentor students in the process of schooling. Fleming (1984) discovered that to have "one person who really cared" was significant in Black freshmen persistence. In her research of more than 300 Black freshmen conducted over two years, she set out to identify students' perceptions of the college experience at HBIs and HWIs. Informal mentoring at HBIs was very powerful in helping students feel welcomed and nurtured and for providing a balance of support and challenge.

The researchers cited above provide an examination of the impact of academically and socially friendly institutions on the retention of minority undergraduate students. Fleming (1984) noted that students' decision to complete or withdraw from college was hinged on informal nurturing, whereas Adams' (2005) study focused on the need to diversify academic programs to match the diverse student population. Both studies found that a nurturing college environment have strong implications for retention and degree completion among African American students.

Campus Climate

After more than five decades of racial integration and four decades of affirmative action, most of the nation's colleges and universities have not come close to eliminating the performance and racial gap that separates Black students and other racial/ethnic

groups (Hispanics and Asians) from their White counterparts (Fischer, 2007). Education researchers and other social scientists have offered a host of explanations for such performance gaps, including the residual effects of slavery and segregation, the stigmatization of high academic achievers by their minority peers, and the lack of minority role models among college administrators and professors (Schmidt, 2007). Although Adams (2005) affirmed that the number of Black students enrolled in PWIs of higher learning has increased, the overall "climate" and curricula of these institutions have made little or no significant change. For example, that study found that problems of equality, "racial stereotyping", discrimination, and alienation from conventional institutions foster institutional climates that continue to be deterrents for Black students. Similarly, Cureton (2003) stated that although the way has been paved for Black students to attend colleges and universities, students' assimilation into a range of new environments, such as involvement in extracurricular organizations, sports programs, and interacting with diverse populations remains a challenge to preventing early departure. Consequently, the lack of institutional change has contributed to the low achievement levels of Black students in 4-year institutions (Adams, 2005).

Fischer's (2007) research showed that the size of the campus impacts minority student retention in college. Larger campuses, though intimidating, allow for greater diversity and generate more interest and opportunities for socializing. Students who become involved during their first year at college are predicted to have greater future involvement, institutional commitment, and integration in campus social life, and persistence. Allen (1992) reported that African American students who are involved in

the institutional social environment are more likely to persist than those students who did not engage and remained isolated.

Manning and Coleman (1991, as cited by MacKinnon, 2004) "assumes that organizational growth occurs when members of the community acquire knowledge about other cultures, gain experience with people different from themselves, and are challenged with structural and systematic change through these efforts" (p. 369). Multicultural organizational models bring to light the value structure that supports institutional policies and practices perpetuating a cultural hierarchy of privilege and urges higher education administrators to question and eradicate the values and actions that maintain this hierarchy (MacKinnon, 2004).

Financial Issues

Financial aid, or the lack of, is another factor that relates to Black student persistence in college. Low- and middle-income students are slowly being priced out of colleges because the amount of financial aid awarded to students has not kept pace with tuition increases (Gutmann, 2008). A study at San Diego Community College showed an 8% decline in students attending college due to fiscal contraction-- a political decision to increase taxes in order to offset deficit in public finances. Fiscal contraction (a) hampers colleges' ability to provide universal access and student support for minorities who are mostly receiving student aid, (b) results in the elimination of academic and social programs, (c) encourages faculty overload, and (d) results in fewer learning resources and financial aid (Sheldon, 2003). Consequently, many students are left struggling to pay tuition and are inevitably leaving college prematurely.

Peter Schmidt in an interview with Freeman A. Hrabowski III, president of the University of Maryland-Baltimore County, and Susan B. Layden, associate dean of student affairs at Skidmore College, on a *Chronicle* (June, 2007) live colloquy addressed critical factors, including finances, related to the retention of minority college students. Schmidt posited that the majority of first generation minorities and low-income students focus on surviving and graduating from college, and not necessarily gaining some type of academic honors. These factors are further compounded with obstacles that deal with issues of integration, prejudice, low expectations, unmet financial need, and unwelcoming classroom and institutions. Hrabowski, in response to Schmidt, supported the previous research stating that there is a need to look carefully at the financial challenges that low-income students face. For example, students of color and low income (SES) are often reluctant to take out loans because they might not be able to repay them (Schmidt, 2007).

Glenn's (2007) study, designed to examine the setting, policies, procedures, programs and culture on community college campuses for clues concerning the institutions' Black male retention rates, identified financial need as a determinant to persistence. He continued to report that students are forced to "stop out", to discontinue enrollment for a semester or more, until they can financially afford to enroll again. Students' need to work forced them to attend school part-time, and part-time students are more likely than full-time students to leave school. When students, many of whom have earned associate and higher degrees, were asked why they continued to enroll in a community college, a prevalent answer from most of the students was cheaper tuition. Since financial issues in higher education among Black/African American students relate

to their persistence in college, this study investigated the students' perceptions of finances and their relationship to persistence.

Gender and Persistence

Black/African American men (52%) continue to experience issues during their pursuit in college that result in less degree attainment than Black/African American women (58 %; NCES, 2010). Bush and Bush (2005), in a study conducted at one California Community College, revealed that African-American men are the lowest-performing sub-group in the percentage of degrees earned, persistence rates, and average cumulative grade point average. Further, Black men are less likely to meet with their instructors than other sub-groups and are less likely than any other male group to be involved in extracurricular activities. Given the relationship between degree attainment and social mobility, the poor academic performance of Black men can have future negative economic and social consequences.

Hagedorn, Maxwell, and Hampton (2002) gathered data from 202 degree seeking community college African American male students on issues that predicted the retention rates of this particular group. In this study, placement data was collected to assess students' writing, reading, and math skills. In addition, students self-reported feelings on educational background, college plans, study plan, work duties, and high school course work were investigated. The researchers used logistic regression to analyze the data. Four variable groupings were used in the regression equations that were designed. The first grouping, labeled demographic and high school experiences included the participants' age, their parents' level of education, the number of years the students studied English and Science in high school, their high school GPA, and the highest level

of Mathematics that they had taken. The second grouping included placement test results and self-efficacy ratings of academic ability. The third grouping contained students' self-reported perceptions about experiences that occurred during their first semester. For example, these experiences included attendance at an orientation session, number of credit hours attempted, number of credit hours completed, class attendance during the day as opposed to evening classes, the students certainty about their chosen major, number of hours spent studying, having a prior college degree, and their GPA for the first semester. The fourth grouping included the number of hours students worked, their perception about the importance of completing college, the number of hours spent relaxing, and the student's self reported need for academic assistance. Of the 202 Freshmen African American men who started the program, 75 (37%) continued through to their second semester. From the first and third groupings, demographic and high school experiences and students' school experiences during their first semester were significant to retention. There were also other individual predictors that were significant to retention such as age and the number of enrolled credit hours. Being a younger student proved to be positively linked to retention. Participants who were enrolled full time were more likely to persist into a second term than those who were enrolled part time.

Graduation rates for Black women appear to have improved over the years, moving from a 34% rate in 1990 to 47% in 2006 then, to 58% in 2009 (NCES, 2010). In a study conducted at a historically Black college, Schwartz and Washington (1999) looked at the retention of 213 African American women. They used a stepwise multiple regression to identify persistence predictor variables. Independent variables (14) were investigated These included demonstrated academic success in high school measured by

grades and rank in class, grade point average, personal emotional adjustment, attachment to college, and social adjustment. The students completed two questionnaires, a Non-Cognitive Questionnaire with eight scales and a Student Adaptation College Questionnaire with four scales. The dependent variable was the student's persistence to continue from their initial enrollment in the fall semester to the following spring semester. Social adjustment and attachment to college were found to predict persistence to continue to the following semester.

Looking at the findings of these studies, it is safe to say that Black women have a larger number of degree completions than Black men. It seems evident for both male and female students, but to a lesser extent to men, that persistence in higher education is related to social integration. Black men's persistence in college is driven by the expectation of having a beneficial future resulting from their education. Age (being younger), prior high school experience and achievement, students' school experience during the first college semester, engaging institutional support systems, student personal responsibility, social adjustment, and attachment to college all have a profound relationship on persistence in college. This study investigated persistence in relationship to these factors.

Summary

This chapter provided the review of conceptual and empirical literature related to Black/African American students' enrollment and persistence toward undergraduate degree attainment. Along with Tinto's, Guiffrida, Astin's, and Bandura's theoretical frameworks, several personal and institutional factors that relate to Black/African American, students' persistence were discussed. Personal factors included background

characteristics, students' personal commitment to completing their education and their self-perceived efficacy about their academic ability and prior academic preparation. Institutional factors included the quality of faculty interactions with students, students' interactions with students, non/limited financial aid opportunities, and the institutional climate. Finally, Black men and Black women were compared based on the issues that relate to gender and persistence in college. It is interesting to note that none of these existing research studies was on Black students in a largely HSI. In Chapter 3 the reader will find a description of the research method followed in this study. Chapter 4 presents the results and data analysis. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the study, implications for retention practice, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This chapter starts with purpose of the study and the research questions as stated in Chapter One. Next, the research design is discussed, including the research setting, population and response rate, instrumentation, procedures for data collection and data analysis, and summary.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose for this study was to investigate how Black seniors at FIU, an HSI, perceive their academic and social experiences as they persist toward degree attainment. Specifically, this study investigated the relationship between personal and institutional factors and self-efficacy of persistence in college among self-identified Black undergraduate seniors at FIU. Using academic and social integration theories (Guiffrida, 2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006); Tinto, (1975, 1987, 1993) and self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1982, 1986, 1997) as foundation, this study examined Black students' perceptions of (a) personal factors (background characteristics and family support) and (b) institutional factors (peer group interactions, interactions with faculty, faculty concerns for student development and teaching, academic and intellectual development, institutional and goal commitment, and self-efficacy) and their relationship to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college. In addition, the study investigated whether students' perceptions differ on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college, based on gender and ethnicity.

Research Questions

The primary research question addressed in this study was: What factors, personal and institutional, relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students? Subsidiary questions were:

1. What personal factors as measured by the SIIS are related to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students?
2. What institutional factors as measured by the SIIS are related to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students?
3. Are there differences between self-identified Black men and Black women on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college?
4. Are there differences among the Black ethnic groups identified on the SIIS on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college?

Research Design

This study used an ex post facto (correlational) research design. Ex post facto research investigates the relationship between variables, without the researcher's direct intervention, but does not establish cause and effect (Kerlinger, 1986; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; Newman, 1976). There are three limitations to consider when conducting ex post facto research design. The researcher's (a) inability to manipulate independent variables, (b) lack of power to randomize participants, and (c) risk of improperly interpreting results

due to lack of control (Kerlinger, 1986). All three limitations relate to the internal validity of the design method. Conversely, the relative absence of experimental control of variables supports the high external validity of this design method. External validity deals with the extent to which study results may be generalized beyond the sample population to the general population (Newman, Newman, Brown, & McNeely, 2006). Thus, the use of an ex post facto research design is deemed appropriate to develop a general understanding of the uniqueness of the factors that relate to persistence among Black ethnic undergraduate seniors.

Research Setting

This research was conducted at FIU, a large, public, urban, research university in Miami, South Florida. FIU is one of the 25 largest universities in the nation located in an urban, racially and ethnically diverse environment. The demographics of the university, as stated in Chapter One, are representative of the racial and ethnic diversity of the community. This university serves a large percentage of economically disadvantaged students. Nearly 50% of all undergraduate students attending this university receive financial aid, and nearly 60% of those financial aid recipients come from families with annual household incomes under $30,000. Approximately 80 % of students at this university are undergraduates.

At FIU, retention rate after 6 years of full-time, first time in college (FTIC) entering Fall 2004 and Summer 2004 was 67.9%; of these 59% graduated. Black students were 11.4% of the original cohort and 9.3% of those retained. Blacks were 8.8% of the graduating cohort compared to Asians (33.3% retained and 33.3% graduating), Hispanics (66.3% retained and 49.1% graduating), and Whites (41.7% retained and

37.6% graduating; FIU Access and Equity Report, 2011). FIU's Office of Planning and Institutional Research reports the 4-year retention rate of the University as 54.2% (https://opiereports.fiu.edu/retention.html, 2009-2010).

Population and Response Rate

The population (N = 1,505) for this study was African American undergraduate college seniors enrolled in any major at FIU for Fall 2010. A college senior is a student who has completed 90 credits or more and aspires to graduate from the institution. This university reports demographic statistics on Black/African American as a group and does not separate this racial category into ethnic groups. However, this study asked participants on the SIIS to self-report their ethnicity (e.g., Black/African American, Black/Bahamian, Black/Cuban, Black/Haitian, Black/Kenyan, Black/Jamaican, Black/Nigerian, Black/Puerto Rican, Black/Trinidadian & Tobagan, and Other). The participants were classified into the self-reported ethnic groups to compare and contrast their responses separately (within group) and to one another (between groups).

A total of 308 (21%) students responded to the SIIS. Of these, 236 (77%) completed the entire online survey. Subsamples used in this survey vary in values because the computer software used, *Qualtrics,* automatically produced different "*n*'s" based on the survey responses. Based on the sample size of the participants that completed the survey, an analysis was conducted to determine the study's power. The analysis indicated that for an α of .05 and a medium effect size, $f^2 = .15$ (Cohen, 1988), the power would be at least .99 for an $n = 236$.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument that was used in this study (see Appendix A) results from the merging of items adapted from a previous survey, the IIS (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; see Appendix B) and variables from Guiffrida's (2003) model of cultural relationships at college.

The Institutional Integration Scale: The IIS

The IIS was developed by Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) to measure Tinto's (1975, 1993) corresponding components of academic and social interactions with the college environment, institutional and goal commitment, and ultimately persistence at the institution. The original IIS had 55 Likert-type items on a 5-point scale of (5 = Strongly Agree; 1 = Strongly Disagree; Caison, 2006). That IIS was later shortened to a 34-item survey that the authors, Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) considered adequate to tap the various aspects of Tinto's model of academic and social interactions in college (Caison, 2006; French & Oakes, 2004). Finally, the IIS (see Appendix B) was further revised to a 30-item survey categorized into five scales: (a) peer group interactions (7 items), (b) interactions with faculty (5 items), (c) faculty concern for student development and teaching (5 items), (d) academic and intellectual development (7 items), and (e) institutional and goal commitment (6 items) using a 5-point Likert scale of (5 = Strongly Agree; 1 = Strongly Disagree; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1980).

Validity. Factor analysis was used to demonstrate content and construct validity of the 30-item instrument. The intercorrelations among the five scales were modest, ranging from .01 to .33 with a median correlation of .23; indicating that the scales appear to be assessing dimensions of institutional integration that are independent of each other

(Pascarella &Terenzini, 1980). The IIS has been used by researchers in various forms. Modifications have been made in order to adapt the scale to match the research setting and population being studied (French & Oakes, 2004).

Reliability. Internal consistency reliability for the 30-item scale has been reported at .83 with coefficient alphas for the five scales (Peer-group Interactions, Interactions with faculty, Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching, Academic and Intellectual Development, and Institutional and Goal commitment) ranging from .61 to .86 (French and Oakes, 2004). The internal consistency reliability for the 34-item instrument was reported at .92 and the following scales at: Peer Group Interactions = .84, Interactions with Faculty = .89, Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching = .88, Academic and Intellectual Development = .82, and Institutional and Goal Commitment = .76 (French & Oakes, 2004). The increased reliability coefficients on the 34-item version were attributed to an increase in sample size and item revisions of the scale (French & Oakes, 2004). Further, the revisions to the IIS resulted in higher internal consistency reliability along with higher item discrimination and higher correlations among the subscale scores and between the subscale and total scale scores (French and Oakes, 2004). In all the correlations the variables were significant at $p < .01$. These researchers' revisions resulted in strengthening the IIS's utility to measure college students' level of academic and social integration in relation to their interactions with faculty, peers, and the institutional environment.

New Instrument Composition: The SIIS

The researcher modified the IIS to create the SIIS, a new instrument. The SIIS contained 53 items: 34 Likert-type items, 18 demographic items, and 1 open-ended

question. All the items on the 30-item IIS were adapted except for the changes described in the following. On the Academic and Intellectual Development scale the wording "this year" was dropped from the fourth item to make it applicable to the time the students spent in college (these participants are college seniors). Items three and four, "It is likely that I will register at this university next fall" and "I have no idea at all what I want to major in" were dropped from the Institutional and Goal Commitment scale and replaced by 2 items: "I am confident that I made the right decision to continue at this university" and "I am confident that I made the right decision to choose this major," respectively. Four items each were added to each of the 2 new scales: Family Support and Self-Efficacy in order to answer research questions one to four. To capture students' demographic data and to support research questions one and two, 17 new items were added to the survey. Lastly, the one open-ended question added allowed the participants to respond in free text to the main research question.

Pilot Testing Of New Instrument: The SIIS

The new instrument was pilot-tested for content validity. Each question was assessed for clarity of the instructions, relevance of the wording of each item to address the research questions, and other modifications (additions and deletions; Broschard, 2005). Pilot testing occurred in two distinctive phases. First, a student affairs administrator, an undergraduate studies adviser, and a research professor completed the survey and provided feedback on the SIIS. The instrument was modified according to the feedback. The first item, "Since coming to this university, I have developed close personal relationships with other students" was replaced by "Since coming to this university, I have developed close personal relationships with other Black students." Two

similar items were added: "Since coming to this university, I have developed close personal relationships with White students" and "Since coming to this university, I have developed close personal relationships with Hispanic students." A similar revision was done to items two, three, and five to reflect the racial/ethnic diversity of students. The scale "Interactions with faculty" resulted in three scales, namely, "Interactions with Black faculty," "Interactions with White faculty," and "Interactions with Hispanic faculty."

Next, a convenience sample of students (see Appendix C) possessing similar characteristics to those who were surveyed (Black undergraduate seniors at FIU) took the survey and provided feedback on its validity. The researcher, with the professor's permission administered the questionnaire in a classroom setting. The students took between 20 to 28 minutes to complete the survey. Eighty percent of the reviewers agreed that the items on the SIIS did measure the specific research questions. Further revisions were done to the questionnaire based on additional comments from the reviewers: (a) Item 56 was labeled "Ethnicity" for clearer identification, (b) 11, instead of seven alternative ethnicities were listed (some students wrote in the ethnicity that they would like to be identified by) with the instruction "Choose the one that applies to you most," and (c) "Student Government" was added to item 68, the list of on-campus clubs/organizations. These revisions are reflected in the final instrument composition.

Final Instrument Composition: The SIIS

The SIIS (see Appendix A) administered in this study is an extensive modification of the 30-item IIS (see Appendix B). Five new scales (i.e., Interactions with Black Faculty, Interactions with White Faculty, Interactions with Hispanic Faculty, Family Support, and Self-Efficacy) were added to support the main research question of this

study. Eight items were added to the first scale, Peer Group Interactions, by inserting the words "Black," "White," and "Hispanic" in each statement, to reflect the diverse racial/ethnic composition of the students. So, the first item became items 1, 2, and 3. Each of the second, third, and fifth items (see items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, & 13) were modified similarly. The word "Black" was added to the fifth item (see item 10). The sixth item became item 14.

The second scale, Interactions with Faculty, was made into three scales namely: Interactions with Black Faculty (see items 15 - 19), Interactions with White Faculty (items 20 - 24), and Interactions with Hispanic Faculty (see items 25 - 29). On the Academic and Intellectual Development scale the wording "this year" was dropped from the fourth item (see item 37) to make it applicable to the time spent in college (these participants are college seniors). Items three and four "It is likely that I will register at this university next fall" and "I have no idea at all what I want to major in" were dropped from the Institutional and Goal Commitment scale and replaced by 2 items (see items 42 & 43) "I am confident that I made the right decision to continue at this university" and "I am confident that I made the right decision to choose this major," respectively. The word "not" was dropped from item 30 (see item 44).

Four items were added to each of the two new scales: Family Support and Self-Efficacy in order to answer research questions one to four (see items 45 - 52). Self-efficacy refers to what a person wants to be or to achieve, how deep-seated these goals are, and the desire to finish college (Allen, 1992). A sample item on the Self-Efficacy scale is "I believe that I have the competence to finish a college degree." Family support refers to the psychological, social, and financial help (e.g., visits, letters, e-mails, prayer,

and monetary assistance) that college students get from parents, immediate relatives, and community members. A sample item on the Family Support scale is "My family encouraged me to attend college." Overall, 18 new items were added to the survey to capture the personal and institutional variables to support research questions one to four. To capture demographic data and to support research questions one and two, 17 new items were added to the survey (see items 53 - 70). The one open-ended question added (see item71) allowed the participants to respond in free text to the main research question.

The final instrument, SIIS, has a combination of 71 items categorized under 9 scales, different types of closed-ended questions, and one open-ended question titled Primary Motivation. In the first section, Personal and Institutional Factors, participants were asked to indicate their degree of agreement measured by a 5-point Likert-type scale (5 = Strongly Agree; 1 = Strongly Disagree). In the second section, Student Background Characteristics, participants were asked to provide demographic data (gender, age, pre-college academic achievement, ethnicity, number of children or dependents, marital status, parents' highest level of education, generation of college student, campus where courses are taken, major academic program of study, number of credits completed, current class load, salary, financing college education, approximate income of parents, campus clubs or organizations, disability, resident or commuter student), and primary motivation for finishing degree (items 53-71). Participants were asked to choose the response in each category that applies to them and write short answers to item 71.

Survey Instrument Administration

The survey was administered through *Qualtrics,* an online survey software that is available to all FIU students. *Qualtrics* is designed to protect each respondent's privacy and it prevents multiple responses from each respondent. The researcher was given the data set of the population from FIU admission records, including their names and email addresses. Each undergraduate senior of Black descent, according to FIU guidelines, was emailed an invitation letter, including the statement of anonymity, and the SIIS questionnaire to complete. Participants were given 2 weeks to respond. The researcher followed-up with e-mail reminders to potential respondents at 15 days intervals, which have been shown to generate 23% - 48% of survey responses (Dillman, 2000). The researcher's contact information was provided so that if respondents encounter any difficulties while completing the online survey they would be able to seek clarification. Table 1 displays the history of activities to obtain maximum response to the survey.

Table 1

History of Activities to Obtain Maximum Response Rates

Time	Action
First survey Administration	Survey email sent
15 days later	Reminder email sent
30 - 90 days later	Reminder email sent until minimum response received

Data Treatment and Analysis

Descriptive statistics were obtained from participants' responses concerning background characteristics and personal and institutional factors as self-reported on the SIIS. The entire survey instrument was coded, assigning numerical labels to nominal and ordinal scale data to allow for data entry using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS), 19.0 Edition. Closed ended responses were statistically analyzed while the open-ended responses were analyzed using content analysis. Background characteristics (items 53 - 70) of the participants were analyzed using descriptive statistics that included mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage. For example, description of participants' gender is reported in frequency counts and percentages. Data from the Likert-type scale items were reported in mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage. In addition, exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was performed on the Likert-type scale items to examine the interrelationships among the personal and institutional variables. This PCA produced either high or near zero factor loadings, making interpretation of the factors easier (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). To address research question one, correlation analysis was completed to identify if there was a relationship between self-efficacy and the personal demographic factors. To test research question two, Pearson R was conducted to indicate the degree of relationship between the variables. Multiple linear regression models were used to identify variables that are predictors of self-efficacy of persistence. Models were run which looked at sets of independent demographic variables believed to predict self-efficacy. Then, other independent variables were examined to see if they account for variance in predicting self-efficacy while controlling for demographic

variables. Analysis of variance and independent samples *t*-tests were used to answer research questions three and four involving students' perceptions on differences of personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence based on gender and ethnicity. The level of significance was set at $p < .05$ to be consistent with social research.

Open-ended responses were analyzed using content analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). This technique sorts words and phrases into categories based on common elements congruent with the theoretical framework. The content analysis was used for each participant's response. Responses to the open-ended question were considered themes when they appeared multiple times (see details in Chapter Four).

Summary

This chapter described the methodology that was used to conduct this study. First, the purpose of the study and the research questions were presented in order to frame the subsequent sections. These sections contain descriptions of the research design, research setting, population and response rate, instrumentation, data collection and analysis. The next chapter will present the results of this investigation.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The main purpose of this study was to investigate how Black seniors at FIU, an HIS, perceive their academic and social experiences as they persist toward degree attainment. Specifically, this study investigated the relationship between personal and institutional factors and self-efficacy of persistence in college among self-identified Black undergraduate seniors at FIU. Using academic and social integration theories (Guiffrida, 2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006); Tinto, (1975, 1987, 1993) and self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1982, 1986, 1997) as foundation, this study examined Black students' perceptions of (a) personal factors (background characteristics and family support) and (b) institutional factors (peer group interactions, interactions with faculty, faculty concerns for student development and teaching, academic and intellectual development, institutional and goal commitment, and self-efficacy) and their relationship to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college. In addition, the study investigated whether students' perceptions differ on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college, based on gender and ethnicity.

Data were collected and analyzed to address the research questions. The primary research question addressed in this study was: What factors, personal and institutional, relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students? Subsidiary questions were:

1. What personal factors as measured by the SIIS are related to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students?

2. What institutional factors as measured by the SIIS are related to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students?
3. Are there differences between self-identified Black men and Black women on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college?
4. Are there differences among the Black ethnic groups identified on the SIIS on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college?

This chapter reports the results of the quantitative and content analyses and the interpretation of the data collected to answer the research questions described above. The analyses are organized as follows: (a) description of the participants, (b) factor analysis of the survey scales, and (c) survey results using correlations, multiple linear regressions, independent samples *t*-tests, ANOVA, and content analysis.

Description of Participants

The second part of the survey contained 18 items designed to collect descriptive information about participants' background characteristics, both personal and institutional. Personal demographic data included: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) ethnicity, (d) first-, second-, and third-generation college student, (e) time worked for pay while in school, (f) disability, (g) family characteristics such as marital status, children or dependents, parents' level of education, and (h) parents' or self income. The institutional demographic data were: (a) pre-college academic achievement, (b) campus where most classes are taken, (c) major academic program, (d) current class load, (e) how college

education is financed, (f) campus clubs/organization joined, and (g) resident/commuter student (see Appendix A).

Personal Demographic Data

Demographic and descriptive statistics were computed on 236 participants who have completed 90 or more college credits. Of these, 65.5% (*n* = 154) were women and 34.5% (*n* = 81) were men; one respondent did not answer the question. The participants' ages ranged from19 years to 35 years of age and older, with less than half (*n* = 108, 46%) between the ages of 19 - 24 years old. Nearly half (54%) of the participants were 25 years of age and over. Based on gender and age, this report is a reflection of the distribution found among undergraduate college students in the persistence literature (Barton, 2002).

Regarding family characteristics, the majority of the participants (77.4%, *n* = 181) were single; 17.9% (*n* = 42) were married, and the others (4.7%, *n* = 11) were divorced. Of the participants who had children, 11.4% (*n* = 27) reported having one child; 8.9% (*n* = 21) had two children. Another 8.9% (*n* =22) had between three to six children. The majority of the students (68.6%, *n* = 162) were without children. Five participants (2.2%) did not answer this question. Seventy percent of the students were single and without children. Few of the students were single with children (17, 7.2%) and still fewer were married without children (9, 3.8%) while 33(14%) were married with dependent children. The other 5% was divorced, separated, or widowed with children. The majority of the students were single and without children.

Report of parents' highest level of education, ranging from doctorate to eighth grade and below were as follows: (a) High school diploma and below (mothers, 49.6%;

fathers, 56.1%), (b) Associate degree (mothers,15.7%; fathers, 11.4%), (c) Bachelor's degree (mothers, 19.5%; fathers, 14.4%), (d) Master's degree (mothers, 7.2%; fathers, 4.2%), (e) Doctorate degree (mothers, 1.3%; fathers, 3.4%), and other (mothers, 5.1; fathers, 8.9%). Some students did not answer the item (mothers, 1.7%; fathers, 1.3%). Most of the students' parents' highest level of education is a high school diploma or below and compared to mothers, more fathers earned a high school diploma or below. The students' fathers earned more doctorate degrees than their mothers. Fewer students have parents with master's and doctorate degrees. Most students' mothers have more associate's and bachelor's degrees combined than their fathers'. Majority (48.3%, n = 114) of the participants were "first-generation" college students with 40.7% (n = 96) following closely behind as "second-generation" college students. A small number of the students (7.7%, n = 23) were "third-generation" college students. Very few (2.6%) of the participants were students with disabilities.

All participants were asked to identify themselves by choosing the ethnicity that most applied to them. Table 2 shows the Black ethnicities of the survey participants. The top five ethnicities identified themselves as Black/African American (32.8%, n = 77), followed by Black/Haitian (24.7%, n = 58), Black/Jamaican (16.6, n = 39), Black/Trinidadian & Tobagan (6.4%, n = 15), and Black/Bahamian (4.7%, n =11).

Institutional Demographic Data

The survey responses revealed that the participants took most of their courses at three of the university's four locations, with the majority (78.7%, n = 184) at the main campus, 20.5% (n = 48) at the Biscayne Bay campus, and 0.8% (n = 2) at one of the academic center locations. Only 12% of the participants were on-campus resident

students. The other 88% were off-campus commuter students. Most of the participants (79%, *n* = 185) were full-time students, taking 12 or more semester credits. The others (21%, *n* = 49) attended part-time, taking fewer than 12 semester credits. Many of the participants (62%, *n* = 145) reported that they work full-time (40 hours) for pay while enrolled in college; 23% (*n* = 54) worked part-time (less than 20 - 39 hours) and a few (15%, *n* = 35) do not work for pay.

Table 2

Frequency of Participants by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Black/African American	77	32.8
Black/Haitian	58	24.7
Black/Jamaican	39	16.6
Black/Trinidadian &Tobagan	15	6.4
Black/Bahamian	11	4.7
Black/Nigerian	4	1.7
Black/Cuban	1	.4
Black/Puerto Rican	1	.4
Other	29	12.3
Total	235	100.0

Note. Analyses were carried out on the top five ethnicities.

In response to the question of how the majority of their college education was financed, the most popular response (48.7%) was a combination of resources (e.g., grants, loans, scholarships, and other). College education was least financed by full tuition reimbursement from employer (0.7%). Most participants (40.7 %) reported that they earned less than $30,000. Another 35.6% said the approximate income of

parents/guardians/self was between $30,000 and $59,999; 19% earned between $60,000 and higher and 11(4.7%) students did not answer the survey item.

Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis was performed using principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation to attempt to confirm the reliability of the nine scales (52 items) on the online survey, which form the personal and institutional variables. These items loaded on to 14 factors with their Cronbach alpha ranging between .472 and .960 as shown in Table 3. The factor names are the researcher's interpretation of the items that clustered together.

The first scale, peer group interactions, loaded on to three components: *Hispanic/White*, *Black*, and *Black/White/Hispanic*, a combination of which explained 68% of the variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequate (.798), above the .5 cutoff (Field, 2005) for analysis. Internal consistency reliability for the three factors ranged from .472 to .843. These are acceptable levels of reliability (George & Mallery, 2003). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity x^2 (91) = 2158.782, p < .001 indicated that correlations between the items were significantly large enough for PCA. The items on the third component, *Black/White/Hispanic* were reverse coded.

The second scale, Interaction with Black faculty loaded on to one factor, *Black Faculty Interactions,* and accounted for 81% of the variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequate (.857) for analysis. Internal consistency reliability for the items ranged from .831 to .950. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity x^2 (10) = 1231.7, p < .001, indicated that correlations between the items were significantly large enough for PCA.

Table 3

Reliability Coefficients of the 14 Factors Loadings

Factor Component	Number Of Items	Alpha
Hispanic/White Peer Interactions	6	.91
Black Peer Interactions	3	.89
Black/White/Hispanic Peer Interactions	5	.75
Black Faculty Interactions	5	.94
White Faculty Interactions	5	.94
Hispanic Faculty Interactions	5	.95
Negative Faculty Concern	2	.89
Positive Faculty Concern	2	.82
Academic and Intellectual Development	6	.86
Academic and Intellectual Development Reversed item	1	-
Importance of Institutional and Goal Commitment	2	.82
Confidence in Institutional and Goal Commitment	2	.74
Family Support	4	.80
Self-efficacy	4	.86

The third scale, Interactions with White faculty loaded on to one factor, *White Faculty Interactions* and accounted for 82% of the variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequate (.840) for analysis. Internal consistency reliability ranged from .835 to .953. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity $x^2(10) = 1305.6$, $p <$

.001, indicated that correlations between the items were significantly large enough for PCA.

The fourth scale, Interactions with Hispanic Faculty loaded on to one factor, *Hispanic Faculty Interactions* and explained 83% of the variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequate (.884) for analysis. Internal consistency reliability for the factor ranged from .833 to .955. The coefficient alpha .95 indicates high reliability. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity $x2$ (10) = 1315.995, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between the items were significantly large enough for PCA.

The fifth scale, Faculty Concern for Student Development loaded on to two factors*: Negative Faculty Concern for Student Development* and *Positive Faculty Concern for Student Development* a combination of which explained 87% of the variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequate (.512) for analysis. Internal consistency reliability for the two factors ranged from .920 to .948. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity x^2 (6) = 393.741, $p < .001$, indicated that correlations between the items were significantly large enough for PCA.

The sixth scale, Academic and Intellectual Development had two components. Six of the seven items loaded on one factor and accounted for 53% of the variance. One item, "few of my courses have been intellectually stimulating" was reverse coded and accounted for 15% of the variance. Internal consistency reliability for both factors ranged between .558 and .960.The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure verified the sampling adequate (.821) for analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity x^2 (21) = 825.276, $p <$ .001, indicated that correlations between the items were significantly large enough for PCA.

The seventh scale, Institutional and Goal Commitment scale had two components a combination of which accounted for 82% of the variance. The coefficients for the two items on the first factor, *importance of institutional and goal commitment* (.898 and .910) and the second factor, *confidence in Institutional and goal commitment* (.872 and .873) respectively, indicate high reliability. The eighth scale, Family Support loaded on one factor and accounted for 66% of the variance. Reliability coefficients range from .675 to .863.

The final scale, Self-Efficacy, and the dependent variable used for the multiple regression analyses, loaded on to one factor that made the interpretation of research questions 1 and 2 possible. The scale contains four items: (a) I have the competence to complete a college degree, (b) I always knew that I would be successful in my academic pursuits, (c) I have persevered to finish what I start, and (c) I have the motivation to finish my college studies. Internal consistency coefficients with all four items on the self-efficacy scale were .855. After removing one item, "I have persevered to finish what I start", from the scale the alpha coefficient increased to .906. The three items had eigenvalues of 2.55 and in combination explained 85% of the variance.

Survey Results

The first section of the Student Institutional Integration Survey (SIIS) contained 52 items designed to collect information concerning participants' experiences as they persist in college. The participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). This section reviews the statistical results and presents the findings of the research questions individually.

Research Question 1

What personal factors as measured by the SIIS are related to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students?

Self-efficacy was correlated with a subsample (n =162) on personal demographic variables and one personal survey scale factor (family support). Correlation analysis revealed no significant relationship between self-efficacy and personal demographic factors. However, self-efficacy was significantly correlated with family support (r = .28, p < .001). The greater the families support the higher the self-efficacy will be. Table 4 describes the correlation between personal factors and self-efficacy. To answer this research question, multiple regressions was conducted on self- efficacy on the personal factors. In the regression model, the personal variables (ethnicity, married, income, divorced, gender, generation, age, mother's, highest level of education, father's highest level of education, and number of children) explained 2.9% of the variability of self-efficacy and were not significant, F (10, 145), = .43, p = .930. This combination of personal factors is weak in predicting persistence. Table 5, 6, and 7 describe multiple regression results.

Table 4

Correlation between Personal Factors and Self-Efficacy

Variables	Correlation	*p*
Gender	.033	.68
Age	.088	.31
Number of Children	.038	.63
Single	-.029	.72
Married	-.001	.99
Divorced	.062	.44
Mother's Highest Level of Education	.023	.77
Father's Highest level of Education	.071	.37
Generation	.029	.72
Ethnicity	.075	.34
Family Support	.282**	<.01

Note. $^{**}p < .01$.
Listwise $n = 162$
Note. Family support scores ranged from 1 to 5 with a higher score indicating greater family support.

Table 5

Multiple Regressions: Model Summary of Personal and Institutional Factors

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.170[a]	.029	.038	.60
2	.816[b]	.666	.607	.37

Table 6

Multiple Regressions: Model Summary of Personal and Institutional Factors

Model	R^2 Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.029	.429	10	145	.930
2	.637	19.349	13	132	.000

a. Predictors: (Constants), ethnicity, married, income, divorced, gender, generation, age, mother's highest level of education, , no. of children, father's highest level of education

b. Predictors: (Constants), ethnicity, married, income, divorced, gender, generation, age, mother's highest level of education, , no. of children, father's highest level of education, institutional and goal commitment (importance), institutional and goal commitment items, academic and intellectual development reversed item, Hispanic faculty interactions, reversed peer interactions, Black peer interactions, family support, faculty concern, faculty concern reversed items, institutional and goal commitment (confidence), Black faculty interactions, Hispanic/White peer interactions, White faculty interactions, academic and intellectual development

Research Question 2

What institutional factors as measured by the SIIS are related to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students?

To test the research questions, correlations were computed. Table 8 indicates the degree of relationship between self-efficacy and peer group interactions, faculty interactions, faculty concern for students, academic and intellectual development, and institutional and goal commitment. Self-efficacy was found to be significantly correlated with institutional and goal commitment measured by the importance of getting good grades and graduating from college ($r = .80$, $p < .001$) and confidence in the choice of college and major ($r = .45$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that students who are self-

efficacious are more likely to persist in college. Moderate positive correlations were seen between self-efficacy and academic and intellectual development items ($r = .35$, $p < .001$) and faculty concern for student development and teaching ($r = .26$, $p < .001$). Higher self-efficacy was associated with greater academic and intellectual development and lower negative faculty concern for students.

Table 7

Analysis of Variance: Model Summary of Personal and Institutional Factors and Self-Efficacy

Model		Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.525	10	152	.429	.930[a]
	Residual	51.475	145	.335		
	Total	52.999	155			
2	Regression	35.283	23	1.534	11.930	.000[b]
	Residual	17.716	132	.134		
	Total	52.999	155			

a. Predictors: (Constants), ethnicity, married, income, divorced, gender, generation, age, mother's highest level of education, , no. of children, father's highest level of education

b. Predictors: (Constants), ethnicity, married, income, divorced, gender, generation, age, mother's highest level of education, , no. of children, father's highest level of education, institutional and goal commitment (importance), institutional and goal commitment items, academic and intellectual development reversed item, Hispanic faculty interactions, reversed peer interactions, Black peer interactions, family support, faculty concern, faculty concern reversed items, institutional and goal commitment (confidence), Black faculty interactions, Hispanic/White peer interactions, White faculty interactions, academic and intellectual development

Table 8

Correlation between Institutional Factors and Self-Efficacy

Variables	Correlation	*p*
Hispanic/White Peer Interactions	.184*	.02
Black Peer interactions	.213**	<.01
Black/White/Hispanic Peer Interactions	.027	.74
Black Faculty Interactions	.147	.06
White Faculty Interactions	.160*	.04
Hispanic Faculty Interactions	.103	.19
Negative Faculty Concern for Student	.256**	<.01
Positive Faculty Concern for Student Reversed items	-.024	.76
Academic and Intellectual Development	.346**	< .01
Academic and Intellectual Development Reversed item	-.041	.60
Institutional and Goal Commitment		
Importance	.790**	<.01
Confidence	.452**	<.01

Note. **p < .01. * p < .05.
Listwise n = 162
Higher scores on all institutional factors indicate more self-efficacy.

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to identify the degree of relationship between self-efficacy and peer group interactions, faculty interactions, faculty concern for students' development and teaching, institutional and goal commitment, and family support. The institutional factors explained an additional 63.7% variance of self-efficacy after controlling for the personal factors listed in research question one, $F(13,132) = 19.35$, $p < .001$. The full model was significant, $F(23,132) = 11.93$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 66.6\%$. Institutional and goal commitment items, measured by the importance of getting good grades and graduating from college ($p < .001$) and confidence

in the choice of college and major (p = .033) may be considered strong predictors of persistence. See Tables 5 and 6.

Research Question 3

Are there differences between self-identified Black men and Black women on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college?

This research question inquired about differences regarding students' perceptions of personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college by gender. Independent samples t-Test was conducted at $p < .05$. As shown in Table 9, there was one significant difference found among the institutional factors; institutional and goal commitment subscale only (p = .030). Women more strongly agreed that the importance of getting good grades and graduating from college is related to persistence in college (M = 4.85) than men (M = 4.70). Generally, both men and women had similar profiles on the institutional factors related to persistence. On the average, men (M = 3.53) agreed somewhat more than women (M = 3.28) that there is a relationship between the development of personal relationships with their Hispanic and White peers (p = .062) and persistence in college.

Table 9

Independent Samples t-Tests for Personal and Institutional Factors and Gender

	Men[a]		Women[b]		
Factors	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*p*
Peer Interactions					
Hispanic/White	3.53	1.02	3.28	0.94	.062
Black	3.51	1.08	3.45	1.07	.671
Black/White/Hispanic	3.65	0.95	3.50	1.01	.267
Faculty Interactions					
Black	3.25	1.22	3.14	1.18	.504
White	3.31	1.20	3.20	1.09	.471
Hispanic	3.80	1.19	3.13	1.05	.711
Faculty Concern					
Negative	3.03	1.26	2.77	1.15	.862
Positive	3.61	1.11	3.59	1.05	.116
Academic and Intellectual Development	3.74	0.88	3.79	0.86	.668
Institutional and Goal Commitment					
Importance	4.70	0.66	4.85	0.40	.030*
Confidence	4.17	1.02	4.30	0.91	.339
Family Support	4.08	1.07	4.10	0.89	.854
Self Efficacy	4.71	0.63	4.79	0.44	.264

Note. a. Sample sizes ranged from 80-81.
b. Sample sizes ranged between148-153.
*p < .05.

Research Question 4

Are there differences among the Black ethnic groups identified on the SIIS on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college?

This research question tested whether students' perception on the personal and institutional factors that relate to persistence in college vary by Black ethnicity. Due to the small number of Nigerian (n = 4), Cuban (n = 1), Puerto Rican (n = 1) and the combined other (n = 29,) students in the study, the categories used were: African American (n = 77), Haitian (n = 58), Jamaican (n = 39), Trinidadian & Tobagan (n =15, and Bahamian (n = 11). Table 10 displays the analysis of variance for ethnicity and personal and institutional factors on survey scale. The data show no significant differences in the perception of the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence in college based on ethnicity. Generally, the top five ethnic groups described above had similar profiles on the personal and institutional factors related to persistence. On the average, Trinidadians & Tobagans (M = 3.70) agreed more than Bahamians (M = 2.83) that there is a relationship between the development of personal relationships with their Hispanic and White peers (p = .72) and persistence in college. All of the five ethnic groups strongly agreed to the importance of institutional and goal commitment (p = .06) as a strong predictor of persistence, with Jamaicans highest (M = 4.90) and Trinidadians & Tobagans lowest (M = 4.46).

Analysis of Open-Ended Question

This section presents the analysis for the following open-ended question:

In your opinion, what is the primary motivation for finishing your undergraduate degree program?

The information from the survey responses was gathered from SPSS, then sorted and recorded using content analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). By counting the frequency of occurrence of important words and phrases categories were established to identify the emerging themes. Common themes that emerged were: (a) self-pride/personal goal, (b) professional aspiration/career, (c) motivation to support family, (d) desire to have financial independence/better job, (e) to serve community, (f) opportunity to go to college, (g) being first-generation college student, and (h) prove to family the value of higher education. A tally frequency for each category was calculated as a percent based on the total number of responses and the number of participants. The most common response for the primary motivation among Black seniors for finishing undergraduate degree program was associated with their self-pride/personal goal (41.1%, $n = 74$). Verbatim responses of the students in the sample are discussed and Table 11 summarizes the categories and frequency of their responses.

Self-Pride/Personal Goal. The students' most common response to the open-ended question was concerning their self-pride/personal goal. One student noted that the primary motivation for finishing an undergraduate degree is, "Is to fulfill [a] promise I made to myself." Another said, "To further my goal." Several of the responses were, "Myself," "To better myself," "Personal satisfaction," "Personal goal," and "Self pride." An isolated and interesting response was, "My husband has four degrees and I would like to have at least one."

Professional Aspiration/Career. The second most common responses from this group of students were related to their professional aspiration and the drive to have a career. "My professional aspiration. Having a degree to start gaining financial independence." "Better career opportunities." "To increase my chances of pursuing a desirable career path."

Motivation to Support Family. Comments from this group of students centered on their desire to support their family, especially their mothers, to set a standard for their children to follow, and to live up to their family's/parents' expectations. Often repeated comments were: "To support my family," "Role model for my children," "My mother," and "To support my little brother." One student commented, "Not to end up like my father." Another response was, "Family expectations."

Desire to have Financial Independence/Better Job. The fourth most common motivation for completing an undergraduate degree that students gave was concerning the relationship between the acquisition of higher education and financial independence. "I did it for me. And of course to be financially stable in my life at some point and the degree will help me achieve that." "A degree will provide better employment opportunities."

The Desire to Serve Community. For a few students (2.7%, $n = 5$), motivation for completing an undergraduate college degree involved giving back to their community. Some students wish to share in helping other people achieve their goals. Their comments were, **"**The satisfaction of helping others to achieve their goals to better themselves. In my opinion, there is not an age limit to finishing your education." "The degree becomes

one thing I can identify with as well as wanting to embrace new experiences so I can share it with others." "To make a difference in my community."

Opportunity to go to College. Statements relating to college access, opportunity and success were repeated by this group of students. "I want to succeed." "More opportunity for myself and family." "To afford myself the opportunity to pursue graduate level studies and increase my marketability."

> My mom always thought [taught] me to take advantage of all available resources, to be the best person I can possibly be regardless of your circumstances, income or race. Until then you cannot say you have tried to succeed. College was an option available to me to be the best I can be.

Being First-Generation College Student. "To be the first to attend a 4-year university and graduating on time without outside influences or obstacles hindering this accomplishment." "I want to be an example to young people in my family, and to go beyond what my mother was able to."

> Being a first-generation college student, I feel it is important for me to finish my undergraduate degree program to set an example for the younger members of my family that are also thinking about obtaining a college degree.

> My primary motivation for finishing my undergraduate degree is for the future generation in my family to be encouraged to complete a degree regardless of what they have been through and regardless of our family history. As well as to be able to support my family once I have completed my degree.

Prove to Family the Value of Higher Education. Although to a lesser extent than other themes discussed in this section, to prove to family that higher education is valuable is a primary motivator to this group of students**.** Responses to this open-ended question were, "Proving to my family there are greater things in higher learning of education." "I value education." "To gain something that no one can take away from me, education."

Table 10

Analysis of Variance for Personal and Institutional Factors and Ethnicity

Factors	*df*	*F*	*p*
Peer Interactions			
Hispanic/White	4, 193	2.19	.072
Black	4, 193	1.86	.120
Black/White/Hispanic	4, 192	1.79	.132
Faculty Interactions			
Black	4, 189	1.01	.404
White	4, 191	0.85	.497
Hispanic	4, 192	1.55	.191
Faculty Concern			
Negative	4, 193	.651	.627
Positive	4, 193	.854	.493
Academic and Intellectual Development	4, 194	1.84	.122
Academic and Intellectual Development			
Reversed item	4, 194	0.53	.715
Institutional and Goal Commitment			
Importance	4, 194	2.31	.059
Confidence	4, 194	0.88	.479
Family Support	4, 194	1.90	.111
Self Efficacy	4, 194	0.23	.923

Note. Mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 11

Frequency Response by Category: Black Students' Primary Motivation for Finishing Undergraduate Degree

Category	Frequency	Participants' Responses Percent
Self-Pride/ Personal Goal	74	41.1
Professional Aspiration /Career	34	18.9
Motivation to Support Family	29	16.1
Financial Independence/Better Job	27	15.0
To Serve Community	5	2.7
Opportunity to go to College	4	2.2
First-Generation College Student	4	2.2
Prove to Family the Value of Higher Education	3	1.8
Total	180	100.0

Summary

This chapter reported the findings of this study including narrowing the sample, description of participants, factor analysis, and survey results and interpretation of the data collected to answer the research questions.

Descriptive statistics were used to establish the personal and institutional demographic profile of the sample. The demographic data revealed that the five largest Black ethnic groups were African American (32.8%), Haitian (24.7%), Jamaican (16.6%), Trinidadian & Tobagan (4.7%), and Bahamian (4.7%). Most of the participants

were women (65.5 %). Nearly half (46%) of the participants were between the ages of 19 - 24 and the other (54%) were 25 years of age and older. The majority (77.4%) were single with no children or dependents (70.8%). Nearly half of the participants were first generation college students with parents' having high school diploma as their highest level of education. Most (78.7%) of the 79% full-time students, took classes at the university's main campus. Eighty-eight percent of the participants were off-campus commuter students. Finally, the themes that emerged as reasons for Black students' primary motivation for finishing undergraduate degree program were: (a) self-pride/personal goal, (b) professional aspiration/career, (c) motivation to support family, (d) desire to have financial independence/better job, (e) to serve community, (f) opportunity to go to college, (g) being first-generation college student, and (h) prove to family the value of higher education. Principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation confirmed the reliability of the nine scales (52 items) on the online survey, which form the personal and institutional variables. These items loaded on to 14 factors with their Cronbach alpha ranging between .74 and .95.

The research questions served as basis for the presentation of the results of the data analysis. For research question #1 correlation analysis revealed no significant relationship between personal demographic factors and self-efficacy. However, self-efficacy was significantly correlated with family support (r =.28, $p < .001$). No statistically significant variance was found between the independent variables and the dependent variable (self-efficacy), F (10, 145), = .43, $p < .930$, $R^2 = .029$. This combination of personal factors is weak in predicting persistence.

To test research question #2 correlations were computed. Self-efficacy was found to be significantly correlated with institutional and goal commitment measured by the importance of getting good grades and graduating from college ($r = .80$, $p < .001$) and confidence in the choice of college and major ($r = .45$, $p < .001$) with moderate correlation. These findings indicate that students who are self-efficacious are more likely to persist in college. Low positive correlations were seen between self-efficacy and academic and intellectual development items ($r = .35$, $p < .001$) and faculty concern for student development and teaching ($r = .26$, $p < .001$). Statistically significant variance was found between the independent variables and the dependent variable, F (23, 132), = 11.43, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .637$. The combination of institutional factors accounts for 64% of the variability of self-efficacy of persistence. Institutional and goal commitment items, measured by the importance of getting good grades and graduating from college ($p < .001$) and confidence in the choice of college and major ($p = .033$) may be considered strong predictors of college persistence.

Analysis of variance and independent samples *t*-tests were used to answer research question #3 involving students' perceptions on differences of personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence based on gender and ethnicity. There was one significant difference found among institutional factors; Institutional and goal commitment subscale ($M = 4.85$, $p = .030$). Women more strongly agreed that the importance of getting good grades and graduating from college is related to persistence in college. Generally, both men and women agreed that all personal and institutional factors on the survey are related to self-efficacy of persistence. On the average, men ($M = 3.53$) agreed more than women ($M = 3.28$) that there is a relationship

between the development of personal relationships with their Hispanic and White peers (p = .062) and self-efficacy of persistence in college. The data showed no significant differences in the perception of the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence in college, based on ethnicity.

The findings of this study, limitations of the study, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research are discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This final chapter of this dissertation summarizes the study and discusses the research findings as they relate to the relevant literature. Implications for retention practice, study limitations, and recommendations for future research are presented.

Summary of the Study

While undergraduate enrollment of all racial/ethnic groups attending United States public and private institutions of higher education during 1999 - 2009 has increased by 39%, Black students who make up 20.1% of the college student population, continue to have the lowest 6-year graduation rate (39%) of all racial/ethnic groups (NCES, 2011). In 2010, compared to men (56%) women earned 61% of the undergraduate degrees sought nationally (NCES, 2011). In 2008 - 2009, compared to White women and White men, Black women earned11.3% (White women, 81.6%) and Black men earned 8.8% (White men, 82.8%) of all bachelor's degrees awarded (NCES, 2010).

In spite of increases in undergraduate enrollment and graduation rates across all racial and ethnic groups, Black students still face a number of personal and institutional challenges that relate to their social and academic experiences (Tinto, 1993) which can hinder their persistence in college (Guiffrida, 2006). Black students and men have the lowest retention rates among all racial groups and between the sexes (IPEDS, 2011).

According to the retention literature, undergraduate students' retention rate at 4-year universities is 57% (NCES, 2011). FIU's Office of Planning and Institutional Research reports the 4-year retention rate of the university as 54.2%

(https://opiereports.fiu.edu/retention.html, 2009-2010); a bit lower than the national average. Six-year retention rate among the racial groups was: Asians (33.3%), Hispanics (66.3%), Whites (41.7%), and Blacks (9.3%; FIU Access and Equity Report, 2011). Compared to other groups in this university, Black students' retention rates fall short.

The literature does not distinguish amongst the different Black ethnic groups, but often uses the designation Black and African American interchangeably (IPEDS, 2011). Therefore, a gap exists in the retention literature on the perceptions of Black ethnic groups (e.g., African Caribbeans) to factors that influence their persistence in college. This study is significant because the quantitative and other descriptive data narrow the gap of research on factors relating to self-efficacy of persistence in college among Black ethnic groups in a predominantly HSI.

This investigation of the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students derived its foundation from Tinto's theory (1975,1997) of social and academic integration in college and Guiffrida's (2003, 2005) model of the effectiveness of cultural relationships while in college. The study was further informed by research involving the relationship of self-efficacy and academic outcomes which assert that self-efficacy is a strong predictor of persistence in college (Ayiku, 2005; Bandura, 1986, 1977, 1997; Reid, 2007). This research advances the applicability of academic and social integration theories among Black ethnic students in a HSI.

In addition, this study investigated whether Black students' perceptions differ on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college, based on gender and ethnicity. Using the SIIS, data were collected

and analyzed to address the research questions. The primary research question was: What factors, personal and institutional, relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students? Subsidiary questions were:

1. What personal factors as measured by the SIIS are related to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students?
2. What institutional factors as measured by the SIIS are related to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students?
3. Are there differences between self-identified Black men and Black women on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college?
4. Are there differences among the Black ethnic groups identified on the SIIS on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college?

Discussion of the Findings

Descriptive demographics revealed that the majority of the participants were female and older than 25 years of age. These characteristics are consistent with national data on the gender and age of undergraduate college students, where retention is higher among women than men, and it is projected that by 2017 there will be a 20% rise in enrollment of students aged 25 and older (NCES, 2010). Family characteristics of participants show that most of their parents: mothers' (60%) and fathers' (63%) highest

level of education ranged from having a bachelor's degree to a high school diploma and below. This accounts for 46.1% of the participants being "first generation" college students. Similar research have found that the increased enrollment in higher education institutions in the United States may be attributed to "non-traditional" including "first generation" students like the Black ethnic groups in this study attending college (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Hagedorn, 2005; Tanaka, 2002).

In this study, the highest number of students identified themselves as Black/African American (32.8%, *n* = 77), followed by Black/Haitian (24.7%, *n* = 58), Black/Jamaican (39%, *n* = 16.6), Black/Trinidadian & Tobagan (6.4%, *n* = 15), and Black/Bahamian (4.7%, *n* = 11). The revelation of the ethnic identification among Black students found in this research suggests that Black ethnicities are as varied as, and even more than, the racial majority and minorities found in the retention literature. Therefore, it would be more representative when reporting statistics of students of Black descent (IPEDS, 2011) to include Black races/ethnicities such as the U.S. Census (2010) does rather than designating all Black racial/ethnic groups as Black/African American.

This study, in an exploratory factor analysis of the SIIS, confirmed the reliability of the nine constructs, which form the personal and institutional variables and indicate that the survey is a good measure of the factors in the literature that relate to undergraduate students' academic and social integration with peers, faculty, and the institutional environment and retention in college (French & Oakes, 2004; Guiffrida 2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Pasceralla & Terenzini, 1980). The personal and institutional variables are: (a) peer group interactions, (b) faculty interactions, (c) faculty concern for student development and teaching, (d) academic and intellectual

development, (e) institutional and goal commitment, (f) family support, (g) self-efficacy, and (h) background characteristics.

Discussion of Research Questions

Research question 1. *What personal factors as measured by the SIIS are related to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students?*

Correlation analysis revealed no significant relationship between self-efficacy and personal demographic factors (ethnicity, married, income, divorced, gender, generation, age, mother's, highest level of education, father's highest level of education, and number of children). These findings are not consistent with the variables (e.g., being first-generation college, age, gender, parents' income, ethnicity, geographic location, and having children while attending college) which were identified in the retention literature as personal factors that relate to persistence in college (Cabrera, Burkum, & La Nasa, 2003; Eunhee, Newton, Downey, & Benton, 2010; Hagedorn, Maxwell, &Hampton, 2002; McDonald & Graham, 2001). The difference in the findings of this study may be due to the characteristics of the participants. The study's sample was a small diverse Black ethnic group of students in a predominantly Hispanic learning community, whereas most of the research in the literature involved mostly White and minority samples in PWIs or PBIs. In this study, the majority of the students (79%) were commuter students (88%) attending classes at the university's main campus in the south Florida community where they live with both their teachers and their peers who are mostly of Hispanic cultures, values, and practices. They are not forced to be assimilated in their learning community (Tinto, 1997). Research has investigated African American male freshmen

from community colleges (Hagedorn, et al., 2002), ethnic minorities who included Black/African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students in a PWI (Rich, 2009), Black women in a PBI (Schwartz & Washington, 1999), and African American students in PWIs and PBIs (Allen, 1992). Yet, no research was found about the perceptions of factors that relate to persistence in college among students of different Black ethnic groups. The results of this study suggest that this group of college seniors in a predominantly Hispanic 4-year university may have had different personal and social experiences than Black/African American students referred to in the literature.

An expected finding of this study is the significant correlation ($r = .28$, $p < .001$) of self-efficacy with family support. Family support is categorized as "my family encouraged me to attend college," "my family was financially supportive during my college career," "the expectations from my family was that I complete a college degree," and "my family provided emotional support and encouragement to complete my degree." The literature suggests that students with families with higher family income and a strong family structure (two-parent homes) are more likely to stay enrolled and finish a college degree than students who have low socio-economic backgrounds and weak family structure (Cabrera, et al., 2003; Schmidt, 2007; Wilson, 2007). This study adds to the discussion on family as a personal variable stating that there is a relationship between family support and Black students' college persistence. Black students whose families expect them to complete a college degree and encourage them financially and emotionally are more self-efficacious.

Research question 2. *What institutional factors as measured by the SIIS are related to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college among self-identified Black undergraduate students?*

Self-efficacy was found to be significantly correlated ($r = .79$, $p < .01$) with institutional and goal commitment measured by "it is important for me to graduate from college" and "getting good grades is important to me." "I am confident that I made the right decision to attend this university" and "I am confident that I made the right decision to choose this major were moderately correlated ($r = .45$, $p < .01$) with self-efficacy. Similar to the retention literature (Bandura, 1993; Hackett, 1995), these findings indicate that students who are self-efficacious are motivated to master challenging academic tasks and to persist in college. Also, moderate correlations were seen between self-efficacy and academic and intellectual development items ($r = .35$, $p < .001$) and between self-efficacy and faculty concern for student development and teaching ($r = .26$, $p < .01$). Academic and intellectual development fell under the categories of "satisfaction with the extent of my intellectual development since enrolling in this university," "academic experience has had a positive influence on my academic growth and interest in my ideas," "satisfaction with my academic experience at the university," and "I am more likely to attend a cultural event now than I was before coming to this university." Results of this study suggest that Black students' academic and social experiences while attending FIU, an HSI, may have had a positive influence on their academic, social, professional, and personal growth.

This research identified the degree of relationship between independent variables (peer group interactions, faculty interactions, faculty concern for students' development

and teaching, institutional and goal commitment, and family support) and the dependent variable (self-efficacy). The data indicated that a combination of these personal (2.9%) and institutional factors (64%) account for 67% of the variability of self-efficacy of persistence. The institutional variable, institutional and goal commitment may be considered a strong predictor of persistence in college, adding to the list that (Guiffrida, 2005a) suggests (experiences with faculty, relationships with family and friends, and involvement in African American student organizations) influenced African American students' persistence in college.

Research question 3. *Are there differences between self-identified Black men and Black women on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college?*

Several studies have investigated factors that relate to Black males' and Black females' persistence in college (Bush & Bush, 2005; Hagedorn, et al., 2002; Harper, 2010; NCES, 2010; Schwartz & Washington, 1999). However, what was not evident in the literature is whether there are differences in the perceptions of the factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence by gender. This study answers this query as an analysis of the data indicated that both men and women agreed that all personal and institutional factors on the survey (SIIS) are related to self-efficacy of persistence. On the average, men ($M = 3.53$) agreed more than women ($M = 3.28$) that there is a relationship between the development of personal relationships with their Hispanic and White peers ($p = .062$) and persistence in college. These results support research studies which suggest that in a diverse ethnic community students are more likely to persist and succeed when they are socially connected with students different from themselves (Terenzini, 2005), rather than

when they feel isolated or discriminated from other students (Allen, 1992; Rowley, 2000). Furthermore, men's self-efficacy of persistence is related to social persuasion, vicarious learning, and mastery of experiences (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1990). The college achievement and experiences of 32 high-achieving African American student leaders in PWIs reported that college success was achieved as their involvement in student organizations was supported and validated by their same-race male and female peers; they were never accused of "acting White" (Harper, 2010).

In this study, one significant difference was found among the institutional factors. Institutional and goal commitment ($M = 4.85$, $p = .030$) was related to persistence in college. This finding gives empirical support to research such as that of African American women in a HBI that suggested that attachment to college is a strong predictor of academic outcomes (persistence in college; Schwartz &Washington, 1999) which are largely related to feelings of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). In this study, slightly more than men, women strongly agreed that the importance of getting good grades and graduating from college is related to self-efficacy of persistence in college. This researcher believes that, with the increase of non-traditional student enrollment in college, women enter college with a determination to become self-actualized and self-reliant. For women, academic success results in not only cognitive and intellectual, but social and economic benefits (e.g., improved family's quality of life and better community). Consequently, women take advantage of higher education opportunities and stay focused on the quality of their education (Hines, 1997). The participants' responses concerning the primary motivation for finishing an undergraduate degree, suggested that women as well as men might be motivated by providing support to their

families, achieving a career, and gaining financial independence. These findings contribute to the body of research studies concerning variables that are significant to self-efficacy of persistence in college by gender. The findings in this study also suggest that on the average, men (M = 3.53) agreed somewhat more than women (M = 3.28) that there is a relationship between college persistence and the development of personal relationships with their Hispanic and White peers (p = .062).

Research question 4. *Are there differences among the Black ethnic groups identified on the SIIS on the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year in college?*

An analysis of the data in this study showed no significant differences in the Black students' perceptions of the personal and institutional factors that relate to self-efficacy of persistence in college based on ethnicity. Students of the five largest Black ethnic groups (African American, Haitian, Jamaican, Trinidadian & Tobagan, and Bahamian) selected for this analysis strongly agreed (M = 4.46 – 4.90, p = .059) that there is a relationship between self-efficacy of persistence in college and institutional and goal commitment measured by the importance of getting good grades and graduating from college. This study contributes to the retention literature as it suggests another variable (institutional and goal commitment) that is a good predictor of persistence among Black ethnic groups of students.

When descriptive statistics for each ethnicity were compared, students from all ethnicities agreed that interactions with peers of all racial/ethnic groups are related to their self-efficacy of persistence in college. However, Bahamian students least agreed (M = 2.83, p = .072) that the development of close relationships among their Hispanic and

White peers related to self-efficacy of persistence in college. Except for Haitians, students of all ethnicity strongly agreed that family support is related to college success. This result might be because Haitian parents are known to meet poor academic performance with stringent alternatives such as sending their young people back to Haiti as a form of punishment (Rennalls, 2006). On the other hand, Haitians are trained to achieve their goals despite obstacles (Bibb & Casimir, 1996). These findings serve to narrow the gap of factors that relate to persistence that exists in the retention literature of other Black ethnic groups' academic and social experiences while in college.

Open-ended question. *In your opinion, what is the primary motivation for finishing your undergraduate degree program?*

Eight common themes were identified by the sample in this study as primary motivators for finishing an undergraduate degree program: (a) self-pride/personal goal, (b) motivation for family, (c) professional aspiration/career, (d) desire to have financial independence/better job, (e) the desire to serve community, (f) gratitude for the opportunity to go to college, (g) being first-generation college students, and (h) prove to family the value of higher education. The most common response was associated with their self-pride/personal goal, followed by support for family, financial independence, professional aspiration, community, and being first generation college students. These responses were somewhat similar to personal factors, in the literature, that relate to persistence in college. For example, drive to achieve (Portes & Stepick, 1987; Schmidt, 2007), family support (Wilson, 2007), individual attributes (e.g., self-efficacy; Tinto, 1993), the desire to serve community (Rennalls, 2006), and seeking educational college opportunity and gainful employment (Nwadiora, 1996) were variables found in the

literature that predict Black students' persistence in college. This study confirmed that these variables are among the personal and institutional factors that relate to persistence in college among Black ethnic groups of students.

Implications for Retention Practice

The implications for retention practice drawn from this study, address the significance of personal and institutional factors in relationship to Black ethnic undergraduate students' perceptions of themselves, their social and academic interactions with their peers, faculty, and the academic learning environment in general. These perceptions and experiences ultimately influence their commitment to the institution and persistence in college.

Provide more Faculty-Student Interactions

The research literature as well as this study revealed that self-efficacy is significantly correlated with institutional and goal commitment and is a strong predictor of persistence and relate to students' decision to persist or depart from college (Cabrera, et al., 2003; Eunhee, et al., 2010; Portes & Stepick, 1987; Schmidt, 2007; Tinto, 1993; Wilson, 2007). This being so, McGregor's (2007) strategy could be practiced by this institution. That is, to provide mentors who could coach students to persevere and finish their college degree and to encourage them, verbally or vicariously, during the pursuit of their college studies.

This study found that both Black men and Black women agreed that all personal and institutional factors on the survey (SIIS) were related to their self-efficacy of persistence. Since high-achieving African American men do well in college when they have strong relationships with faculty, heightened sense of self-efficacy, and better peer

relationships (Reid, 2007), FIU should be commended and encouraged to continue to develop strategies that promote faculty interactions, faculty concern for students' development and teaching, and academic and intellectual development among Black ethnic students. Teaching faculty could intentionally, consider their in- and out-of-classroom interactions and academic advising with Black students and teaching methods to positively influence students' personal growth, values, and attitudes toward career goals and aspirations. Also, student affairs administrators, counselors, and coaches are encouraged to provide opportunities for campus-wide leadership in addressing issues (e.g., internalized bread-winners' role, childcare services, financial aid that are not loans, reduced cost for food while on campus, and social events; Schwartz & Washington, 1999) that can challenge Black men and women during their academic experience.

Moore (2006) found that many schools provide counselors and coordinate multi-faceted activities for African American students but fail to promote career knowledge, or allow for career explorations and counseling beyond traditional professions. FIU must be commended for already engaging students in service learning, summer internships, study abroad, and faculty-supervised undergraduate research. It is not known if Black students are participating in these activities; a subject worth investigation.

Provide Family Support Activities

Guiffrida's (2005) model of how cultural differences affect relationships with others at college established that family provides academic and financial support to Black college students at PWIs. In that study, first-generation high-achievers attributed their college success and psychological adjustments to their family. Likewise, Maramba and Palmer (2011) advocated for the importance of family support systems and students'

connectedness with their community while in college as critical to their retention and persistence. These researchers asserted that families can provide (a) a source of motivation, (b) role models, and (c) critical facilitators to academic success. This study had similar findings in that most participants strongly agreed that families (a) encouraged them to attend college, (b) expected them to complete college, (c) provided emotional support and encouragement to complete college, and (d) were financially supportive. It is recommended that at freshmen orientation and at various points in students' academic careers, student affairs personnel, instead of only conducting informational sessions about the institution, could include topics and panel discussions on "the role of family and friends in college adjustment." Furthermore, such types of activities could also be held at off-campus town hall meetings, school assemblies and open-houses with parents and high school seniors (Maramba & Palmer, 2011). This researcher also suggests that FIU could consider providing campus events, apart from graduation, that involve family reunions (e.g., parent week, parents' breakfast/luncheon, homecoming games, and picnics).

Seek Student Feedback Concerning Undergraduate Experiences

This study identified variables or institutional factors on the SIIS (e.g., peer interactions, faculty interactions, and institutional and goal commitment) that relate to Black undergraduate students' experiences as they persist in college. At FIU, and particularly the Student Affairs Department of Multicultural Programs and Services, the SIIS could be used periodically, at the end of a semester or academic year, to gather information on similar groups of Black students' academic and social experiences. The findings could be shared with administrators, faculty and staff, and student affairs

specialists, to inform decisions regarding support for program improvements. It might be necessary to (a) examine the university's philosophy and mission to ensure diversity inclusion, (b) assess teaching staff ability, and training to assist them to better interact with Black students, (c) assess the Black students' academic and social readiness by arranging early visits to the institution and establishing rapport (Harper, 2010).

Provide more Opportunities for Interracial/ethnic Peer Interaction

Although Black men are less likely than women to meet with faculty and be involved in extracurricular activities (Bush &Bush, 2005), in Harper's and Kuykendall's, (2012) study the men spoke fondly of participating in collaborative relationships with women in study groups, planning campus activities, community initiatives, and student protests. Activities such as these should be ongoing for Black men and their Hispanic and White peers. In this study, Black men strongly agreed that there is a relationship between the development of personal relationships with their Hispanic and White peers and self-efficacy of persistence in college.

Other ways to provide significant social and academic support to students of various Black ethnicities in college could be to encourage students to have membership in social fraternity and clubs on campus, such as Black Student Unions and the National Society of Black Engineers. Additionally, these fraternities could schedule Black top-achievers (e.g., college presidents, business gurus, entertainers, and students leaders) to tell their stories of how they navigated college successfully (Harper & Harris, 2010). Similarly, Harper's and Kuykendall's (2012) theory of educational outcomes of engagement supports leadership in student organizations and established the benefits Black male students' may derive from their participation. These included (a) resolving

masculine identity conflicts, (b) negotiating peer support for achievement, (c) developing political acumen for success in professional settings where Blacks are underrepresented, (d) acquiring social capital and access to resources and exclusive networks, (e) crafting productive responses to racist stereotypes, and (f) overcoming previous educational and socioeconomic disadvantages.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study are related to sample size. The sample (n = 236) represented 15.7% of the Black undergraduate students enrolled at this large urban, Hispanic-serving, public, research university, FIU. Furthermore, the sample size was reduced due to incomplete data provided by respondents on the survey instrument. Also, responses among Black ethnic groups were very often limited to as few as one. This shortfall limits generalization of the ethnic groups' results beyond participants in this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Replication of this study is recommended using a larger population of Black ethnic groups in other Florida universities as well as other universities in the United States. Larger populations, and especially larger samples of Black ethnic groups, would enhance generalizability and allow for institutional and ethnic group comparisons. Studies involving larger ethnic samples would be important to conduct because past retention literature has referred to Black students interchangeably with African Americans; but this study shows that there are significantly different Black ethnic groups. This is especially true of the identity of Blacks in South Florida who are found to be as different among themselves in values and cultures as the other racial groups who

surround them (Dunn, 1995). Further, the perceptions of academic success have been shown to vary among Black ethnic groups whose academic performance may be influenced by their immigration status (Ogbu, 1990). A qualitative study to investigate the relationship of personal and institutional factors on Black students' self-efficacy of persistence in college could provide a more holistic and in depth analysis of individuals' beliefs and perceptions.

In addition, a longitudinal investigation of students as entering freshmen to final year in college could be useful to compare the relationship between self-efficacy of persistence and personal and institutional factors strategically (e.g., at the end of each semester or each school year) to determine at which point, if at all, the concepts of self-efficacy of persistence may be altered or changed among Black ethnic groups. This type of investigation could provide information on the academic and social success of completers (graduating from college) in relation to non-completers (drop out of college before graduation).

Conclusion

While undergraduate student enrollment and graduation rates have increased in the United States higher education institutions, Black students and Black men when compared to Black women continue to have the lowest college persistence among all racial groups and gender (IPEDS, 2011). Both student and institution are responsible to urgently and intentionally make efforts to change the academic and social interaction in college to improve persistence and degree attainment among the Black ethnic groups. Whether through fostering more attractive curricular and extra-curricular activities, peer and faculty engagements, increasing student leadership and involvement with on-campus

clubs and organizations, encouraging external relations with family and community, providing counselors and mentors to encourage students verbally or vicariously during stressful situations, or rethinking institutional policies and practices to be more relevant for diverse student populations. These decisions have practical implications that will affect Black students' self-efficacy of persistence in college.

This study investigated personal and institutional variables or factors that relate to Black undergraduate students' experiences at a large Hispanic-serving, urban, public research university in south Florida. The study also inquired about differences in students' perceptions of factors as they persist in college, based on gender and ethnicity.

The results confirm the reliability of the factors as good measures for predicting students' academic and social integration with peers, faculty, and the institutional environment and retention in college. Even though the results may not be generalized to other universities, the study's methods could be replicated in other institutions to assess Black students' needs there and to provide programs that relate to those students' academic and social success.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Student Institutional Integration Survey (SIIS)

1. Student Institutional Integration Survey (SIIS)

This questionnaire is part of an undergraduate student research study concerning student experiences as they persist in college. It asks about how you spend your time in school and about those with whom you come in contact with during your college experience, including faculty and peers. It also asks about your employment as well as your social and cultural activities. The usefulness of this or any other survey depends on the thoughtful responses of those who are asked to complete it. Your participation is very important and I thank you in advance for your help. It may be answered in approximately 10-15 minutes. If you would like a synopsis of the results of this study, please provide an email at the end of the survey where the results can be sent to you.

Instructions: Using the following scale, check the appropriate number in the space provided to indicate how each personal and institutional factor below relates to your persistence in college. Please rate your agreement using the following statements:

1= *Strongly Disagree* 2= *Disagree* 3= *Agree a little* 4= *Agree* 5= *Strongly Agree*

Personal and Institutional Factors

	1	2	3	4	5
Peer Group Interactions					
1. Since coming to this university, I have developed close personal relationships with other Black students					
2. Since coming to this university, I have developed close personal relationship with White students					
3. Since coming to this university, I have developed close personal relationship with Hispanic students					
4.The Black student friendships I have developed at the university have been personally satisfying					
5. The White student friendships I have developed at the university have been personally satisfying					
6. The Hispanic student friendships I have developed at the university have been personally satisfying					
7. My interpersonal relationships with other Black students have had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest in ideas					

8 My interpersonal relationships with White students have had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest in ideas					
9. My interpersonal relationships with Hispanic students have had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest in ideas					
10. It has been difficult for me to meet and make friends with students besides those in my Black peer group					
11. Few of the Black students I know would be willing to listen to me and help me if I had a personal problem					
12. Few of the White students I know would be willing to listen to me and help me if I had a personal problem					
13. Few of the Hispanic students I know would be willing to listen to me and help me if I had a personal problem					
14. Most students at this university have values and attitudes different from my own					
Interactions with Black Faculty					
15. My non-classroom interactions with Black faculty have had a positive influence on my personal growth, values, and attitudes					
16. My non-classroom interactions with Black faculty have had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest in ideas					
17. My non-classroom interactions with Black faculty have had a positive influence on my career goals and aspirations					
18. Since coming to this university, I have developed a close, personal relationship with at least one Black faculty member					
19. I am satisfied with the opportunities to meet and interact informally with Black faculty members					

Interactions with White Faculty					
20. My non-classroom interactions with White faculty have had a positive influence on my personal growth, values, and attitudes					
21. My non-classroom interactions with White faculty have had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest in ideas					
22. My non-classroom interactions with White faculty have had a positive influence on my career goals and aspirations					
23. Since coming to this university, I have developed a close, personal relationship with at least one White faculty member					
24. I am satisfied with the opportunities to meet and interact informally with White faculty members					
Interactions with Hispanic Faculty					
25. My non-classroom interactions with Hispanic faculty have had a positive influence on my personal growth, values, and attitudes					
26. My non-classroom interactions with Hispanic faculty have had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest in ideas					
27. My non-classroom interactions with Hispanic faculty have had a positive influence on my career goals and aspirations					
28. Since coming to this university, I have developed a close, personal relationship with at least one Hispanic faculty member					
29. I am satisfied with the opportunities to meet and interact informally with Hispanic faculty members					
Faculty Concern for Student					

Development and Teaching					
30. Few of the faculty members I have had contact with are generally interested in students					
31. Few of the faculty members I have had contact with are willing to spend time outside of class to discuss issues of interest and importance to students					
32. Most of the faculty I have had contact with are interested in helping students grow in more than just academic areas					
33. Most of the faculty I have had contact with are genuinely interested in teaching					
Academic and Intellectual Development					
34. I am satisfied with the extent of my intellectual development since enrolling in this university					
35. My academic experience has had a positive influence on my academic growth and interest in ideas					
36. I am satisfied with my academic experience at this university					
37. Few of my courses have been intellectually stimulating					
38. My interest in ideas and intellectual matters has increased since coming to this university					
39. I am more likely to attend a cultural event (for example, a concert, lecture, or art show) now than I was before coming to this university					
40. I have performed academically as well as I anticipated I would					
Institutional and Goal Commitment					
41. It is important for me to graduate from college					
42. I am confident that I made the right decision to attend this university					
43. I am confident that I made the right decision to choose this major					
44. Getting good grades is important to me					

Family Support					
45. My family encouraged me to attend college					
46. My family was financially supportive during my college career					
47.The expectations from my family were that I complete a college degree					
48. My family provided emotional support and encouragement to complete my degree					
Self Efficacy					
49. I believe I have the competence to complete a college degree					
50. I always knew I would be successful in my academic pursuits					
51. I have persevered to finish what I start					
52. I have the motivation to finish college studies					

The SIIS adapted the Institutional Integration Scale (IIS) developed by Pascarella and Terenzini (1980). The investigator was given permission by the authors to modify items in the subscales to suit this study.

11. Student Background Characteristics

Instructions: Please **choose** the number of the response in each category below that applies to you and provide the information requested.

53. **Gender**
    1. Male
    2. Female

54. **Age**
    1. 18 and under
    2. 19 to 24
    3. 25 to 34
    4. 35 and over

55. **Pre-college Academic achievement**
    1. High school GPA _____
    2. ACT/SAT scores_____
    3. Prior training _____
    4. GED_____

56. **Ethnicity**. **Please identify yourself (Choose the one that applies to you most)**

    1. Black/African American
    2. Black/Kenyan
    3. Black/South African
    4. Black/Cuban
    5. Black/Jamaican
    6. Black/Trinidadian & Tobagan
    7. Black/Nigerian
    8. Black/Bahamian
    9. Black/Haitian
    10. Black/Puerto Rican
    11. Other (please indicate) _____

57. **Number of children or other dependents**
    1. One
    2. Two
    3. Three
    4. Four
    5. Five
    6. Six or more
    7. Not Applicable

58. **Marital Status**
    1. Single with no children
    2. Single with dependent children
    3. Married with no children
    4. Married with dependent children
    5. Divorced, separated, or widowed with children
    6. Divorced, separated or widowed with no children

59. **Parents' highest level of education**

1. **Mother**
   - 8th grade and below
   - High school diploma
   - Associates
   - Bachelor's
   - Master's
   - Doctorate
   - Other (please indicate) _____

2. **Father**
   - 8th grade and below
   - High school diploma
   - Associates
   - Bachelor's
   - Master's
   - Doctorate
   - Other (please indicate) _____

60. I am a
   - **First-generation** college student
   - **Second-generation** college student
   - **Third- generation** college student

61**. FIU campus where you take most of your courses:**
   1. Biscayne Bay
   2. Downtown Miami Center
   3. Broward Pines Center
   4. University Park

62. **What is your major academic program of study? _____**

63**. As of today, how many credits have you completed toward the undergraduate degree? _____**

64. **Current Class Load**
   1. Full-time (12 or more semester credits)
   2. Part-time (fewer than 12 semester credits)

65. **While enrolled, how much time do you work for pay?**
   1. Full-time (40 hours)
   2. Part-time (20-39 hours)
   3. Less than 20 hours
   4. None

66. **How have you financed the majority of your college education?**

1. Full scholarship or grants
2. Loans
3. Personal or family funds
4. Combination of resources (grants, loans, scholarships, other)
5. Full tuition reimbursement from employer
6. Partial tuition reimbursement from employer

67. **What is the approximate income of your parents/guardian/self?**

1. Less than $30,000
2. $30,000 to 59,999
3. $60,000 to 89,999
4. $90,000 or higher

68. **Which on-campus clubs or organizations have you joined?**

1. Social fraternity or sorority
2. Student government
3. Honor society
4. Other_____

69. **I am a student with disability.**

_____Yes
_____ No

70. **I am an**

___ On-campus resident student
___ Off-campus commuter student

71. **In your opinion, what is the <u>primary motivation</u> for finishing your undergraduate degree program?**

_____
_____
_____
_____

Thanks very much for taking the time to participate in this survey.

Student's contact information (optional):_____

Appendix B: Institutional Integration Scale (IIS)

Institutional Integration Scale (IIS)

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Agree a little 4= Agree 5=Strongly Agree

Scale 1: Peer-Group Interactions
Since coming this university I have
developed close personal relationships
with other students
The student friendships I have developed at
this university have been personally
satisfying
My interpersonal relationships with other
students have had a positive influence on
my personal growth, attitudes, and values
My interpersonal with other students
have had a positive influence on
my intellectual growth and interest in idea
It has been difficult for me to meet wand make
Friends with other students
Few of the students I know would be willing
to listen to me and help me if I had a
personal problem
Most students at this university have values
and attitudes different from my own

Scale11: Interactions with Faculty
My nonclassroom interactions with faculty
have had a positive influence on my
personal growth, values, and attitudes
My nonclassroom interactions with faculty
have had a positive influence on my
intellectual growth and interest ideas
My nonclassroom interactions with faculty
have had a positive influence on my career
goals and aspirations
Since coming to this university I have
developed a close, personal relationships
with a least one faculty member
I am satisfied with the opportunities to meet
and interact informally with faculty members

Scale 111:Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching
Few of the faculty members I have had contact
with are generally interested in students
Few of the faculty members I have had
contact with are generally outstanding or
superior teachers
Few of the faculty members I have had
contact with are willing to spend time out-
side of class to discuss issues of interest
and importance to students
Most of the faculty I have had contact with
are interested in helping students grow in

more than just academic areas
Most faculty members I have contact with
Are genuinely interested in teaching

Scale 1V: Academic and Intellectual Development
I am satisfied with the extent of my
intellectual development since enrolling in
this university
My academic experience has had a positive
influence on my intellectual growth and
interest ideas
I am satisfied with my academic experience
at this university
Few of my coursed this year have bee
intellectual stimulating
My interest in ideas and intellectual matters
has increased since coming to this university
I am more likely to attend a cultural event
(for example, a concert, lecture, or art
show) now than I was before coming to
this university
I have performed academically as well as I
Anticipated I would

Scale V: Institutional and Goal Commitments
It is important for me to graduate from
college
I am confident that I made the right decision
in choosing to attend this university
It is likely that I will register at this university
next fall
It is important to me to graduate from
this university
I have no idea at all what I want to major in
Getting good grades Is not important to me

Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzini, P.T. (1980). Predictind freshman persistence and voluntary dropout decisions from a theoretical model. *Journal of Higher Education,* 51(1), 60-75.

Appendix C: Pilot Testing of Instrument-Instructions and Rating Sheet

Correspondence to Faculty

Re: Pilot Testing of Research Instrument

Dear Professor _____:

My name is Sandra Fletcher. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and I am writing to request your support for a survey that I am conducting as part of my dissertation research. My research involves the study of Black undergraduate students' perceptions of factors that relate to their persistence to the senior year in college.

My request is to visit your class this fall semester to ask your students to participate in pilot testing of the research instrument for my study. It will take approximately15-20 minutes for your students to complete the survey. Although I would like to get this done during the first week of June, I am available to visit your class at your convenience.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. I will contact you by phone or email again in the next few days for your response.

Sincerely,

Sandra Fletcher

Doctoral Candidate

Information to Participate in Pilot Testing of Instrument

You are being asked to participate in the review and critique of the **Student Institutional Integration Survey (SIIS)**. The SIIS is adapted from Terenzini & Pascarella's (1980) Institutional Integration Scale (IIS). Since modifications are made to the instructions and the wording of selected survey items, a pilot test is needed to check the content validity and item reliability of the instrument and to identify potential problems. Your participation is very important, is greatly appreciated and strictly voluntary. I, Sandra Fletcher am a doctoral student at FIU, along with my major professor, Dr. Adriana McEachern, I am conducting this study for educational purposes only. As such no harm will come to you, and all information will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity. This self-report questionnaire consists of 71items designed to collect information about undergraduate student perceptions of the relationship between personal and institutional factors and persistence to the senior year in college, based on constructs identified by the research literature, as important dimensions of academic and social integration and retention (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Instructions: Please complete the attached **SIIS**. In addition, kindly critique the questionnaire in the areas listed below, write the statements *unacceptable, fair, good, excellent or not applicable (N/A)* in the left margin of the survey:

Clarity of the instructions
Headings
I. Personal and Institutional Factors
II. Background Characteristics
Subheadings (Peer Group Interaction, Interaction with Faculty, etc)
Items (1-71)

Please provide an overall recommendation for the instrument:

Accept questionnaire
Accept with reservation (i*ndicate areas of reservation in the space below)*
Reject the questionnaire

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Any other modifications *(additions and deletions)*

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix D: Information Letter

FIU
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Miami's public research university

Information Letter

Title: Personal and Institutional Factors: Relationship to Self-Efficacy of Persistence to the Senior Year in College Among Self-Identified Black Undergraduate Students in a Hispanic Serving Institution

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The investigator of this study is Sandra Fletcher, a student at Florida International University completing her dissertation under her major professor Dr. Adriana McEachern. This study may include approximately 1, 505 Black undergraduate seniors. It will investigate Black students' perspectives on the relationship between personal and institutional factors and persistence to the senior year of college. Part 1 consists of personal and institutional factors and Part 11are students' background characteristics. This research will provide insights for the development of undergraduate programs for Black students' personal and institutional academic and social success.

If you decide to be a part of the study, you will complete a survey. There are no known risks or benefits involved in your participation in this study. There is no cost or payment to you as a participant. However, your participation will give information about Black undergraduate students' perceptions of factors that contribute to persistence to the senior year in college. Your responses will be anonymous. All your answers are private and will not be shared with anyone unless required by law. You may ask questions about the study at any time. You may skip any questions or items that you do not want to answer. You may withdraw your consent and stop your participation before you finish the survey without any negative consequences. Your participation will require approximately 20 minutes of your time.

If you would like more information about this research study after you are done, you can contact Sandra Fletcher at (786) 246-8087 or osooy2@bellsouth.net. If you would like to talk with someone about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact Dr. Patricia Price, the Chairperson of the FIU Institutional Review Board at 305-348-2618 or 305-348-2494.

I have explained the research procedure, participant rights, and answered questions asked by the participant.

_____ _____ _____

Signature of Investigator Printed Name Date

VITA

SANDRA FLETCHER

May 5, 1959	Born, Westmoreland, Jamaica
1977 – 1980	Diploma, Elementary Education West Indies College Mandeville, Jamaica
1980 – 1989	Elementary School Teacher West Jamaica Conference of Seventh - day Adventist Montego Bay, Jamaica
1989 – 1993	Bachelor of Arts, Elementary Education Northern Caribbean University Mandeville, Jamaica
1998 – Present	Middle School Teacher Southeastern Conference of Seventh - day Adventist Miami, Florida
2000 – 2002	Master of Science, Human Resource Development Florida International University Miami, Florida
2000 – 2005	Adjunct Professor St. Thomas University Miami, Florida
2005 – 2007	Graduate Certificate, Family Life Education Andrews University Berrien Springs, Michigan
2009 – Present	Principal Perrine Seventh - day Adventist School Miami, Florida