AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP WITH WHITE COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT WHILE ENROLLED IN EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

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AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP WITH WHITE COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT WHILE ENROLLED IN EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

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Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a more in-depth understanding of the student-teacher relationships and academic achievement of seven African American students who are from the millennial generation. This in-depth understanding was based on their perceptions of their student-teacher relationships with White college faculty members while they were enrolled in Early College High School. Early College High School (ECHS) is a specific type of dual enrollment program that provides the opportunity for high school students to enroll in high school and college courses and simultaneously earn their high school diploma and college credits toward an Associate Degree. Students begin their ECHS experience in the ninth grade. The seven participants in this study were all in their senior year of ECHS who had more experiences with White college faculty members at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) than any other students in the program.

Based on the analysis of the transcripts from an interview questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and a focus group the emergent themes indicated that students perceived their student-teacher relationships as interactive and interpersonal, additionally they defined their personal definition of academic achievement as learning perseverance. The students felt as if their college instructors cared about them authentically which contributed to them working harder; however, caring instructors were less important than the positive self-image they believed academic
achievement gave them as African Americans in their society and their communities. The concept of care in this study was operationalized through Critical Race Theory, an Ethic of Care, and Womanist Caring.
DEDICATION

This dissertation journey began the summer of 2006, and along the way my three pillars were unable to see me through to the end, therefore it is my honor to dedicate this work to them:

In Memory of

My Grandmother, Ida Mae Gibbons,

May 6, 1931—June 26, 2010

My Mother, Thelma Elizabeth Arnold,

January 9, 1951—April 11, 2011

My Grandfather, Mack Neal Gibbons,

March 9, 1928—August 29, 2014

I love you all and I am forever grateful for the values you instilled in me and thank God for how you shared your life with me during your time on this earth.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for allowing me to complete such a humbling task. “For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and the holy angels.” (Luke 9:26, ESV)

I would like to thank my husband, Sandy Dennis Womack, Jr. and my two daughters Imani and Nia Womack, for supporting me through this process and reminding me that “I have come too far to turn back.” I want to thank my dad, Anthony Prince who has always been a support for me. I want to thank my sisters Toni and Damaris for cheering me all the way to the end, thanks. I want to thank all of my friends and family members, who shared scriptures, prayed, listened, encouraged, fed me, checked on me, and loved me through this journey.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Considerable support is often needed, because admissions standards at early-college high schools are non-traditional. . . . But in almost all cases, the students most likely to get in are those who are struggling academically, need special-education plans, or are learning English as a second language. (Killough, 2009, p. 11)

Early College High School programs provide low-income, minority [African American] students the opportunity of achieving both a high school diploma and college degree at the same time (Born, 2006; Lieberman, 2004; Thompson & Ongaga, 2011). Early College High School is a specific type of dual-enrollment pathway that intentionally targets underrepresented minority students (Webb, 2004). Integrated dual-enrollment pathways are projected to reach over 95,000 underrepresented students; in 2009, there were 15,000 underrepresented students served through Early College High School (ECHS) (Hoffman, Vargos, & Santos, 2009).

In addition, the population of students enrolled in ECHS are part of the millennial generation who have been told that they are special; trusting that they will have a bright future that is connected to achievement (Johnson, 2006). Minority students, particularly African Americans, have been the focus for educational integration throughout most recent history and there are still higher percentages of White students who have graduated from high school than African American students (Gordon, 2013). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2014) the dropout rate for White
students was only 5.1% compared to 7.3% of African American students. The low percentage of African American students graduating from high school puts them at risk of slowly becoming an endangered species for college. Furthermore, ECHS students have the opportunity to embark upon a different educational experience as compared to their peers in a more traditional high school setting.

**Motivation of the Study**

The primary motivation of this study stemmed from my professional and personal experiences in higher education. I graduated from a predominantly Black high school with a 3.0 grade point average. I applied and was accepted to the local predominantly White university in the city in which I lived because I was a first-generation college student, unaware of academic opportunities that would have allowed me to apply and be accepted to other colleges outside of my home state. I immediately began my first college course the fall semester of 1990. My first college course was held in a large lecture hall at a predominantly White institution (PWI) of higher learning. I can recall seeing less than 10 African American students out of more than 100 students in that classroom.

My experience my first semester was overwhelming, and I struggled to adjust academically and culturally. I was totally unprepared for the lack of diversity and level of rigor that was required in college as compared to my high school experience. I found myself in culture shock in college. I was uncomfortable and unable to make a connection with faculty members on the campus; it seemed as if they were not as caring as my high school teachers. The consequence of this shock resulted in my inability to find the academic and social support to assist with me and I was academically dismissed. After
participating in a mandatory student success program that was taught by a Black professor which provided me with some specific study and time management skills, I was able to navigate college and successfully graduated.

My memories of my failure and shock I experienced as an 18-year-old adult in college sparked my interest in a new program that I was introduced to in my role as an Admissions Counselor at a community college known as Early College High School. This new program allowed ninth graders to attend college; I became curious about the high school students who were taking college classes on a four-year university campus. It was at that time that I wanted to learn more about their experiences as Early College High School students and their relationships with White faculty members.

**Statement of the Problem**

The national standards used to guide teacher and student efforts in Early College High Schools promote alignment of skills, content, and outcomes (Gruenewald, 2003). However, the skills, content, and outcomes neither address nor assess the student-teacher relationship within the new dual-enrollment partnerships between high school students and their college professors. In 2009, over 15,000 underrepresented students were served through Early College High School (Hoffman et al., 2009). Projections are that these numbers will eventually reach over 95,000 students by 2012 through its integrated dual-enrollment pathways between traditional high schools and colleges (Hoffman et al., 2009). “In a global society, the traditional American high school is seen as a fragmented, alienating system stalled by an adherence to an outmoded transmission-oriented model of teaching and learning” (Thompson & Ongaga, 2011, p. 43). The traditional high school has been impacted by recent changes in policy and the increased technological advances
that have occurred in our global society to advance the academic progress of all students and to prepare students for the academic rigor of college (Le & Frankfort, 2011).

The students who are enrolled in Early College High School are not only African American students who are categorized as minority and underrepresented but are also a part of the Millennial Generation. Individuals within the millennial generation are identified as being technologically savvy (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007). Because the millennial generations of ECHS students are comfortable with the use of technology, there is a fear that this comfort or strong reliance on technology could pose a problem for this generation of students having face-to-face experiences (Elam et al., 2007).

According to Hershatter and Epstein (2010), the relationship that millennial students have with technology changes the way they know the world; therefore, achievement, direction, and motivation for this generation of students is a challenge, an opportunity, and a learnable skill. These attributes for millennial ECHS students further demonstrate the importance of relationships in the sociocultural experiences for ethnic minorities who are a part of the millennial generation while participating in dual enrollment programs. The current trends in technology, educational reform, and funding encourage educators and policy makers to create accessible pathways from high school to college. Although state policies are being reframed to promote these innovative pathways, some oppositions remain to support separate K-12 and higher education systems (Berger, Adelman, & Cole, 2010; Kisker, 2006). The separation between both educational systems may be damaging to high school students who are learning subjects in high school that are not adequately preparing them for college. Early College High School is a place in which secondary and postsecondary institutions are able to merge
credits, staff members, faculty members, students, curricula, and instructional processes. 

Lieberman (2004) stated that “the success of Early College High School depends on destroying the hierarchy between secondary and higher education, and building an equal partnership” (p. 3). There has to be a conscious effort to strengthen the academic relationship between each institution, as well as within the high school and college classroom in order to maintain a strong educational system.

Within the newly created spaces of Early College High Schools, especially due to the academic demands that are doubled of high school and college, it is therefore important to consider the cultural and social conditions that the students experience, and to investigate their relational experiences as African American first-generation college students who are also part of the millennial generation. Research conducted in the academic year 2004-2005 with 13 Early College Schools showed that 80% of the students enrolled were non-white (Barnett, 2006). The unique blend of high school and college will provide students, teachers, administrators, parents, policy makers, and the community with opportunities to learn new ways of meeting the educational and relational needs of a new generation of minority students. These students are not only participating in an innovative educational opportunity through Early College High School, they are also a part of one of the largest generation of people who were born between 1982 and 2002 (Cummings, 2007).

**Background of Dual Enrollment Programs**

Recent innovations in American secondary education afford students options for earning college credits while yet completing their high school requirements. Expanding dual enrollment or concurrent enrollment initiatives have launched across the nation over
the past three decades (Edwards & Hughes, 2011; Mokher & McLendon, 2009). These dual enrollment initiatives have increased educational options and access to higher education. According to Hughes (2010), the U.S. Department of Education conducted a survey for secondary and postsecondary institutions and reported that during the 12-month academic year 2002-2003, over 800,000 high school students were enrolled in dual enrollment courses nationwide. Furthermore, Kleiner and Lewis (2005) reported that dual enrollment initiatives provided high school students with benefits such as savings in time and money, a wider range of rigorous academic and technical courses, and facilitated admission into college. Over a decade ago, Nancy Hoffman (2003) argued that the area of dual enrollment programs in education belonged to a small “exclusive group” of privileged young people from well-funded school districts. However, over time, dual enrollment programs have changed with the goal of preparing more students for college and have become more common with a wider variety of students participating (Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2008).

Barnett and Bragg (2006) defined dual enrollment as college courses offered to high school students for both high school and college credit. Some researchers use the term dual enrollment, dual credit, and concurrent enrollment interchangeably (Edwards & Hughes, 2011; Farrell & Seifert, 2007; Hughes, 2010). Dual enrollment programs provide a number of students, especially those in jeopardy of failing high school, the opportunity to enroll in college at little or no cost to the student’s family (Kleiner & Lewis, 2005). There are many different types of dual enrollment programs including Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Middle College, Post-
Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), and Early College High School (ECHS) (Bhatt & Best, 2009; Boswell, 2001; Learner & Brand, 2007).

The increased participation in dual enrollment programs has spread across the United States for various reasons; one of which is a push for high school reform. Recent educational reform movements in the U.S. moved away from industrialization, assimilating large influxes of immigrants, and providing access to schools as a civil right toward the establishment of standards, aligning assessments, and holding schools accountable for student performance (Kuo, 2010). The legislation of No Child Left Behind of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) established general parameters for elementary schools and secondary schools to meet assessment goals, teacher accountability, and time-limited improvements, or there would be consequences to the school such as restructuring, replacement of staff, or turning operation of the school over to the state (Kuo, 2010). To this end, the nation’s low-performing school systems have been exposed through standards-based reform, and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) driving the search for models that are more effective, and programs that improve the quality of teaching and learning in public education (Fleischman & Heppen, 2009).

Furthermore, Kress, Zechmann, and Schmitten (2011) reported that “the standards-based reform movement began at the state level” (p. 191). The reformation of America’s educational system has transitioned and transformed throughout history on federal and state levels. For example, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed in 1965 by the federal government that authorized grants at the state level to improve the academic achievement of students who were enrolled in schools serving low-income areas (Kuo, 2010). In most states, dual enrollment programs and
models provide the framework that enables high schools and universities or community colleges to work together in a system to increase student academic achievement (Burns & Lewis, 2000). Though early in its development, dual enrollment initiatives have already contributed significantly to educational reform efforts in the United States.

There have been a number of private foundations, policymakers, and educators promoting dual enrollment nationwide to facilitate access and success for middle-performing or even lower-performing students (Bailey, Hughes, & Mechur Karp, 2002). For example, the State of Florida’s legislators viewed dual enrollment largely as a mechanism to save the state and students money (Hunt & Carroll, 2006). The state sponsored an academic acceleration program titled Florida’s Accelerated Mechanism Program, which allowed students to shorten their time to degree for both high school and college, which reduced state educational costs (Hunt & Carroll, 2006). Ideally, educational change that occurs through reformation is about enabling students to develop both academically and socially (Dukes & Dukes, 2006). It is important to recognize that educational reforms have allowed students who are both academically gifted and at-risk of not graduating high school the opportunity to expand their options beyond high school into college. Furthermore, reforms have helped to establish social relationships among parents, policy makers, teachers, administrators, and the community at large. There are ongoing social exchanges that teach individuals about themselves and about what is needed to become a part of certain groups (Martin & Dowson, 2009). Students who are involved in the educational system encounter many social connections among their peers and their teachers.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the millennial generation’s African American students’ experiences, and their perceptions of their student-teacher relationships and academic achievement while enrolled in an Early College High School.

It may be argued that the establishment of warm, positive, healthy teacher-student relationships may be more crucial in these contemporary times of volatility, uncertainty and complexity. Thus, the exploration of the nature of teacher-student relationships in this research is timely. (Beutel, 2010, p. 78)

The student-teacher relationship is significant to student success (Newberry, 2010); however, more research is needed on the perception of the student-teacher relationship in ECHS specifically. Furthermore, Calabrese, Goodvin, and Niles (2005) noted the importance of having teachers who care and are willing to develop meaningful relationships with students, in order to be considered effective with at-risk student populations.

Some student populations who are considered at-risk may possibly come from minority groups, such as African Americans and Latinos, might lack home and community resources to benefit from conventional schooling practices, could have low academic achievement, and high secondary dropout rates (Levin, 1989). Consequently, having effective teachers who care and are willing to form meaningful relationships with students, particularly African American students, will be of great benefit to student success. The student-teacher relationships in ECHS, particularly for African American millennial generation students, will be evaluated with both high school teachers and college faculty members.
Research conducted in 2007 by the U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2010) through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) showed that White faculty members made up 82.8% of the faculty, and the combined number of minority faculty teaching at all degree granting institutions was only 17.2%. To this end, minority students at all institutions of higher learning are more likely to have White faculty instructors than a minority faculty instructor during their college experiences.

Most faculty and staff in higher education are predominantly White, while the majority of students in ECHS are non-white and are the first to attend college in their families. In a study titled *Unconventional Wisdom: A Profile of the Graduates of Early College High School*, for the academic school year of 2009-2010, there were 46,493 students enrolled in Early College High School, and 25% of those students were African American compared to 30% of their White counterparts, 37% was Latino, 4% was Asian/Pacific Islander, 2% was Other, and 1% was Multiracial (Webb & Mayka, 2011). Although Early College High School targets minority students, there were still less African American students enrolled in the program than Latino or even White students during the 2009-2010 academic years (Webb & Mayka, 2011), which are similar to the racial and ethnic make-up of some four-year and community college campuses. To this end, cultural sensitivity is important among faculty members at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) which add value to the relationships between White faculty and non-white students (Guiffrida, 2005). The racial composition of PWIs has changed due to the increased number of minorities accessing higher education that had traditionally been inaccessible except for historically Black colleges and universities; however, the climate
and overall curricula of these institutions have remained the same (Adams, 2005; Dahlvig, 2010).

In the limited research that has investigated the quality relationships between faculty and African-American students, two primary factors have emerged as influencing these relationships. The first is that Black students may experience difficulty connecting with White faculty because they do not perceive them as realistic role models... Second, research indicates that students often perceive faculty at PWIs as culturally insensitive. (Guiffrida, 2005, p. 702)

Although it may be difficult for African American students to connect with White faculty members, it is imperative they overcome the difficulty in order to successfully complete college. Approximately one-third to one-half of minority students enrolled at traditionally White colleges and universities leave without a degree and drop out at rates higher than their less prepared White counterparts (Gordon, 2013). According to Guiffrida (2005), African American students specifically believed that White faculty members would not have positive beliefs in their academic abilities when compared to a minority faculty member. Positive relationship building between the students and faculty is a provision to motivation, initiative, and engagement, which are essential for student success (Stuhlman, Hamre, & Pianta, 2002). According to Allen (1992), applying resources committed to minority endeavors does not always come with clear directions for leadership on how to apply the resources. As evidenced by previous research with minority students’ experiences on PWI campuses (Adams, 2005), college faculty members may be unprepared (or unwilling) to establish a caring relationship with the at-risk population of high school students participating in the Early College High School. Furthermore, little research has been conducted on how the student-teacher relationship is associated with outcomes for at-risk student populations (Decker, Dona, & Christenson,
To expand on the relational dynamics between minorities and the majority in education, Crowley et al. (2004) stated the following:

Individuals from minority groups may be aware of interpersonal dynamics and unspoken assumptions that create and maintain a “climate” that is virtually invisible to the majority group. Their perception may be that they live in a climate that others create and that they are outsiders, rather than important contributing members. (p. 27)

More than one-third of students in colleges are of color as compared to only about one-tenth of instructors (Ignash & Townsend, 2003). A more effective and culturally sensitive pedagogy may be developed through understanding the student-teacher relationship of minority, particularly African American, first-generation college students and the White faculty members who serve them.

This research intends to add to the body of knowledge in education and student-teacher relationships that occur within this social setting. The outcomes of this research with first generation, at-risk African American students in Early College High School, who are a part of the millennial generation, can help to illuminate the nuanced social connections for students that are underrepresented in the institution of higher education (Pascalella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003; Terenzini et al., 1994; Walton & Cohen, 2007). Despite the research related to the establishment and implementation of Early College High School, there remains a lack of research on the student’s relational experiences in Early College High School as a new model, and how it contributes to their academic success (Ongaga, 2010).

**Theoretical Framework**

Critical race theory (CRT) first started with legal scholars who shared their frustration with traditional civil rights strategies (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Moreover,
Ladson-Billings (1998) went on to state that critical race theory is a separate entity from an earlier legal movement called critical legal studies and can also be used in the discipline of education to shed light on the inequities that occur in education for African American students. This study used the critical race theory as an interpretive framework to formulate an understanding of the perceptions of students through the phenomenon of race in the student-teacher relationship and academic achievement while enrolled in Early College High School. Additionally, CRT draws on the experiences of people of color to deconstruct and challenge dominant paradigms on race by attacking racism as a normative in American society (Tuitt & Carter, 2008). The issue of race is significant in this study because the African American students taking college courses in Early College High School are more likely to be taught by a White faculty/instructor throughout their college experience and therefore demands examination in greater detail.

Critical race theorists view race as both a powerful reality and social construction intimately ingrained in Western society (Comeaux, 2010.) This study engaged the critical race theory in the examination of African American students’ perceptions of their White college professors’ expressions of care about their student-teacher relationship and academic achievement. While Early College High School targets all minority students, one of the largest minority groups enrolled in the program are African Americans. The inclusion of CRT in this study is relevant when one considers the relational and learning development of African American students at predominantly White institutions, and the enduring significance of race in our society (Comeaux, 2010).
Conceptual Framework

According to Jabareen (2009), a conceptual framework is a network of a linked construct of concepts that provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena. For this study, the conceptual framework was linked to concepts that establish coherency between the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, review of literature, theoretical perspective, methodology, data, and analysis. These three separate and independent conceptions from the literature worked to clarify the research process: 1) an ethic of care, 2) womanist caring, and 3) critical race theory. The framework was used to explain the role of care in the student-teacher relationship and academic achievement with African American Early College High School students. Additionally, the linked connections within the framework provided the lens to operationalize the importance of care in this study.

Ethic of Care

An ethic of care as defined by Noddings (1992) is in its most basic form an encounter between two human beings, one being a carer and the other being the recipient of care. An ethic of care was used as part of the conceptual framework in this study to conceptualize care in the relationship between Early College High School students and their college instructors. Caring is critical when addressing the adolescent students’ experience with college faculty members in the Early College High School environment. Students benefit from schools with well-designed curriculums, technology, and instructional leaders; additionally, a caring classroom environment is also important to student success (Roberts, 2010).
According to Noddings (1992), “No matter how hard teachers try to care, if the caring is not received by students, the claim ‘they don’t care’ has some validity. It suggests strongly that something is wrong” (p. 15). And while “Students are not usually as close to teachers as offspring are to their parents, the relationship is still, ideally, a close one, and for some students, teachers are more important than parents” (Noddings, 1992, p. 106). This [ethic of] caring is reciprocated when the caring teacher lays the foundation for a trusting relationship with the student (Calabrese et al., 2005), and persistence and retention may be improved. To this end, an ethic of care in this study allows the student-teacher experience to be operationalized as a relationship. Within this relationship of carer [college faculty/instructor] and cared-for [student], the carer is attentive, listens, observes, and is receptive to the needs of the cared-for (Noddings, 2012). Furthermore, in care ethics, less emphasis is placed on moral credit due to the carer, but it is deeply interested in the strength of the caring relation (Noddings, 2012).

**Womanist Caring**

According to Kelly Brown Douglas (2006), a womanist conscience emerged as a result of Black women recognizing the active discrimination that occurred through freedom-fighting organizations during the Civil Rights Movement that included blatant sexist attitudes and behaviors from Black men. Black women began articulating the unique connection between being both Black and female in the United States and what it meant to be an oppressed member of an already oppressed group (Douglas, 2006). According to Borum (2012), the term *womanist* was first used in 1983 by Alice Walker to demonstrate the reality of African American women, which differs from White women so much that a term other than *feminist* needed to be incorporated. According to Williams
(1987), a womanist is a Black feminist or feminist of color. Walker (1983) said in her book titled *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens* “womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender” (p. 49). Research and writings based on a black feminist perspective are not just simple reminders of diversity among women (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), whereas research and writings based on a black feminist perspective emphasize that multiple identities and subjectivities are constructed tentatively, in particular historical and social contexts (as cited by Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The research and writings based on a womanist perspective include a constant commitment by Black women to their families and community, which searches for a wholeness and strategy that would assure that Black people, men and women, gain rights to live as whole and free human beings that keep the Black community whole and unified (Douglas, 2006). Although the foundation of the womanist perspective began from women of color, the attributes found in those women can span across all races, genders, and cultures.

Historically, students who attended all-Black schools were taught by African American women who were committed to ensuring their students excelled regardless of their parents’ educational status and economic situation, characterized as authoritarian, held high expectations, and encouraged students to succeed (Patterson, Mickelson, Hester, & Wyrick, 2011). The pedagogical practices of these Black women helped to comprise womanist caring characteristics of racial uplift and the betterment of all African Americans (Patterson et al., 2011).

This study used the concept of womanist caring as a lens to explore characteristics displayed in the student-teacher relationship in Early College High School. For the purpose of this study, characteristics displayed by educators using the concept of
womanist caring included, but were not limited to: 1) creating a structure that educate and shelter students from adversity, 2) sharing their understanding of society that does not shy away from the reality of domination and the resistance struggles against oppression that exist, and 3) being able to see teaching and change as relational processes (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). The characteristics of womanist educators can be embodied by women and men, minorities and the majority, and it offers a lens through which caring in education may benefit students, particularly African American students. Figure 1 provides an illustration of the conceptual framework as it relates to this study.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework based on care in the student-teacher relationship.

**Background of the Study**

Candace Thompson (2006), as cited by Thompson and Ongaga (2011), conducted a case study on how an ethics of care supports or constrains teaching and learning based on the perspective of Early College High School students and teachers. The data in the study revealed that there were cultural differences in terms of learning and
communication styles for African American students in ECHS and White faculty members (Thompson & Ongaga, 2011). This study will serve as an extension of Thompson’s case study to expand on the African American students’ perception of their student-teacher relationship in ECHS with White college faculty members. A qualitative inquiry was used to analyze actions, and provide insight into certain situations as opposed to a quantitative method that involves assigning numbers to levels of variables for statistical analysis (Boudah, 2011). Moreover, the richness of qualitative data reflects the complex nature of relationships.

**Research Questions**

This qualitative study focused on selected African American students’ perception of their student-teacher relationship in Early College High School. These students are part of the millennial generation and first in their family to attend college. The research questions that frame and guide this study are as follows:

1. How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, perceive their student-teacher relationship with their White college instructors/professors?
2. How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, define their personal academic achievement?
3. How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, perceive the relationship between their White college instructors/professors caring about them as students and their academic achievement?
Significance of the Study

There is limited research on the student-teacher relationship of first-generation minority students dually enrolled in high school and college with their college instructors. Dr. Khandi Bourne-Bowie (2000) stated the following:

Much research has been done on “minority” student retention and many factors have been found to affect students’ attrition rates. Research grounded in the experience of thousands of African heritage students has shown that persistence and academic success have as much to do with social interactions and social adjustment in the college setting as do variables such as socioeconomic background and academic preparedness. One significant factor affecting adjustment and interactions within campus environments centers on the interpersonal elements of college life. (p. 36)

There are studies that address dual enrollment programs based on transitions between high school and college, outcomes of the students, and state policies (Andrews, 2004; Bailey et al., 2002; Boswell, 2001). Although there are studies that focus on adolescent students participating in dual enrollment initiatives, more research is needed to explore relationships between the students and faculty and the potential impact on academic achievement.

While low graduation rates and the existing achievement gaps amongst minority students and their White counterparts are important to consider in student achievement, this study contributes to the body of knowledge as it relates to student-teacher relationships, particularly in specific dual enrollment programs. “While quite a few researchers have been pioneers in the conversation addressing the convergence of cultural relevance and care, minimal attention has been given to African American young people in the care/justice debate” (Roberts, 2010, p. 452). The purpose of this study was to build an understanding of first-generation African American college students’ experiences enrolled in ECHS programs and their relationships with White instructors/faculty. Data
can be used to inform ECHS college instructors, program structures, future dual enrollment students, and university policies and procedures. The findings may identify caring practices of college faculty members who are teaching a diverse population of college students.

High school and college personnel may better serve the student population with more information about building effective relationships, and how these relationships can contribute to student achievement within and beyond the classroom. More research is needed to understand the components in a successful relationship among faculty at PWIs and African American students (Guiffrida, 2005). Walton and Cohen (2007) stated that “indeed, a sense of social connectedness predicts favorable outcomes” (p. 82).

Allowing African American students to share their experiences within the place of Early College High School may provide insight and awareness from the students’ perspectives that stakeholders such as community leaders, policy makers, educators, administrators, businesses leaders, and parents can learn from and utilize to improve education and collaborations to enhance student access and success.

As an African American woman who works at a community college in Student Services, I have the opportunity to go to local high schools and recruit students to attend college. Students are recruited from urban inner-city high schools that serve predominantly African American students. During one recruiting presentation, students were asked to define tuition. None of the students answered the question. Students often discuss their intimidations, fears, and loneliness while in college during admissions meetings. More often than not, these conversations have unveiled issues related to their fears of talking to their teacher and asking for help, feeling lonely and uncomfortable
because they are the only African American in a classroom, and also feeling intimidated as a student in a classroom with other adult students.

In addition to the African American students who have had admissions meetings, working on a college campus has allowed me to reflect on past and present experiences as an African American student at a predominantly White college. Memories of being intimidated are still evident, although it was 20 years since I entered the college classroom as a high school graduate. Reflecting on my experiences and fears while striving to obtain a doctoral degree and conduct research as other White classmates move through the process and complete their degree a lot quicker has been a humbling experience. However, I have learned many lessons that are really not inside the classroom per se; my lessons seem to be more directly related to understanding the importance of the political and relational atmosphere of higher education.

Research has demonstrated that minority students and first-generation college students are significantly impacted by relationships (Beutel, 2010; Docan-Morgan & Manusov, 2009; Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007; Thompson & Ongaga, 2011). Allen (1992) reported that some African American students, in this case the students were female, were socially ostracized and experienced emotional pain from social isolation on predominantly White campuses. As an African American woman, I have a tremendous passion and care for the future success of other African Americans through the higher education system. These attributes of passion and care for other African Americans in education are also common in a womanist’s tradition of care that was customary during segregation. There are womanist traditions of care that span the history of African American womanhood particularly in education (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). While
this study utilized the care expressed through those traditions as a lens through which to view the African American students’ perception of care within their student-teacher relationship with their White instructors, perhaps the same attributes of care that benefitted other Black students in the past may somehow be of benefit to the millennial generation of students in ECHS. Currently, there are fewer African American faculty members in higher education than there are students (Ignash & Townsend, 2003); perhaps those womanist caring attributes displayed by other African Americans in education may be seen in White faculty members who are teaching these African American students in this generation. A womanist perspective and ethic of care in education embraces and displays characteristics wholeness as a woman which includes being maternal, having a sense of community, and taking an ethic of risk which can be displayed by all educators not just Black women (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002).

Academic achievement and completion is strongly emphasized in dual-enrollment pathway integration; however, high school students are also expected to integrate into a political and relational environment that includes being involved in the student-teacher relationship with their college instructors while enrolled in some dual enrollment programs. According to Calabrese et al. (2005) there were six supportive processes revealed in effective teaching attitudes and traits that consisted of: (a) cultural responsiveness, (b) measurement of victories in small success, (c) encouragement of students, (d) formation of meaningful relationships with students; (e) projection of an attitude of caring, and (f) difference making. These findings support the importance of the relationship between student and teacher in education and how it can be effective for both the student and the teacher.
Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions for the terms are used throughout the text.

**Achievement Gap**—the disparities in standardized test scores between Black, Latina/o, and recent immigrant students in comparison to White students (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

**Affective**—refers to specific qualities such as values, beliefs, dispositions and attitudes (Grootenboer, 2010).

**African American/Black**—are terms used to refer to an American ethnic group who descended from African people (Asante, 2002). Also refers to a phenotypic expression and/or appearance.

**At-risk and Underserved**—For this study particularly, the terms are used interchangeably to refer to minority students who are lacking household, financial, and community resources to benefit from conventional schooling practices (Green, 2006; Levin, 1989).

**Dual Enrollment**—college courses offered to high school students for both high school and college credit (Barnett & Bragg, 2006). These classes can be offered either at the high school or the college. Other terms used are postsecondary enrollment options, concurrent enrollment, or dual credit (Bhatt & Best, 2009).

**Early College High School (ECHS)**—a small autonomous school designed for underrepresented or traditionally underserved students with characteristics such as low socio-economic status, students of color, and first-generation college students (Born, 2006; Hoffman et al., 2009; Kisker, 2006).
Ethic of Care—is “…in its most basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings—a carer and a recipient of care, or cared-for” (Noddings, 1992, p. 15). In this study, the carer is the faculty/instructor, and the cared-for is the student.

First-generation college student—students in college whom either parents or guardians have a high school education or less, and did not begin a postsecondary degree (Inkelas et al., 2007).

Middle College—as articulated by Lieberman (1998), middle college is the first national model that was built on the collaboration between high school and college that aims at potential high school dropouts and students that are high risk, and students graduate with a high school diploma and some college credit.

Millennial Generation—refers to a generation of people born within birth years of 1982-2002 (Cummings, 2007).

Predominantly White Institution (PWI)—an institution of higher education in which the majority of the hired employees and enrolled students are White.

Underrepresented—a group identified as low-income, racial, and ethnic minorities who are non-white and the first in their family to attend college and have little or no input in policy, program, and evaluation decision-making (Green, 2006; Madison, 2007;).

Womanism—a theoretical perspective which focuses on the experiences and knowledge of Black women, which recognizes and interrogates the social realities of slavery, segregation, sexism, and economic exploitation that African Americans experienced historically in the United States (Beaufour-LaFontant, 2005).
Assumptions

This study assumed that the Early College High School experience is a key to success for participants and an effective educational model for stakeholders. This “success” may [for the students] be in the form of a career or an increase in financial income, and/or for more educational experience. However, there are some Early College High School students unprepared for the overall college experience, and the classroom climate in higher education. The educational opportunity that ECHS presents is one that most high school students and first-generation college students need in order to access higher education. Yet the student-teacher relationship for African American students at a PWI and, especially with White college faculty members, may be challenging for Early College High School students inside and outside of the classroom. Perhaps, this research can uncover another layer in education from the students’ perspective to enhance and assist with college completion. Gaining a better understanding from the students’ experiences in Early College High School adds to the body of knowledge in the reformation of education in both secondary and postsecondary institutions. I anticipated that students would provide accurate and honest feedback regarding the student-teacher relational experiences in Early College High School. It was further believed that this research investigation would expand and develop relationships between high school students, particularly African American students, and college faculty, secondary and postsecondary institutions, as well as educational policies and procedures.
Summary

Chapter I outlined the importance of understanding the student-teacher relationship of African American students with their White college instructors in Early College High School. There is limited research on the student-teacher relationship on college campuses, as well as those students who are dually enrolled in high school and college simultaneously. Educators must not only consider the academic aspect of education, but also the impact that relationships have on students during their education, particularly the relationship of students and their teachers. Academic achievement is extremely important for all students; however, there are significant data that indicate that there is a need to explore African American students’ ability to achieve and succeed in education because there is a gap in their rates of success when compared to their White counterparts within the same environment.

Chapter II provides an overview of dual-enrollment options and the literature on Early College High School. More specifically, Chapter II examines the millennial generation of students attending Early College High School, the student-teacher relationship, and finally an ethic of care, which further extends the framework provided in Chapter I. Chapter III provides a detailed overview of the qualitative inquiry and methodology used for this study as well as the epistemological frame, participant and site selection, data collection and analysis, validity, and reliability. Chapter IV unveils the findings and the results of this study, and Chapter V provides the conclusions and recommendations for future studies.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review provides an overview of dual enrollment programming and associated guiding state laws and policies. There have been several different terms used to describe dual enrollment such as dual credit, concurrent enrollment, and postsecondary enrollment options (Azinger, 2000; Bhatt & Best, 2009; Hébert, 2001). Research that informed this study focused on a specific model of dual enrollment—Early College High School—its development, design, the participants who are a part of the millennial generation, care, and their academic achievement. Additionally, studies were used to examine the relationship between students and teachers participating in such innovative programs.

An Overview of Dual Enrollment

America’s educational system reform efforts have resulted in the development of new educational initiatives. The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education conducted research in 1971 (as cited in Hébert, 2001) that emphasized changing the structure of higher education. Hébert (2001) also noted that a national survey of curriculum showed a need for partnerships between high schools and colleges that would provide less repetition and a smoother transition to postsecondary education. However, Azinger (2000) stated that, “calls for clearly defined, functional partnerships between postsecondary institutions and high schools are not new. Attempts to bridge the two
sectors were made as early as 1893” (p. 17). Recently, dual enrollment emerged as a popular effort and an innovative way for policymakers to unite the historically disconnected secondary and postsecondary educational systems (Mokher & McLendon, 2009). As Hébert (2001) stated, “by the late 1970s, dual enrollment partnerships had emerged throughout the United States as a means of providing opportunities for academically motivated and well prepared high school students to begin their college careers” (pp. 24-25). As of 2004, a report of the U.S. Department of Education showed 38 states with dual enrollment regulations or policies, of which only 18 support dual enrollment as an option for high school students (Mechur Karp, Bailey, Hughes, & Fermin, 2004). Additionally, Mechur Karp et al. (2004) stated:

Three states (Oklahoma, Oregon, and Tennessee) allow dual credit courses to be taught by postsecondary faculty or by secondary teachers that are approved by the college; the secondary teachers do not need to have the same credentials as the college faculty in order to receive approval. Six other states require that secondary teachers serving as dual credit course instructors have the same credentials as postsecondary faculty. (pp. 25-26)

Barnett and Bragg (2006) defined dual enrollment as college courses offered to high school students for both high school and college credit. Recent cohorts of high school students have had the opportunity to enroll in college and obtain college credits while still in high school by participating in dual enrollment. Researchers noted the benefits that students have by taking classes in dual enrollment programs which include saving time and money towards college, enhancing the high school experience, learning a more rigorous curriculum, and developing an academic profile for admissions into college (Hugo, 2001; Jordan, 2001; Mokher & McLendon, 2009).

Hoffman et al. (2009) noted that, “an emerging body of research and practice suggests that providing college-level work in high school is one promising way to better
prepare a wide range of young people for college success, including those who do not envision themselves as college material” (pp. 43-44). For example, the dual enrollment program offered by Santa Monica College in California allows students who are from historically disadvantaged minority backgrounds accessibility to classes geared toward the performing and visual arts (Hugo, 2001). Dual enrollment initiatives have expanded the educational boundaries and opened academic options that include different program features, funding support, flexible admissions criteria, active faculty participation, and accommodating policies for secondary and postsecondary school systems (Farrell & Seifert, 2007; Hoffman et al., 2009; Jordan, 2001). These characteristics of dual enrollment work well for students, teachers, administrators, and policy makers because it unites the two separate educational systems to benefit all stakeholders involved (Mokher & McLendon, 2008).

**Guiding State Policies on Dual Enrollment Programs**

Since the inception of dual enrollment, virtually all states have adopted policies to support programming implementation. A brief by Elisabeth Barnett and Katherine Hughes (2010) pointed out that national and state policies mandate that all qualifying students have access to dual enrollment while waiving the tuition and fees for high school students who participate. Farrell and Seifert (2007) reported that, “47 state legislatures have developed dual-enrollment programs as a strategy to increase their states’ human capital” (p. 69). These same researchers noted that developing human capital historically has improved the development of the economy. Boswell (2001) stated that, “38 states have concurrently adopted state-level policies that encourage the provision of postsecondary options—usually in the form of concurrent enrollment of high school
students in college-level classes” (p. 7). Individual states have formed specific policies and procedures when developing and implementing dual enrollment programs. According to Laura Hébert (2001), dual enrollment programs are considerably flexible in their design because courses can be taught by either high school teachers or college faculty, they can be on college or high school campuses, and they may even take place outside of normal high school hours.

The State of Ohio has followed the dual enrollment national trend. Jordan (2001) noted in her research conducted on dual enrollment that, “Ohio’s dual enrollment program has a legislative history that began over 10 years ago. The Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program was originally enacted in 1989” (p. 73). Characteristics of the dual enrollment programs developed in Ohio are a part of the chosen program of study. The chosen program began in the 2007-2008 school year, and students are dually-enrolled through the local school district and university. This collaboration has grown to serve a total of 400 students in grades 9 through 12; the first class graduated in 2011.

There are some stakeholders involved with dual enrollment programs who recognize that there are also criticisms of dual enrollment initiatives. For example, Hunt (2007) found in her study that “funding presents one of the greatest challenges in implementing P-16 initiatives such as dual enrollment” (p. 863). Similarly, Mokher and McLendon (2009) noted that critical decisions must be made when distributing state funds based on attendance, cost of tuition, books, and other expenses in K-12 and higher education for those states with dual enrollment policies. Bhatt and Best (2009) mentioned in their study that, “recently, states have been seeking to increase oversight
and regulation of dual credit curriculum to address issues of quality, access and financial challenges associated with dual credit programs” (p. 2). Therefore, a strategic effort must be made by secondary and postsecondary institutions in order to ensure that the return on the investment made in dual enrollment programs is visible through a decrease in high school dropout rates and an increase in college completion rates.

As federal and state funding continued to be an issue for the public school system across the United States, dual enrollment programs grew and changed the ways in which they designed and delivered postsecondary options for students. Boswell (2001) noted in his study that parents, policymakers, and the media look for high schools, colleges, and universities to come together in a changing economy and allow access for students to a relevant education at a reasonable price. Researchers have shown that some states such as Florida and North Carolina, allow the K-12 district and community colleges to “count” the students (for funding report purposes) and develop rules for these programs (Bhatt & Best, 2009; Hebel, 2007; Merchur Karp, et al., 2004; Nikias & Tierney, 2012). Although the federal government supports increasing educational alternatives, no specific guidelines have been adopted to guide decisions on design, size, and target populations (Andrews, 2004; Bailey et al., 2002; Hébert, 2001). Consistent guidelines and policies would allow dual enrollment to have seamless goals and objectives for students participating in K-12 school districts and colleges across the nation. Currently, there exists a lack of consistency between academic calendars, course schedules, crediting systems, and common content or learning standards across postsecondary institutions nationally or statewide (Hoffman et al., 2009). The systemic challenges encountered through the development of dual enrollment programs will provide a framework for
reforming and improving education to benefit current and future stakeholders such as students, administrators, policymakers, educators, and parents.

**Types of Dual Enrollment Programs**

Dual enrollment has allowed high schools and colleges to become more interconnected in providing learning opportunities for students (Edwards & Hughes, 2011). These learning opportunities are used as a pathway to college completion and are implemented in various ways throughout many school districts in the United States. More state policies are being developed that will allow more students to take advantage of the opportunity to take college courses while concurrently enrolled in high school.

**Middle College High School (MC)**

The Middle College concept was the first national model that was built on the collaboration between high schools and colleges (Born, 2006). The target population from the outset was potential dropouts and those students who did graduate from high school and were at high risk of not attending college (Lieberman, 1998). The Middle College High School concept was first articulated in 1972, and the Early College High School Initiative is based directly on the 30-year model of Middle College (Lieberman, 2004). According to the Middle College National Consortium (2011), the Middle College initiative was first established on the campus of New York’s LaGuardia Community College to give underserved youth a seamless educational continuum that included innovative curricula and pedagogy in a small caring educational environment. According to Born (2006), Middle College and Early College High School “encourage close relationships between students and adults in the community and provide exposure to the college environment as a way to encourage student responsibility and commitment
to academic success” (p. 50). Additionally, Cullen (1991) reported that the resources of high school and college are combined in the Middle College High School to develop a structure that promotes academic engagement and school membership. Lieberman (1998) also observed that, for the first time in state history, higher education and secondary systems were together at the planning table, enabling efforts toward collaboration and systemic pipeline support.

**Early College High School (ECHS)**

The next iteration of dual credit options, and the specific focus of this study, was in the form of “Early College” high schools. The major difference between Middle College and Early College High School is that students participating in Middle College have the option to take college courses, whereas Early College High School participants are mandated to take college courses (Lieberman, 2004). The Middle College National Consortium (2011) defined the Early College High School model as one that would operate as a school that serves to decrease the high school dropout rate and increase the college completion rate. According to Olsen (2010), “most middle colleges are either part of a school district or a charter school and serve several hundred students” (p. 666). In 2002, some of the Middle College High Schools were redesigned into Early College High Schools with the support of several funding sources, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Ford Foundation (Born, 2006; Middle College National Consortium, 2011). Lieberman (2004) stated that “continued failure of the nation’s school system to meet the needs of underserved students has prompted the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to launch the Early College High School Initiative” (p. 1). To this end, Early College High School came to be defined as a small, autonomous school
designed for underrepresented or traditionally underserved students of low socio-economic status, students and/or of color, and first-generation college students (Born, 2006; Green, 2006; Hoffman et al., 2009; Kisker, 2006). Thus, Early College High Schools provide minority students, who are the first in their family to attend college, the opportunity to access a college education based on more than their academic capabilities.

Born (2006) noted that the purpose of the MC and ECHS was to integrate high school programs with college programs; leading to students’ graduating with a high school diploma and an associate degree within grades 9-13. As of 2010, Jobs For the Future reported that 8% of the Early College High Schools serve students from 9th grade through 12th grade, 17% of the Early College High Schools serve students as early as 6th grade, and 10% of Early College High Schools allow students more time to prepare for college-level work and include a grade 13. Researchers have shown that approximately 75% percent of Early College High Schools partner with two-year colleges; while others partner with four-year institutions (Edmunds et al., 2010; Nodine, 2009; Webb & Mayka, 2011). Additionally, Bailey et al. (2002) stated:

The community college’s traditional role as a provider of technical education makes such a partnership with high schools an ideal endeavor—students are able to take vocational courses, high schools can focus on creating curricula that enable all students to meet high academic standards, and two-year institutions are able to fill their technical classes and create a “pipeline” of future students. (p. 21)

The ECHS partnership established with public schools and universities vary from state to state. The educational relationship developed through working together allows both institutions to develop strategies that can lead to an increase in high school and college graduation rates.
The Early College High School model was developed as a dual enrollment program planned for students who are underrepresented in college (Berger et al., 2010). African American students purposefully represent a significant portion of the ECHS enrollment based on the conceptualization of serving students who are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education (Berger et al., 2010). Various educational efforts to address the issues of educational reform for minority students have recreated and affected school curricula, personnel, and secondary/postsecondary places of learning. Currently, significant numbers of minority students are unsuccessful in education and are falling through the achievement gap (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The achievement gap is the term used to describe the disparities in standardized test scores of African-American, Latina/o, and recent immigrant students in comparison to White students (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The Early College High School program provides minority students the opportunity to close the large gap in achievement when students graduate from high school and enter college academically and financially unprepared (Williams, 2011). The area of closing the achievement gap demonstrates the impact that these disparities have on the American economy, social stability, and moral health (Evans, 2005). An educated and skilled workforce impacts the economical state of the global society. A college education is critical for economic self-sufficiency and social mobility, whereas the lifetime economic benefits are growing (Sokatch, 2006).

Minority students who are from a lower-socioeconomic status have different needs that must be considered when moving them from high school to college as early as ninth grade. Whereas, going to college for minorities is a realistic option for upward
social mobility and represents the best and perhaps only escape from poverty; they are most in need of this opportunity yet are the least likely to take it (Sokatch, 2006). “Much of the available data [on students underrepresented in higher education] focus on the risk factors and obstacles rather than protective factors and resources for students, though other factors, such as educational expectations, academic preparation, and parental involvement are also known to play a role” (Oliver, Ricard, Witt, Alvarado, & Hill, 2010, p. 16). As such, there needs to be an emphasis on social and institutional contexts that influence the behavior of students and staff to make sense of the experience of low-income and ethnic minority students (McGrath & Tobia, 2008). Early College High School, therefore, is a positive initiative that allows ethnic minority and low-income students who are traditionally underserved in higher education to begin college while in high school.

**Design and Principles of ECHS**

“Early college designs include early college high schools as well as emergent designs that adhere to early college high school principals but are suitable for any high school serving low-income young people” (Hoffman & Vargas, 2010, p. 5). Researchers have shown that Early College High Schools have been based on a small learning community concept serving low-income, underrepresented, at-risk students as early as ninth grade (Edmunds et al., 2010; Hoffman & Vargas, 2010; Le & Frankfort, 2011). According to Dukes and Dukes (2006), some characteristics of small learning communities included students knowing each other, their teachers, and administrators in contrast to the impersonal interactions that took place in larger high schools. The core of many recommendations for school reform is grounded in calls for small learning
communities focused on efforts to personalize school environments (Felner, Seitsinger, Brand, Burns, & Bolton, 2007). Researchers have noted through empirical studies the importance of small learning communities’ effect, and their impact on the development of educational policies and effectiveness of the Early College High School Model (Thompson & Ongaga, 2011). For example, the Early College High Schools’ initiative was created to: (1) increase the number of high school graduates through exposure to a rigorous curriculum, (2) provide access to college for underrepresented students, and (3) decrease the tuition cost for attending higher education (Born, 2006; Nodine, 2009; Ongaga, 2010). Regardless of particular characteristics, virtually all ECHS models that have been implemented address these three explicit goals.

According to a study by Berger et al. (2010), there were five core principles that have guided the Early College High School initiative over the past three decades. Jobs for the Future (2008) outlined the five core principles as:

1. Core Principle 1: Early college schools are committed to serving students underrepresented in higher education.

2. Core Principle 2: Early college schools are created and sustained by a local education agency, a higher education institution, and the community, all of whom are jointly accountable for student success.

3. Core Principle 3: Early college schools and their higher education partners and community jointly develop an integrated academic program so all students earn one to two years of transferable college credit leading to college completion.

4. Core Principle 4: Early college schools engage all students in a comprehensive support system that develops academic and social skills as well as the behaviors and conditions necessary for college completion.

5. Core Principle 5: Early college schools and their higher education and community partners work with intermediaries to create conditions and advocate for supportive policies that advance the early college movement. (p. 2)
Additionally, Berger et al. (2010) noted that “because the current core principles guiding the Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI) were ratified in 2008, not all Early College High Schools (ECHSs) opened with this vision. However, all intermediaries have committed to working with their ECSs [Early College Schools] toward meeting these core principles” (p. 338). As reported by Jobs for the Future (2010) in A Portrait in Numbers, a unique vision and learning environment has been developed by each Early College High School based on these five core principles. Thus, over the developmental evolution of dual enrollment programs, specific guiding principles emerged that characterize the distinctive attributes and goals of Early College High Schools.

**Development of ECHS**

Various forms of dual enrollment programs have been developed over the past 30-years. Each dual enrollment program has been designed with its own unique structure for high school students to have the opportunity to obtain college credits in response to local needs and resources. Structural differences exist in the form of course content, location, instructors, student enrollment demographics, and credits earned (Bailey et al., 2002). The researched literature has described many types of dual enrollment programs, such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), and Early College High School (ECHS) (Boswell, 2001; Edwards & Hughes, 2011). While AP and IB models allow students to take rigorous college-level courses and an end-of-course exam, some, but not all, colleges will give students college credit for such programs (Edwards & Hughes, 2011). These differences in how dual enrollment programs are structured are indicative of the lack of consistency between state policies and procedures.
The Early College High School initiative was designed as a blended relationship being established between secondary and postsecondary educational institutions that compress the time required to complete high school and two years of college (Berger et al., 2010; Born, 2006; Webb & Mayka, 2011). Therefore, the Early College High School model was built largely on the long existence of dual enrollment programs (Berger et al., 2010). Tremaine (2010) stated that, “In a national education climate more attuned than ever to college access and completion, we should vigorously pursue opportunities for direct collaboration between the institutions that run grades 9-12 and those that run grades 13-16” (p. 33). The ECHS model was specifically developed to address this objective.

As stated earlier, Early College High School developed out of the Middle College Initiative. Initially, Middle College was developed through a program at La Guardia Community College in New York to meet the needs of the adolescents who showed potential of dropping out of high school (Born, 2006; Cullen, 1991; Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000; Nodine, 2009). More specifically, Middle College High School was developed to address the 40% of students in New York failing to complete high school and, of those, only one out of four went on to college (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000; Lieberman, 1998, 2004). Lieberman (1998) went on to state that the development of this program took place from 1972 to 1974, “Middle College, the first public high school-college collaboration in the country, aims at attracting potential drop-outs and high risk students” (pp. 14-15). According to Learner and Brand (2007), Middle College High Schools’ (MC) graduate students with a high school diploma and some postsecondary credit, while students participating in Early College High School are
encouraged to graduate with an associate’s degree or two years of transferable credits. Research conducted by Born (2006) showed that out of 490 students enrolled in MC, 193 went on to enroll in ECHS. Although MC and ECHS have similar characteristics, there are some specific differences between the two types of programs. Thad Nodine (2009) described some of the important differences as such:

Early college schools, however, differ from the middle college high school design in important ways. For example, not all early college schools are located on college campuses, although over half of the schools are. More significantly, early college schools offer their students the opportunity to earn a significant number of transferable college credits, up to an Associate’s degree and a high school diploma within four or five years of starting ninth grade; this is not a tenet of middle college high schools. While not every student will earn two years of college credit in high school, all are expected to enroll in college courses, and the schools support them in doing so. (pp. 5-6)

According to Lieberman (2004), findings indicated that MC is categorized as an alternative school, and results covering a 10-year time span concluded that 97% of the students participating in MC stayed in school and 87% graduated. Although MC experienced positive results, potential barriers existed between faculty credentialing and union representation leading to the hindrance of integrated college and high school coursework (Kisker, 2006). Kisker (2006) went on to explain that MC evolved into the current ECHS collaborative model, and contributes to the need of multiple pathways from high school to college which is encouraging for our educational system in general. At this stage, educational collaborations allow secondary and postsecondary institutions to come together and support each other by sharing resources to develop the blueprint for effective educational support systems.

Corporate support has also been instrumental in the design and implementation of these innovative programs. The middle college program in New York was supported by
11 major foundations (Lieberman, 2004). The ECHS Initiative began in 2002 with financial support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and eight other organizations to increase the rate of college completion for underrepresented students (Edmunds et al., 2010; Lieberman, 1998; Oliver et al., 2010; Webb & Mayka, 2011). Furthermore, Berger et al. (2010) reported that funding for the Early College High School Initiative was a way to meet two goals: (a) improving students’ secondary educational experience and (b) improving students’ postsecondary educational experience.

The Jobs for the Future initiative supported the Early College High School model as a way to promote, develop, and implement new strategies for the nations’ workforce development and education in over 40 states (Webb & Mayka, 2011). Results from a study published by Jobs for the Future on ECHSs concluded that over 50,000 underrepresented students in higher education are being served through 230 ECHSs in at least 28 states (Webb & Mayka, 2011). Thus, in addition to advancing student’s academic interests, the national workforce has benefitted from these postsecondary programs. For example, there is a specific ECHS program called Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) that is a collaboration between the New York Department of Education, City University of New York (CUNY), New York City College of Technology, and IBM which is a globally recognized company (Gupta, 2011). The students who graduate from P-TECH have the opportunity to become employed by IBM or other companies that have a demand in the field of Information Technology (Gupta, 2011). There is a commitment among the educational and business partners of this collaboration to the students participating in the P-TECH program where
they will have project-based and workplace learning experiences to contribute to their academic and career skills (Gupta, 2011). The ECHS initiative exposes students to both educational and occupational opportunities that encourage students to pursue high demand career paths (e.g. Information Technology) that can impact their ability to increase their income in the future.

**Early College High School College Collaboration**

According to Laanan (2000), community colleges serve as the ideal place for students to explore their educational and career goals. Early College High Schools often partner with the community colleges’ tradition of flexibility and operations based on “theory of change” (Webb, 2004). The theory of change is defined as the “implicit assumptions held by practitioners and participants about why the activities they choose for addressing a particular problem will work” (Ashton, 2007, p. 42). Collaboration between high schools, community colleges, and universities is one approach to changing the options available for academically underprepared students within the public education system (Deil-Amen, 2011). Additionally, the partnership between high school and colleges through dual enrollment stimulates discussions on how to improve the nation’s high school graduation and college completion rates. Dual enrollment enables resources to be shared and provide learning options for students, establishes commonalities of course curriculums to decrease the percentage of high school graduates starting college in remedial courses, and creates a smooth academic and social transition from secondary to postsecondary education (Hebel, 2007; Killough, 2009; Nikias & Tierney, 2012).

Early College High School has evolved as a new place of education, created out of the collaborative efforts of high school and college as a type of dual enrollment.
initiative. “Several states are building statewide initiatives in which versions of early college make up a major pillar of their high school reform strategy” (Hoffman & Webb, 2010, p. 55). Reforming the educational system to meet the needs of the students will require that both high schools and colleges work together, and not separately. The ECHS model has come to be defined as a small school structure that facilitates a learning environment that is personalized for the students and a collaborative environment for high school teachers and partnering college faculty (Edmunds et al., 2010).

In the new partnership established through the places of ECHS and community colleges, teachers, students, faculty, staff, and administrators learn and build new relationships. Place-based curriculum consideration include the purposeful creation of spaces that comprise learning environments, dimensions of a created space, and the cultural and social conditions of its participants (Callejo-Pérez, Fain, & Slater, 2004). Ongaga (2010) stated that “Early College High Schools (ECHS) are at the forefront of high school reform embodying the principles of rigor, relationship, and relevance” (p. 375). Thus, Early College High School inspires and influences educational movements by supplying a place for collaboration between high schools and colleges in the 21st century. Policies that support rigor and accessibility in education have promoted the emergence of new educational spaces or places while others are disappearing (Stevenson, 2008). Such reforms have also prompted the emergence of new emotional, as well as academic challenges. “Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other” (Tuan, 1977, p. 3). America’s educational system has often offered a place of security traditionally; however, policies, technology, and a global economy have
impacted and are challenging these traditions to expand the spaces and places in education in the interest of increasing educational opportunities for all students.

**The Function of ECHS**

Early College High School functions as a place—a school program that incorporates both high school and a partnering community college or university, allowing students to take classes (for high school and college credit) on the college campus. Born (2006) referred to ECHS as a blended institution. ECHS is a type of dual enrollment program that permits high school students to earn an associate’s degree or 60 college credits as well as a high school diploma, within five years of starting high school (Middle College National Consortium, 2011). ECHS represents an avenue of college accessibility and collaboration for students while in high school that will help contribute to student’s degree completion and ultimately their success in the national workforce. The students participating in ECHS are also part of the millennial generation, and they will be entering into the workforce in large numbers (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). Furthermore, Schmitz, Baber, John, and Brown (2000) explained a new vision for connecting education in the 21st century by stating:

This new world of education hinges on two types of connectivity. The first is electronic connectivity to give our students the ability to command the new communication technologies. The other kind of connectivity is the desire and capacity to be meaningfully connected to others, from class-mates to coworkers in a pluralistic, ever-changing society. Advanced social skills in collaboration, communication and democracy are needed to connect people and their ideas. (p. 67)

Early College High Schools have served more than 75,000 students since 2002 across the United States (Early College High School Initiative, 2011). Importantly, the students who participate in ECHS are a part of the millennial generation who use technology to
function, or connect to other viewpoints of the global society. The oldest millennials are turning 33 years-old in 2015 and the youngest will be turning 13 years-old. A study on cross-generational understandings conducted by Boggs and Szabo (2011) explained the generational differences and approaches to work habits, beliefs, experiences, and attitudes for those who were from the millennial generation, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. The generational, racial, ethnic, and technological differences of students may impact students in the classroom as well as the workforce.

Due to the changes in the demographics in the United States, ECHS students in the millennial generation will be recruited by organizations that recognize that this millennial generation has different career expectations and priorities as compared with workers who preceded them (Ng et al., 2010). Obtaining a high school diploma and an associate degree from college for the millennial generation of Early College High School students is vital for future employment and success. According to Laanan (2000), “More than ever, community colleges are viewed as the segment of America’s [sic] higher education systems that plays a critical role in training the current and future workforce” (p. 20). Thus, the collaborative partnership between the community college and Early College High School also serves in the role of job training or career preparation for participating students. For example, in a qualitative study with managers, there were nine perceived orientations identified with regard to the millennial employees including “abrasiveness, indifference, unfocused, myopic, entitled, defensive, imaginative, autonomous, and self-absorbed” (Espinoza, Ukleja, & Rusch, 2010). The career and academic success of millennial learners will rely, in part, on society understanding and
recognizing the different perceptions that this generation has towards technology and its impact on work and school and effectively responding to these changes.

Attributes of the Millennial Generation in ECHS

Although each Early College High School has its own unique design and functions, the participating students have traditionally shared a critical attribute: they are a part of the millennial generation. The millennial generation students were born between 1982-2002 and are one of the trendiest topics garnering a great deal of attention in higher education (Cummings, 2007). Additionally, Tulgan (2009) noted that the millennial generation was one of the largest generations along with the Baby Boomers. Data related to the millennial generation indicate that these young people bring with them to college differences in demographic characteristics, as well as political and social values. These values will require colleges and universities to adjust how they attempt to address social issues, the design and delivery of programs, and student support services (Broido, 2004; Cummings, 2007; Lowery, 2004). Broido (2004) went on to state that “one highly visible way in which Millennial students differ from earlier students is their racial and ethnic diversity” (p. 73).

Others have described the millennial generation as the most racially diverse generation in the history of the United States (Holliday & Li, 2004). Hershatter and Epstein (2010) reported that, “to others, they [the millennial generation] are ‘Generation Whine,’ young people who have been so over-indulged and protected that they are incapable of handling the most mundane task without guidance and handholding” (p. 211). This new and diverse student demographic may be challenging for cross-generational understandings within the student-teacher relationship (Boggs & Szabo,
2011), and ultimately impact academic expectations and communication processes that are critical for academic achievement.

Educators from either the Baby Boomer Generation or Generation X have faced a dilemma in predicting and identifying the required changes for meeting the needs and demands of the new technologically savvy millennial generation of students while still fulfilling educational expectations of students with more traditional inclinations (Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil, 2004). Suleman and Nelson (2011) stated that the millennial generation is “known by a variety of names Gen [Generation] Y, the Nintendo generation, generation next, the net generation, the echo boomers, the trophy generation, and others” (p. 39). A study conducted by Kowske, Rasch, and Wiley (2010) found that the millennial generation’s work attitude compared with Baby Boomers and Generation X showed a significant difference between members of the three generations. For example, millennials display higher turnover rate as compared to their counterparts the Gen Xers and Baby Boomers (as cited in Kowske, et al., 2010). These same researchers went on to expand on the definition of generation membership by stating that, “generation members are the same age when wars are waged, technological advances are made, and other social changes occur” (Kowske et al., 2010, p. 266). It is for these reasons that it is important to develop a clearer understanding of the millennial generation, particularly African Americans, and how their perceptions may impact their construction of a student-teacher relationship with White college instructors, and how these perceptions may be reflected in their ability to achieve success academically and in the workforce.
Generation Y (the millennial generation) desires a life/work balance, good pay with benefits, advancement, and work that is challenging and interesting (Ng et al., 2010). There are also some important desires evident in an academic setting for Generation Y. Millennials are known to demand a quick turnaround time for grades, as well as immediate and constant feedback that is synchronized with their trait to multitask, which could be frustrating to a content-based professor (Monaco & Martin, 2009).

According to McGlynn (2008), college faculty members discussed millennial students and wanted to know who they are, and how they learn. It is important that faculty understand how to engage and interact with the students that are being taught in their classrooms. “It is indisputable then that teachers are key actors regarding students’ social integration and experiences in school” (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011, p. 86). The shared characteristics of students in the millennial generation may be a challenge for faculty members from past generations holding dissimilar values.

Students participating in ECHS are also from the millennial generation and are often interested in working in groups, and have a low tolerance for boredom (Roehling, Vander Kooi, Dykema, Quisenberry, & Vandlen, 2011). These characteristics and attributes have been found to pose challenges for traditional educational institutions and instructors trained in previous generations (Espinoza et al., 2011; Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil, 2004). According to McMahon and Pospisil (2005), the millennial generation considers computers, web access, and mobile phones commonplace technology, which are a critical part of their environment and lifestyle. Interestingly, some college courses are being taught by natives to the digital world who did not grow up around technology who often struggle to adapt their instructional methods with new technological advances.
Students from the millennial generation are constantly challenging professors in regard to how the traditional college experience has functioned for generations (Cummings, 2007). Consequently, the millennial generation view themselves as consumers of education wanting choices and customization in their educational offerings (Holliday & Li, 2004). The educational system must be prepared to view the millennial generation of students as educational consumers, and develop strategies that are relative to their demands. Teachers and students within the 21st century will develop relationships quite differently from previous generations due to many technological advances, such as social networking, email and cell phones.

In contrast, instructors often represent generations with different expectations of the learning environment (Jonas-Dwyer, & Pospisil, 2004) that may or may not be aligned with the academic and social development needs of millennial learners. “Whether you believe the characteristics commonly attributed to the millennial generation or not, it is clear that the manner in which students are motivated to engage in higher education has been changing, and will continue to change rapidly” (Crone & MacKay, 2007, p. 18). According to Whitlock (2007), “students and teachers are who we are in large part because of where we are; we are shaped by place; we believe, behave, speak and desire in place; we interact with each other in place” (p. 44). Although there is research about minority first-generation college student’s academic preparation, little is known about their college experiences; especially in ECHS settings (Pascarella et al., 2003).

Consequently, this research focused on a millennial generation of students, often considered sheltered, and how they relate with college faculty in a new place of learning.
and their academic achievement (Wilson, 2004). In order to inspire, engage, and motivate students from the millennial generation, there needs to be a connection between how they learn and how they are taught (McGlynn, 2008). Furthermore, “Millennials want to learn information that is relevant to their lives and that can make a difference in the world” (McGlynn, 2008, p. 21). Education can serve as a springboard and increase individual’s intellectual, professional, and personal social status (Laanan, 2000). With explicit attention to affective needs such as values, beliefs, dispositions, and attitudes of students, Early College High School programs can contribute to educational opportunities of success more effectively (Grootenboer, 2010).

**Teaching and Learning in ECHS**

Although Early College High School provides access for students attending higher education, there are other factors that may challenge students, especially those who are the first in their families to attend college. Learning in Early College High School is personal, requiring strong teacher/pupil relationships that combine high expectations with strong support in order to promote student success (Evans, 2005). For example, in North Carolina, there is an instructional framework used in each Early College High School with learning strategies such as, collaborative group work, literacy groups, and classroom talk that enable students of diverse skills to accelerate their learning in writing, talking, and questioning during class (Le & Frankfort, 2011).

However, according to Walker (2009), “despite broad recognition that teaching excellence requires meeting students’ intellectual and social needs, teachers struggle to manage—and learning theory struggles to explain—the interplay between the academic and social dimensions of classroom life” (p. 123). Moreover, Crosnoe, Kirkpatrick-
Johnson, and Elder (2004) noted the in-school intergenerational bonding within the student-teacher relationship and concluded that adolescents’ responded on a survey that teachers “somewhat” cared for them in comparison to the results of the areas on academic achievement and disciplinary problems. Research on intergenerational bonds normally refer to parent-child relationships, however, purposeful studies on students’ general feelings about their teacher, how well students get along with their teachers, and whether students perceive their teachers as caring and fair also deserve attention (Crosnoe et al., 2004). “A caring relation is, in its most basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings—a carer and a recipient of care, or cared-for” (Noddings, 1992, p. 15).

In the new blended place of ECHS, minority first-generation college students, who are often young adolescents, may require more caring relationships with their college professors than traditional college students. Huber (2009) stated that while teachers at the university levels are motivated by the care they feel for their students, many are frustrated and find it harder to teach more diverse student populations because they challenge conventional pedagogical styles and postures.

The design principles of the Early College High School emphasize that students participating in ECHS are treated as college students so that they will perceive themselves as college students (Middle College National Consortium, 2011); however, little attention is devoted to the affective dimensions of this blended model. Although teachers play a major role in ensuring that students feel a part of a school and are cared for, not all students experience teacher support (Certo, Cauley, Moxley, & Chafin, 2008). Moreover, Early College High School is a dual enrollment pathway and a collaborative
partnership with institutions of higher learning comprised largely of minority students from low socio-economic status (Middle College National Consortium, 2011).

There are several institutions of higher learning, including ECHS that are successful at recruiting minority students; however, few demonstrate their ability to retain these students (Eimers & Pike, 1997). Researchers report that “high school students need to receive and give care, and that this is associated with positive outcomes, such as the establishment of a school environment conducive to increased learning” (Ellerbrock & Kiefer, 2010, p. 396) and retention. Present ECHS models accomplish recruiting goals, but fail to meet persistence and retention objectives.

**Retention and Persistence in ECHS**

Webb (2004) stated that Early College High School is designed to better prepare these traditionally underserved students for careers that provide financial income to support their families; however, persistence or withdrawal from college is dependent upon both a student’s social (affective) and intellectual (cognitive) experiences within the college community (Eimers & Pike, 1997). Thus, Walker (2009) suggested that a conversation take place in education to discuss a framework on how and why academic and social dimensions of learning are necessary for schools (including ECHS schools) to help all students flourish in various academic settings. The ECHS millennial generation students are unique and diverse. They are primarily minority students, often the first in their families to attend college, and often enrolled in predominantly White community colleges or four-year college campuses (Early College High School Initiative, 2007). As young adolescents begin participating in the ECHS program, they require caring
student/teacher relationships with both college professors and high school teachers to support their success.

Studies have shown that students respond well to high expectations or educational acceleration (Andrews, 2004; Bailey et al., 2002; Boswell, 2001; Hébert 2001). Many students who have participated in Early College High School are of lower socioeconomic status, considered at-risk of not graduating from their high schools, and have shown little potential for successfully attending college. Lieberman (1998) described the Early College High School model as holistic and developed to raise aspirations, enrich the setting, reduce fear and anonymity, replace failure with success, and provide a sense of the future. Thompson and Ongaga (2011) conducted a case study of an ECHS in North Carolina where students stated that, “their relationships were characterized by high expectations to complete class projects, and encouraging each other to attend school regularly, and develop academic resiliency in the face of challenges” (pp. 48-49). Furthermore, Steinberg and Allen (2011) reported that programs and schools focused on “recovering” students who have dropped out of school were inspired by the bold idea of ECHSs because they help low-income, at-risk students stay engaged while being launched onto a postsecondary pathway. Though long-term studies have not yet been completed, preliminary data for accelerated learning options (Hoffman et al., 2009), enhancing the high school experience through a rigorous curriculum (Jordan, 2001), and increased educational aspirations (Smith, 2007) have confirmed the efficacy of such dual enrollment programs.

While research implicates the challenges of dual enrollment such as policies for regulatory structures (Mokher & McLendon, 2009), funding issues (Hunt, 2007), and the
college experience for the high school students (Hébert, 2001), it is important to note that although the dual enrollment programs are developed to benefit students, if the students’ perceptions of their experiences are not included in developing and expanding the programs, then many of these efforts may be ineffective and fail to provide the support, scaffolding, and structures to enable their success.

**Caring Student-Teacher Relationships in ECHS**

Student-teacher relationships are a part of the student experience in Early College High School. “Effective, meaningful relationships in schools that are grounded in the common purpose of student achievement and progress result in effective teaching and learning. Such relationships require personalized environments” (Sinner, 2004, p. 37). Research on student-teacher relationships have drawn upon the influence of attachment models, studies of social interaction, and adjustment models (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Kindermann, 2011; Wentzel, 2002). Such research has provided answers to questions related to student motivation, success, and achievement. Researchers have implied that college instructors have a major goal to facilitate and maximize student learning, while students actively seek knowledge (Lei, Cohen, & Russler, 2010). Beutel (2010) concluded in her study on teacher-student interactions that teachers perceived themselves as “significant others” with influence in the lives of students which extended beyond the classroom. According to Wentzel (2003), “a caring classroom environment in which teachers and peers support and promote the expression of positive social behaviors appears to play a critical role in promoting students’ adoption and pursuit of positive social goals” (p. 319). Observing high school students participating in Early College High School, and the college teachers engaged in the teaching and learning relationship
may provide more understanding into student-teacher relationships inside and outside the college classroom during this significant transition period.

Additionally, students described caring teachers with caring attitudes as: (a) those who demonstrated communication styles that were open and independent which brought out student participation, (b) those who held high student expectations despite differences in behavior or performance, (c) those who were interested in how they instructed and interacted personally with students, and (d) those who provide constructive feedback rather than harsh or critical views (Wentzel, 2003). The Early College High School Students may perceive teachers that display an ethic of care in a college classroom a little differently from their teachers in middle and elementary school. Docan-Morgan and Manusov (2009) reported that more investigation is needed in discovering relational turning points between students and teachers. “Relationships involve emotional work, yet teachers are given little instruction or support for the development of personal relationships with students” (Newberry, 2010, p. 1702). Additional investigation of the relationship between students and teachers in Early College High School may contribute to a more thorough understanding of student’s experiences in this new model of teaching and learning and may help to facilitate student-centered reform aimed at improving both relational and academic supports at the ECHS.

The core principles and design of ECHS have emphasized the importance of students participating in the initiative being viewed as college students. In addition, Straits (2007) stated that “caring as a component of college teaching had been relatively ignored” (p. 171). Researchers have reported that the concept of care in student-teacher relationships have manifested in the form of empathy, learner-centered instruction, and
student success (Anthrop-González & De Jesús, 2006; Eisler & Levine, 2002; Pecaski-McLennan, 2007; Straits, 2007). However, McAllister and Jordan-Irvine (2002) have noted that empathy is necessary, yet not a sufficient requirement when teaching diverse populations. While Schussler and Collins (2006) stated that “the literature base within which care holds the most prominence is the literature on at-risk student and alternative schools” (p. 1462). The ability to communicate care in a student-teacher relationship is a skill that could be taught and nurtured through a supportive educational environment, not a distinctive ability for some and not others (Pecaski-McLennan, 2007).

Of particular relevance, the educational environment of Early College High School presents a new model of the student-teacher relationship for consideration that involves college instructors/faculty and high school students. Research conducted by Noblit (1993) implied that caring in classrooms was about the ethical use of power not about democracy. While power and democracy should be considered, Hayes, Ryan, and Zsellar (1994) argued that teachers have limited time or incentives to develop relationships in caring classrooms due to prescribed communications determined by achievement tests and curriculum demands. Similarly, findings by Ferreira and Bosworth (2001) indicated that students did not attribute caring to the content or the curricula teachers taught, but the processes that teachers used in the classroom such as encouragement, guidance, checking for understanding and explaining work. According to Pecaski-McLennan (2007), “In the current age of academic rigor, standards, and accountability, the fostering of caring relationships in the classroom may not always be a priority” (p. 451). Prioritized relationships inside and outside the classroom contribute to the educational experiences of all involved in schools – at all levels.
Noddings (2001) described the ability of caring relationally as the “carer” and the “cared-for” contributing to a relationship by listening to expressed needs and responding with an explanation of why the need can be satisfied or cannot be met. Although teachers acknowledge the importance of establishing relationships with students, training is needed to know how students can be cared-for in pedagogical and social ways (Wentzel, 2003). Similarly, O’Connor (2006) reported that caring is connected to teachers’ pedagogical strategies and demonstrated within the broader social context of interactions between the student and teacher inside and outside of the classroom. The concept of care has been researched from an affective and physical viewpoint. Researchers who have explored caring from a biological or neurophysiologic aspect reported that positive experiences should strengthen selective neural circuits representing caring social bonding for both adults as well as children (Eisler & Levine, 2002). Furthermore, Ozer, Price-Wolf, and Kong (2008) reported that there were few studies that examined the experiences which enhanced positive affective bonding among teachers with high school students. Public schools must take into consideration the importance and need for care within the context of learning in order to reform education for the next generation of learners. Nel Noddings (2005) added that themes of care should be used to organize education rather than the traditional disciplines. If we aim at engaging students in general education that guides them to care for others, self, plants, animals, the environment, the human-made world and ideas, this aim will supply a firm foundation for intellectual development and academic achievement (Noddings, 2005).
ECHSs on the College Campus

There are many Early College High Schools designed to integrate high school students, to a greater or lesser extent, into the campus of a college. The college climate impacts students’ relationships with instructors and faculty members. For non-white, low socio-economic status, and first-generation students (the population characteristics of most ECHS students), these aspects of their college experience are often less than positive. Rankin and Reason (2005) conducted a study on college campus climate which indicated that “students of color experienced harassment, defined as any offensive, hostile, or intimidating behavior that interferes with learning at higher rates than White students” (p. 43). A significant consideration of the design principles used for ECHSs is to treat high school students as college students, to locate schools near or on a college campus, and structure the organization to reflect the shared responsibility of the high school, college, and school district for student outcomes (Middle College National Consortium, 2011). As a result, some ECHS students are taking college classes on college campuses with traditional and nontraditional college students, as well as being taught by college faculty. Yet, the affective dimensions of these students’ experiences and their potential impact on persistence and completion have yet to be researched.

The college campus can be intimidating, particularly for ECHS students between the ages of 14-and 15-years-old in their first-year of high school. Although Alvarado and Peebles-Wilkins (2003) acknowledged in their study that Early College High School students need both nonacademic counseling and affective development and support, yet in the review of Early College High School promotional materials neither of the two areas received a high priority. In addition, transitioning to college requires that students
actively negotiate a challenging set of demands and environmental circumstances (Oliver et al., 2010). Students of color face additional challenges in this “blended” classroom model. As research shows, “until recently, there has been no common framework for understanding the campus racial climate in a way that helps develop policies and practices that can be used to enhance the campus climate” (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998, p. 279).

**Underrepresented Minorities on Campus**

For those students who are historically underrepresented, gaining access and transitioning to college can be a frightening and challenging experience (Green, 2006). Traditionally, underrepresented students are identified as being from low-income homes, racial and ethnic minorities who are non-White, the first in their family to attend college, and have little or no input in policy, program, and evaluation decision-making (Green, 2006; Madison, 2007). Barnett (2006) reported that 80% of the students in the 2004-2005 academic years enrolled in an ECHS program were non-White. Moreover, many ECHS students are from homes of low socio-economic status, may have had limited success in traditional schools, and would be first-generation college students (Berger et al., 2010; Chmelynski, 2004; Edmunds et al., 2010). First-generation college students are defined as those for whom either parents or guardians have a high school diploma or less, and did not begin a postsecondary degree (Inkelas et al., 2007).

There are many challenges for minority low-income students, particularly African American students, from different domains such as peer groups, family, and community that may impact effective transitions while in school; however, transitioning from middle school to high school can be more intensified for this particular population (Gentle-
Genitty, 2009). Additionally, the new place of ECHS targets students confronted with urban issues of violence and drug abuse, and who traditionally underperform and are underserved by regular school (Barnett, 2006; Born, 2006; Lieberman, 2004). According to Alvarado and Peebles-Wilkins (2003), there was a presence of substance abuse problems, mental health problems, and family-related problems present for students in an early college high school, and both high school and college teachers were inadequately prepared for these complex dimensions of young people’s lives.

It is crucial that students, particularly the African American, first-generation, and low-income students being recruited to attend ECHS as early as ninth grade, have the opportunity to tell their side of the story. The Early College High School is designed to bridge the gap between high school and college with traditionally underrepresented students in higher education who are often not motivated intrinsically to academically perform, and who generally come from homes where they are or will be the first to graduate from high school, and ideally college (Born, 2006). The student-teacher relationships with college faculty encountered by the students in ECHS will be either a positive or negative contribution to academic achievement based on the student’s perception of their ECHS learning experience. Therefore, “it is indisputable then that teachers are key actors regarding students’ social integration and experiences in school” (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2010, p. 86). Sinner (2004) added that each student and each teacher must have opportunities to build effective and positive relationships in order for more effective teaching and learning to occur in schools, which includes colleges and universities.
Consequently, college faculty on the college campus may be just as unprepared for establishing relationships with ECHS students as the learners are for this novel experience. According to Williams and Southers (2010), unanticipated challenges for adult learners and instructors emerged as a theme in research conducted at a community college that hosted an ECHS. There are reports, in addition to teacher opinions, that emphasize the need for appropriate assessment procedures to help understand the academic, emotional and social adjustment experiences of adolescents enrolling in college early (Caplan, Henderson, Henderson, & Fleming, 2002). According to Berger et al. (2010), Early College High Schools serving discouraged or reluctant high school students, who may be unengaged in traditional school settings, can hypothetically motivate students at an early age to view themselves as successful participants in the college experience. Nevertheless, there is a body of practice and research emerging that suggests one way to prepare young people for college success, including those who do not envision themselves as college ready, is to provide college-level work while students are still in high school (Hoffman et al., 2009), and provide opportunities to explore college experiences though previously unattainable means due to financial constraints, location, and such.

**African American Students in ECHS**

As of the 2008-2009 academic year, there were over 41,000 students enrolled in over 200 Early College High Schools nationwide, and the two highest minority groups represented were 26% Latinos and 28% African-Americans (Nodine, 2009). Although Early College High School represents those students who are underrepresented in higher education, during the 2009-2010 school years, there were more White students
participating in the ECHS program than African American students (Webb & Mayka, 2011). African American students were even underrepresented in a program designed to serve minorities particularly in higher education in the 2009-2010 academic years. For this reason, I have chosen to focus on the African American race of students participating in Early College High School. These students are underrepresented in higher education, have lower academic success in college, and are less likely to connect with their White college instructors (Adams, 2005; Bourne-Bowie, 2000; Guiffrida, 2005). Rankin and Reason (2005) posited that the experiences of students of color at predominantly White institutions (PWI) stress the importance of campus climate. Early College High Schools that are situated on college campuses collaborate with primarily PWIs. It is imperative that further research is conducted to better understand the students’ perceptions of their student-teacher relationships, particularly with White instructors, due to the fact that African American students are more likely to be taught by a White instructor in college than an instructor who shares their same racial identity and similar upbringings.

Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy (2011) noted that African American students and their families found schools, in general, to be uninviting or unfriendly to their culture. This has contributed to cultural distrust by African American students and their families for the mainstream schools and associated personnel. Ladson-Billings (2009) described African Americans as a distinct racial group whose culture is not recognized by society. Evans (2005) concluded that schools should focus on being welcoming, comforting, safe environments for African American students, Hispanics students, and their parents if these institutions truly intend to support universal student success. African American
students who are from a lower socio-economic status and at-risk of not graduating from high school have faced many challenges. According to Cullen (1991):

The message of “work hard now to get a job later” is meaningless for many at-risk [African American] students. Many live with unemployment; many see illegal easy money; many have such poor self-images they cannot believe in their own success. (pp. 88-87)

In addition to some African American students having poor self-images, Carter (2003) indicated in his study that minority students, which includes African Americans, and students with lower grades have the most difficult experiences in classrooms of tenured teachers who evaluate them as less mature and less capable.

The various types of evaluation methods used by teachers in the classroom could impact how the student-teacher relationship is established. Student-teacher relationships have been shown to be the primary source of bonding when examining social integration within educational institutions through intergenerational bonding (Crosnoe et al., 2004). Crosnoe et al. (2004) also stressed a need to consider other social aspects of schooling such as a student’s socio-emotional adjustment. Their argument emphasized the need to focus on in-school intergenerational bonds, by examining general feelings students have about their teachers, and not the typical parent-child relationships studied for this type of bonding (Crosnoe et al., 2004). Additionally, Bergin and Bergin (2009) reported that children who were not bonded at school in a network of relationships with teachers or peers felt lonely, alienated, and outcast. They went on to report that a student’s socio-emotional well-being, attachment, and bonding with teachers and school are linked to student success.

There are many challenges and disadvantages for African American students who are the first-generation of their family entering college that could impact their academic
success. To further complicate the likelihood of their success, African American students who are at-risk of failing school have a difficult time understanding the educational transitions that must be navigated in postsecondary systems. Such transitions are critical for improving educational opportunities, and disadvantaged students do not have adequate preparation for postsecondary education (Valentine et al., 2011). While ECHSs have been located primarily on community college campuses (Jobs for the Future, 2010; Webb, 2004; Williams & Southers, 2010), Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum (2003) noted that low-income students often lack the social know-how necessary to navigate the community college environment, even in their own locales. Gresham, Van, and Cook (2006) reported:

social skills represent a set of competencies that (1) facilitate initiating and maintaining positive social relationships, (2) contribute to peer acceptance and friendship development, (3) result in satisfactory school adjustment, and (4) allow individuals to cope with and adapt to the demands of the social environment. (p. 364)

Educators, practitioners, and researchers have observed and indicated that a proportion of adolescents entering college early may be even more likely to encounter socio-emotional problems (Caplan et al., 2002) than the traditional aged college student.

When taking into consideration the factors impacting students in Early College High School such as: (a) intergenerational bonding, (b) cultural distrust, (c) educational transitions, and (d) the lack of social know-how of African American students in higher education who are at-risk of not completing high school or college, gaining a more in-depth understanding of perceived student-teacher relationships is warranted.
Summary

Given the abundance and evolution of dual enrollment programs, specifically as it relates to Early College High School, there remain several dimensions yet to be researched. In particular, little or no data exist about the relational experience between students and teachers participating in Early College High School programs. Moreover, there are questions about factors such as care and generational differences of at-risk populations, including minorities interacting with college teachers working in educational initiatives such as ECHS.

The primary focus of this study was to provide a more complete understanding of selected millennial generation African American students who are enrolled in Early College High School and their perceptions of the student-teacher relationship with White college faculty. Gaining a deeper understanding of student-teacher relationships in the context of care alongside generational indifferences, race, and lack of college experience could contribute to knowledge that may support an increase in college completion and student success for first-generation college goers. This qualitative interpretive inquiry used the following research questions as a guide toward responding to this need:

1. How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, perceive their student-teacher relationship with their White college instructors/professors?

2. How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, define their personal academic achievement?
3. How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, perceive the relationship between their White college instructors/professors caring about them as students and their academic achievement?
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

The central purpose of this study was to gain a more in-depth understanding of student-teacher relationships from the perspective of African American Early College High School students who are a part of the millennial generation. Using a qualitative approach, this study concentrated on student-teacher relationships between White college faculty members and select African American Early College students. This chapter focused on the epistemological frame, research design, setting and participants, data collection, data analysis, validity, and reliability of the study.

**Epistemological Frame**

According to Flick (2007), a form of theoretical knowledge comes from the researcher’s epistemology. “The term ‘epistemology’ comes from the Greek language, with *episteme* meaning knowledge and *logos* meaning theory. Epistemologies deal with questions about ‘truth’: what do we accept as truth? And how has this [truth] been constructed” (Grbich, 2007, p. 3)? Flick further points out that the research perspective and research methods are also forms of theoretical knowledge and play a role in how select research is designed and performed. This study used Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Interpretivist epistemologies in the research design, data collection, and analysis. It is through the lens of CRT and the interpretive paradigm that one can gain insight into
how African American students enrolled in Early College High School make sense of their student-teacher relationships with White college faculty members in this study.

Although CRT first started with legal scholars in a movement called critical legal studies, it is also used in the discipline of education to shed light on imbalances that occur in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). One of the ways in which CRT can be used as an epistemology by researchers is to question, critique, and challenge the manners in which race and racist ideologies have shaped and undermined participation in an educational environment for African American students (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). Critical Race Theory is also a tool that can be used to illustrate identifiable strengths of students, particularly African American students’ learning experiences in a classroom setting (Chapman, 2007). Because CRT places at its center a focus on race and racist systems, others can gain a better understanding of student-teacher relationships from the real life stories of African American students and their White college instructors.

Interpretivism is characterized by exploring the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences, and how those experiences are understood within a wider social environment (Grbich, 2007). According to Williams and Morrow (2009), there is a distinct difference between constructivism and interpretivism. These same researchers provided an explanation of the difference by stating that “Interpretivists tend to maintain a certain distance from the research, whereas constructivists tend to immerse themselves more completely in the participants’ experiences” (p. 577). Willis (2007) added that, “Interpretivists believe an understanding of the context in which any form of research is conducted is critical to the interpretation of the data gathered” (p. 98). A race-based interpretivist perspective was used in this study to gain a deeper understanding of the
participants’ interpretations of their relational experiences with White faculty members as African American students in the context of Early College High School.

**Research Design**

This qualitative study draws from different epistemologies while combining several strategies for data collection and interpretive data analysis. Patton (2002) stated that qualitative researchers take readers into the time and place of the observation and capture someone else’s experience of the world in his or her words. This study was designed to bring the reader into the real-life student-teacher relationships as experienced by first-generation African American students participating in an Early College High School Program who are also a part of the millennial generation in order to understand what that meant for them as students. Qualitative research evolves with the developments and changes in situations that happen naturally and emphasizes the unique qualities of both the researcher and the participants (Xuehong, 2002). It is a goal of the qualitative researcher to gain holistic and in-depth insights about interactions and perspectives of groups of people, environments, and programs (Farber, 2006; Merriam, 1998). The students in this study were observed while they were in their classrooms, social areas, and offices within a Early College High School in order to gain in-depth and holistic insights about their perspectives and experiences in their student-teacher relationships.

Qualitative designs usually focus on a smaller number of cases and people as compared to quantitative designs (Yin, 2009). Participants in qualitative work can be selected purposively which may also include different types of sampling techniques. Participants in this study were selected using a combination of purposive and convenient
procedures in order to answer the three guiding research questions in this study. A smaller number of cases can, and often does, produce a wealth of detailed data in great depth. In addition, “a qualitative design needs to remain sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 255). Ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment form data (Merriam, 2009). There were seven participants who were selected and willing to share information pertaining to their experiences while dually enrolled in high school and college. Qualitative data are presented in words and are collected by asking questions through interviews, reviewing material culture (artifacts or written documents), or watching through observations (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). As the researcher, I served as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in this qualitative study; interpretations of participants’ experiences were accessed directly through my observations and interviews and my interpretation of both (Merriam, 2009). The research questions in this study were answered through interviews and observations with the seven participants in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of their perceptions. The following research questions were used as a guide for this study:

1. How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, perceive their student-teacher relationship with their White college instructors/professors?

2. How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation enrolled in ECHS, define their own personal academic achievement?
3. How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation enrolled in ECHS, perceive their relationship between their White college instructors/professors caring about them as students and their academic achievement?

**Setting and Participants**

An Early College High School serves a minority student population who are dually enrolled in high school and college. This Early College High School is situated on a four-year university campus. My interest was specifically focused on first-generation African Americans perceptions from the students’ perspectives, who took high school and college classes on a four-year university campus. I have a strong passion to help first-generation college students complete their college goals. I have seen many first-generation college students as an admissions counselor at a community college become frustrated because they were unable to communicate with their professors, they felt as if they did not care about them as students or their academic success. I want to ensure that more first-generation college students to not only have access to higher education, but to also complete their college degrees. This study offers insight into the experiences of high school students who accepted the challenge of navigating college and high school at the same time.

**Setting Demographics**

Pseudonyms were used in this study for the Early College High School, the four-year University, participants, and public school district in order to maintain confidentiality. Strive Early College High School, Sandy University, and Strive Public School District are used as the pseudonyms in this study. Strive Early College High
School is housed in Sandy University, which is a medium-sized Predominantly White Institution (PWI) that had a total enrollment of 28,771 students in the fall of 2012, of that the total number, 20,547 or 71% of the students were attending full-time. The racial/ethnic composition of the student population at Sandy University in the 2012-2013 academic years was 73.8% White, 11.7% African American, 2.0% Hispanic, 2.4% Multiracial, and 2.1% Asian, and 0.2% Native American.

The racial/ethnic composition of the instructional staff with faculty status employed at Sandy University in the fall of 2013 was 49.1% White, 5.5% Black, and 1.2% Hispanic/Latino, 18.2% Asian, 0.6% American Indian or Alaska Native, 0% Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 22.4% Nonresident Alien, and 3% Race and ethnicity unknown based on the data available in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2013). According to Guiffrida (2005), students attending a PWI who are taking classes in a college classroom are less likely to be taught by an African American or Hispanic faculty member. As shown in Table 1 the reported racial/ethnic composition of the instructional staff with faculty status at Sandy University during the fall semester of 2013 which supports Guiffrida’s statement above.
Table 1

Reported Racial/Ethnic Composition of Instructional Staff with Faculty Status at the four year-Sandy University During Fall Semester 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Non Resident Alien</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>African American or Black</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Race and Ethnicity Unknown</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Non Resident Alien</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>African American or Black</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Race and Ethnicity Unknown</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* % = Total/165. There are a total of 165 full-time instructional staff at the public university in this study identified as tenured, on tenure track, or not on tenure track/no tenure system.

Strive Public School District is considered large and urban, serving 22,518 students in 2012-2013. Additionally, Strive Public School District has eight high schools, eight middle schools, 18 elementary schools, and eight specialty schools. The racial/ethnic composition of the students within the school district in the 2012-2013 academic year was 39.1% White, 45.8% Black/African American, 3.1% Hispanic, 7.4% Multiracial, 4.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.1% American Indian/Alaska Native. Strive Early College High School is identified as a Specialty School within the Strive
Public School District. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2014), in the 2012-2013 academic year, the racial/ethnic composition of the population of students in Strive Early College High School for this study was 46.4% White, non-Hispanic and 37.3% Black, non-Hispanic as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Enrollment Characteristics of Students Enrolled in Strive Early College High School in Grades 9 Through 12 During the 2012-2013 Academic School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Pacific Islanders</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. % = Total/ 351. There are a total of 351 students participating in Strive Early College High School in 2012-2013.

The students who were enrolled in Strive ECHS were integrated within the campus of Sandy University which had a designated area on the campus for students to meet and study, as well as office space for high school personnel. Students enrolled in Strive ECHS were dually enrolled in the Strive Public School District and Sandy University.

Sampling Procedures

Institutional Review Board Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) approval was obtained before data were collected or research conducted (Appendix A). Strive ECHS was the site chosen because it serves first-generation African American students dually
enrolled in high school and college who are also a part of the millennial generation. In addition, Strive ECHS was chosen because it is housed in Sandy University which is a four-year university. From the Strive ECHS student population, a combination of purposeful and convenience sampling techniques were used to recruit participants in this study. According to Merriam (2009), “to begin purposive sampling, one must first determine what selection criteria are essential in choosing the people or sites to be studied” (p. 77). There were four specific criteria required for the participants from Strive ECHS who were willing to participate in this study. They were as follows: (a) first-generation African American students, (b) students in their senior year at Strive Early College High School, (c) high school students taking college courses being taught by White faculty/instructors, and (d) students born between 1982 and 2002. All the participants in this study met the required criteria mentioned above that directly related to the purpose of the study (Merriam, 2009). Moreover, convenience sampling is determined by who is available and who is willing to serve in the role of a participant in the study (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Students were also recruited in this study based on their availability and their willingness to participate. More than one purposeful sampling procedure can be used in a qualitative study (Patton, 2002). Using purposive and convenience sampling in this study provided for the selection of rich cases for study.

Gaining Access

I established a relationship with the guidance counselor at Strive Early College High School through my church affiliation; this relationship helped to initiate access into the environment in order to recruit potential participants for the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). An initial meeting with the guidance counselor of Strive Early College High
School was conducted during the first week of August before students returned to campus in the fall semester of 2013. It was during this initial meeting I shared the purpose of the study, my interest in recruiting students, and set up another meeting before fall classes began.

I met with the guidance counselor for the second time during the second week of August to allow the counselor to review the recruitment questionnaire (Appendix B). During this second meeting we agreed on a date to distribute the questionnaire and discuss the purpose of the study with the senior class. The guidance counselor asked me to attend the senior orientation held the third week of August. The orientation session was held in a classroom at Sandy University where Strive ECHS is located. During the orientation, the guidance counselor distributed the recruitment questionnaire to all the African American students who attended the orientation session and collected the completed questionnaires before the students left the orientation. Questions on the Recruitment Questionnaire asked students about their instructors, courses enrolled, and date of birth as a means to help identify potential participants.

Eight students responded on the recruitment questionnaire that they were interested in and willing to participate in this study. It was those students who were given a packet describing participation in this study along with a parent and student letter (Appendix F), consent form (Appendix G), and informed assent (Appendix H) for their signature and their parents/guardians’ signature. The students were also provided the faculty letter (Appendix I) that gave an overview of the study and a faculty agreement form (Appendix J) that required the instructors’ signature to agree to allow me to conduct classroom observations.
Participants

Although eight students showed an interest, only seven students returned their signed assent and consent forms. The students who returned their forms were available and participated in the study. Participants were informed of the data collection processes prior to participating in this study, which was a part of the informed consent for participation. Seven students, who were in their senior year at Strive Early College High School, participated in this study. Participants in their senior year of Early College High School have taken more classes with college faculty members than other ECHS students in other grade levels. Five of the participants were African American males, and two of the participants were African American females. Pseudonyms were chosen by the participants and used to maintain their confidentiality in research reporting. The seven participants chose the following pseudonyms: (a) A. Lias, (b) James Black, (c) Layla, (d) Mike Smith, (e) Optimist, (f) Sasha Brown, and (g) Shawn.

Setting Up the Interviews

Each of the seven students in this study voluntarily indicated on question nine of the Recruitment Questionnaire (see Appendix B) that they would like to participate in this research project. All seven participants returned the signed assent and consent forms to the guidance counselor prior to meeting with me. After receiving the assent and consent forms, I sent an email in September of 2013 thanking the students for their willingness to participate and requested that they provide dates and times of their availability to meet and discuss the research project in further detail. There was only one email response received after the third week of September, and I decided to use a different form of technology to communicate with the students. I sent a text message to
the remaining six participants to obtain dates, times, and locations for their initial meetings. Although some students were slow to respond, each student replied with a wide range of times, days, and locations of their availability.

After sending text messages to their cell phones successfully, this particular device and method of communication became the primary form of communicating with the students. I chose to use this method of contact to set up the times, dates, and locations for the focus group meetings, observations, as well as the final interviews. While well prepared to interact with this group of millennial students using technology, I was somewhat naïve to believe that the students checked their emails more often than their cell phones. I quickly realized that these students were not situated in a traditional high school that consisted of one building with different floors and classrooms. I traveled across campus from one building to another to conduct interviews and observations. Student participants had classes anywhere at any given time on a campus with over 20,000 students. The students emphasized that they preferred to use their cell phone devices as the technology of choice to communicate; they admitted that they did not check their email accounts as often as they did their text messages on their cell phones.

All interviews and observations occurred throughout the months of October and November that consisted of 5 ½ hours of individual interviews, 8 hours of classroom observations, and 1 ½ hours toward a focus group discussion. I dedicated a total of 15 hours of interview and observation time with students and generated 148 pages of transcription. During initial interviews, students were asked to choose their own pseudonyms, and all choices were unique to the individual.
Data Collection

Data were collected from seven students participating in the study through several sources including a recruitment questionnaire, initial and final interviews, a focus group, and classroom observations. All seven participants completed the recruitment questionnaire, initial interviews, final interviews, and classroom observations; however, only six participants were available to participate in the focus group session due to a personal issue. The various methods and strategies used during data collection in this study were used to gain a better understanding and more insight into the relational experiences of African American first-generation college students’ participating in Strive ECHS with White faculty members teaching at Sandy University. In 2013, I spent the months of August and September planning dates and times to meet with students and the months of October and November observing and interviewing students. The schedule of the student interviews and observations as shown in Table 3.
Table 3

Student Interviews and Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Initial Interviews</th>
<th>Classroom Observations</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Final Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Interviews and Observations

All participants had various times and days that they were available throughout their fall semester which depended on when they had to be in classes or when they had to work. Initial interviews, classroom observations, focus group, and final interviews were conducted based on student availability. Interviews and observations were conducted at mutually agreed upon times and places. The process of interviewing and observing provided opportunities for me to achieve empathy and give an empirical basis to describe the experiences of others (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

**Initial interviews.** Initial interviews were conducted with all seven participants in various locations on the campus of Sandy University during the month of October in 2013. Interviews were held during times that would not interfere with the students’ class or work schedules. Initial interviews were held in places such as the student union or private faculty offices. The participants were willing to be interviewed in these various locations in order to be closer to their next location. During the initial interviews, I used an initial semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C). The initial semi-structured protocol was developed based on research questions one and two. Questions on the
protocol related to student-teacher relationships with White college faculty members, participants’ definitions of academic achievement, and participant’s preparation for a career. Initial interview sessions with participants were digitally recorded and ranged from 30 to 60 minutes in length. Notes were taken during the interviews for follow-up purposes in order to create analytic, personal, and descriptive field notes. Initial interview recordings and notes were transcribed for analysis within 24-hours.

**Classroom observations.** Classroom observations were conducted with all seven participants in various classrooms on the campus of Sandy University during the month of October in 2013. I conducted these classroom observations as a participant observer. Through participant observation, I am not merely a passive observer but may assume a variety of roles (Yin, 2009). I observed participants while they were attending their classes with White college faculty members and I would participate in the classroom discussions by asking questions during class to clarify specific information that was being discussed during lessons. I wrote field notes during observations about the interactions taking place in the daily lives of teachers and students within the classroom environment, with descriptions of the physical facility in which ECHS is housed and the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of teachers and students. As noted by Merriam (1998), the qualitative researcher must be highly intuitive or sensitive to the context and all the variables. These observations provided details of the natural setting in order to gain more insight and more become more sensitive of the participants’ experiences while being in a college classroom. Observations and notes also assisted with refining and expanding follow-up questions with students during the focus group and final interviews. Classroom observations ranged from 50 to 75 minutes in length. Notes were taken
during classroom observations for follow-up purposes in order to create analytic, personal, and descriptive field notes. Field notes were transcribed for analysis within 24-hours.

**Focus group.** The focus group interview was conducted with six of the participants in one location on the campus of Sandy University during the month of November in 2013. The focus group included six of the seven participants; one participant was unable to attend due to a family medical situation. Focus groups are an important tool for accessing the experiences of any group, but they are particularly useful with minority groups including racial/ethnic minorities (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Using a focus group with students who are homogenous or similar to one another because they share the same race and educational level, in this study was appropriate because it allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding about how they experienced their student-teacher relationships as African American students in their senior year of ECHS (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Focus groups are also used to follow-up on results to better understand interesting or unexpected findings (Early College Designs Data Use Toolkit, 2011). During the focus group interview I used a semi-structured focus group guide (Appendix D). The focus-group semi-structured protocol was developed based on research question three. Questions on the protocol related to the number of classes the participants were taking while enrolled in ECHS, a description of a caring teacher and if White college professors cared about them as students and their academic achievement. The focus group session was digitally recorded and lasted for 60 minutes in length. Notes were taken during the focus group for follow-up purposes in order to create
analytic, personal, and descriptive field notes. Focus group recordings and notes were transcribed for analysis within 24-hours.

**Final interviews.** Final interviews were conducted with all seven participants in various locations on the campus of Sandy University during the months of October and November in 2013. Final interviews were conducted with each participant during times that would not interfere with their class or work schedules. Final interviews were held in places such as the student union or private faculty offices. During the final interviews I used a final semi-structured interview guide (Appendix E). The final semi-structured protocol was developed based on all three research questions. Questions on the protocol related to caring student-teacher relationships, participants’ identification of a favorite teacher, and a comparison of their college instructors to their high school teachers as a means to learn more about their perceptions of faculty and their experiences in ECHS. Final interview sessions with participants were digitally recorded and ranged from 30 minutes to 60 minutes in length. I took notes during the interviews for follow-up purposes in order to create analytic, personal, and descriptive field notes. Final interview recordings and notes were transcribed for analysis within 24-hours.

**Data Analysis**

Analyzing and interpreting data entail immersion, organizing the data into chunks, and making meaning of those chunks (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). According to Merriam (2009), “data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation” (p. 176). The process of analyzing data is a dance between immersion in the text to identify meanings and reworking the text to
create sub-categories and codes that involves three ways of reading the text that is literal, reflexive, and interpretive (Check & Schutt, 2012). The analysis of data in this study used the above mentioned aspects in order to make meaning of the student-teacher relationship of select African American students who are part of the millennial generation and enrolled in Strive ECHS.

According to Tobin and Begley (2003), the researcher’s documentation of data, methods, decisions, and end product can demonstrate dependability. The audio recordings from the interviews, focus group, and field notes from classroom observations were transcribed and coded using inductive analysis on an ongoing basis. Data were coded by hand by bracketing off large sections of data with words and phrases written in the margin to identify sub-codes and themes beside the bracket. Bracketed sections of data were constantly compared to other sections of data to refine initial thinking about the codes. The analysis process started with a hard copy of the large set of data and I became deeply immersed into the transcripts by reading and re-reading them in order to get to understand the data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Immersion allowed me to review the data without coding which helps in identifying emergent themes without connections being lost between concepts and their context (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007). After the initial reading of the data, I began rereading for more specific information, seeking answers to questions that were raised and looking for connections and nuances. This type of reading is a more recursive type of reading process (Blakeslee & Fleischer, 2007). Through this recursive process I began coding the data by reading the data line by line in order to identify patterns of words or events in order to assign a code.
After reading and re-reading the data, as shown in Table 4 the initial codes and subcodes that were created from the raw data. This inductive coding process allowed me to reflect on the experiences of the participants as the data were analyzed (Bradley et al., 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Table 4

Initial Codes and Subcodes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Subcodes</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Student Acknowledgement | • Attendance  
                        | • Involvement  
                        | • Hard work/good behavior  
                        | • Sit in the front of class | One |
| 2. Resourceful       | • Getting better acquainted  
                        | • Connections to the content  
                        | • Accessibility  
                        | • Networking | One |
| 3. Self-Motivation   | • Acquire passing grades  
                        | • Access learning resources  
                        | • Force yourself to perform  
                        | • Future aspirations  
                        | • Diverse Styles  
                        | • Internal Drive | Two |
| 4. Academic Attentiveness | • Go above and beyond  
                        | • Engaging/ take time out  
                        | • Academically challenging  
                        | • Active listeners  
                        | • Support student success | Three |
| 5. Student Equality  | • Deemed to be college student  
                        | • Maintain personal standards  
                        | • Representative of African Americans  
                        | • Equal opportunities | Three |

After further analysis I identified the relationship between the codes and subcodes and developed themes that emerged from the relationship between the codes and subcodes (Check & Schutt, 2012). Each code and emergent theme was electronically filed and
labeled consistent with the focus of the study (Merriam, 2009). There emerged five themes that reflected the perception of the student-teacher relationship of African American Early College High School students from the millennial generation as well as their personal definition of academic achievement. Table 5 shows the final emergent themes that became the findings of the study.

Table 5
Final Emergent Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Emergent Themes</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Interactive</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Interpersonal</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Learning perseverance</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Instructors authentically cared</td>
<td>Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Caring instructors are not required for academic achievement</td>
<td>Three</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data show that students believed their relationships with the White college faculty members were interactive which included both the students’ and the teachers’ involvement. Students’ interactive relationships were also interpersonal relationships with White college faculty members. These two aspects of their relationship made the students feel well-known by their instructors. The students defined academic achievement as learning perseverance. They gained their knowledge of perseverance from their challenges, grades, own understanding, and other factors. The students believed that their White college faculty members authentically cared about them and their academic achievement; however, students also emphasized that they were very self-motivated to achieve academically and therefore having caring instructors was not as important for them to achieve academically. The students believed it was important for
them to academically succeed in order to portray a positive racial image as African American students to society and their communities. They did not want to be treated special because they were Black or because they were in Early College High School.

**Validity and Reliability**

According to Maxwell (2005), validity refers to the credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other reports of a study. Reliability refers to consistency or the extent to which the research findings can be reproduced and most often has to do with the instrumentation of the study (Merriam, 2002, 2009). According to Merriam (2002) there were discussions and debates in literature and at conferences as to how to consider validity and reliability in qualitative research. She goes on to state “All researchers aspire to produce valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner. And both producers and consumers of research want to be assured that the findings of an investigation are believed and trusted” (Merriam, 2002, p. 22). There is a need for researchers to address the concerns that others may have that may challenge the credibility of qualitative research as well as identify the concept of validity threats (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2002, 2009). There are different strategies that can be used to ensure validity and reliability in a study such as triangulation, member checks, rich, thick descriptions, researcher’s position, and an audit trail. These strategies were incorporated in the research methods and design of the study in order to address ethical concerns of this research study.

**Validity**

There are a variety of terms that are used for validity in the different type of qualitative research studies and by different researchers. Some researchers prefer to use
either the terms internal validity or credibility. They also use either external validity or generalizability to refer to validity (Merriam, 2009). For the purpose of this study, internal validity, credibility, external validity, and generalizability were used interchangeably. According to Merriam (2002), internal validity hinges on what constitutes reality and in qualitative research, the understanding of reality is the researchers’ interpretation of the participants’ understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Qualitative research has an underlying assumption that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single objective phenomenon waiting to happen (Merriam, 2009). External validity refers to the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Merriam, 2009). External validity can also be referred to as generalizability. Qualitative researchers usually approach external validity or generalizability through studying a single setting or a small number of individuals using theoretical or purposeful sampling, as compared to a quantitative researchers’ use of probability sampling while rarely making explicit claims about the generalizability of accounts (Maxwell, 2005). In qualitative research, a single case or small, nonrandom purposeful sample is selected in order to understand the particular in depth, not to find what is generally true about many but to reveal how the general rests in the particulars (Merriam, 2009).

Validity threats are also key concepts of validity and are often conceptualized as alternative explanations or ways in which the results of a study may be wrong and ways in which to rule out these threats (Maxwell, 2005). I have worked to create a text that uses several mechanisms to address internal validity such as triangulation member checks, as well as external validity such as rich, thick descriptions and the use of a
purposeful sample of selected participants in order to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences in their voices that can resonate with the reader. I have also considered the threats to validity in this study by identifying my own subjectivity as a researcher and recognizing that I am a human who makes mistakes. Therefore it was my responsibility to limit the impact of these threats by being open-minded and self-reflective in a constructive manner while sharing my position as a researcher as well as maintain a detailed audit trail as a part of data management.

Triangulation. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), “triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (p. 148). To this end, ensuring trustworthiness through triangulation occurs through “multiple sources of data, multiple points in time, or a variety of methods used to build the picture” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 69). I collected data for this study from multiple sources from seven different participants with different perspectives, and I used a variety of data collection methods such as observations and interviews at different times (Merriam, 2009) which are sources for triangulation used in order to increase trustworthiness of the study (see Table 3). Each source of data was compared and examined in relation to on another to confirm and/or contrast findings and emergent themes.

Member checks. I solicited feedback from the participants by giving them a copy of their individual transcripts to serve as a check between the participants’ voices and my interpretation of their meaning of the categories that were developed through data analysis (Williams & Morrow, 2009). This verification process is known as member checking, which is argued to be “a key to establishing the accuracy and credibility of
many types of qualitative research” (Bradshaw, 2001, p. 203). The feedback that I received provided me with a more in-depth meaning of the data and allowed participants to clarify their perspectives and contributions to the study.

**Rich, thick descriptions.** Thick descriptions provide details of the surroundings, actions, events, words, and people on the scene (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I provided details about the students which included the clothes that they were wearing as well as the location in which we met for various interviews and observations. I also included the voices of the students to support the findings. These details contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the data during analysis and clarification for the reader of the environment and the participants of the study. It is essential that when working with human participants, that their voice and perspectives are honored—rich and meaningful descriptions help to convey participants “humanness” in the data.

**Reliability**

According to Merriam (2002, 2009), reliability refers to the extent to which replicated studies are able to yield the same results. However, qualitative research will not yield the same results due to various interpretations of the same data. It is more important for the results in qualitative research to be consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 2002, 2009). There are several strategies that qualitative researchers can use to ensure for consistency or reliability such as triangulation, researcher’s position, and an audit trail. I used all three of the above mentioned strategies to ensure consistency in the data collection and analysis process.

**Researcher’s position/reflexivity.** Qualitative researchers, specifically those who operate from an interpretivist paradigm, reject the idea that one can be objective and
neutral in research (Willis, 2007). According to Merriam (2002), researchers should explain their position on the topic being studied and what values and beliefs might affect data collection. She went on to state that the researcher’s position has also been referred to as reflexivity by other scholars which allows the researcher to reflect critically on the self as the human instrument in the study (Merriam, 2009). Clarification of the researcher’s values and assumptions allow the reader to better understand how individual researchers arrived at particular interpretations of the data (Merriam, 2002, 2009). Therefore, qualitative researchers recognize their beliefs and values and acknowledge them to the best of their abilities (Willis, 2007). As the primary instrument in this study, I acknowledge that I brought my own world views and experiences as an African American, first generation college student to the study. To this end, I kept personal field notes to reflect on my thoughts and personal feelings about being a minority woman on a large campus who struggled with navigating the culture of higher education that included many isolated experiences. Because of my own experiences I may assume that other African American college students have these same struggles. My family encouraged me as much as they could; however, learning how to navigate the culture of higher education and adjust to being perhaps the only minority in the classroom required a more proactive approach to finding resources. I had to seek resources and support outside of my own family and oftentimes it came from the relationship that I had with my professors.

I grappled with the progress of data collection and analysis and keeping personal field notes allowed me to reflect on myself and my involvement with the data. Qualitative researchers using critical theories routinely use reflexivity or researcher’s position as a tool to better represent, legitimize, or call into question their data (Rossman
Interacting with participants and allowing the participants to respond to me as a researcher allowed for reflexivity (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Reflexivity can be challenging, and an uncomfortable reality of doing engaged qualitative research (Pillow, 2003). I also used personal field notes to recognize and consider my existing preconceived notions on the research (McCabe & Holmes, 2009). In my personal notes I would continue to remind myself “these are their experiences” not my own experiences and this process helped me to remain more aware of my own voice and position during analysis.

**Researcher’s position/subjectivity.** An awareness of your subjectivities can guide you to strategies to monitor those perspectives that might skew or distort what you make of what you see as you write up your data (Glesne, 1999). As an African American first-generation college student and researcher at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), I have come to appreciate and value the importance of an effective and caring student-teacher relationship. In addition, I have learned from my religious beliefs that caring relationships with others is one way in which I can express my faith. While I am appreciative of the student-teacher relationship, through my experiences in higher education I had a difficult time trusting White faculty members. This issue of trust may have come from being raised by my grandparents who were from the South who often shared stories of racial discrimination they encountered, particularly in education, while growing up in the state of Georgia. I have always heard from my family “get a good education” but I realized that I would have to get an education from people who I felt could not relate to me and my struggles to understand the culture of higher education as an African American first-generation college student. After attending a PWI for a
number of years, I finally encountered a caring student-teacher relationship with a White faculty member who I believe greatly influenced my academic success. I was able to trust her insights and knowledge and I felt that she genuinely cared about my success which motivated me to complete my degree.

However, I have learned the hard lesson of balancing my personal feelings within a caring student-teacher relationship. It is the balance within the student-teacher relationship that I have come to trust and realize that it is my responsibility to manage my emotions and passion and learn more about the culture in which I have to navigate in order to “get a good education.” I am constantly reflecting on my relational experiences, my religious beliefs, and reflecting on the life lessons to be learned. With that in mind, I am not going to divorce my own subjectivity. I believe Maxwell (1992) articulated my concept of subjectivity clearly when he stated “as observers and interpreters of the world, we are inextricably part of it; we cannot step outside our own experience to obtain some observer-independent account of what we experience.” (p. 283) Being aware of my subjectivities allowed me to learn more about myself.

After careful reflection of my own relational experiences with several White faculty members, either good or bad, I have found that it gave me the passion to pursue this research. I am determined to learn about and understand African American students from a younger generation and their relationships with White college faculty. My relational experiences with college faculty has motivated and engaged me as a minority, first-generation college student. This research study allowed the perspective of African American high school students who are still in high school to share their stories if they have been taught by White faculty members who care and how that care might impact
their academic success. These students are able to tell their stories in their own voice about what academic achievement is to them as high school students dually enrolled in college. It is my hope that the findings from this study will provide a more in-depth understanding of the student-teacher relationship and academic achievement in higher education, particularly with African Americans students and help institutions of higher learning to better meet the needs of students; especially African American ECHS students.

**Data management/audit trail.** Merriam (2009) stated that organizing and managing data needs to take place early in the research study and it also authenticates the findings in the study by following the audit trail. According to *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (2008), an audit trail is a thorough trail of evidence that includes notes about data collection experiences, the researcher’s experience in the conduct of the study, and memos generated during data analysis. I used a three-ring binder to organize an audit trail of a large amount of data for this study that consisted of the transcribed interviews and observations of seven participants that were expanded and coded as either analytical, descriptive, or personal reflections. Analytical notes were identified by an italicized bold font, descriptive notes were in normal font, and personal notes were in bold font. The three-ring binder included tabs that separated the transcribed data for each individual participant’s recruitment questionnaire, initial interview, classroom observation field notes, final interview, and focus group. Transcriptions were dated, paginated and had a reference code. The large amount of data collected was kept in a locked, secure location and the participants’ identity remained confidential. After data were collected, all transcribed interviews and field notes were
kept in a locked file cabinet. I was the only person who had access to the electronic files in a password protected computer.

Summary

This chapter explored the methodological design, the setting and selection process of student participants, data collection, data analysis, validity, and reliability of the study. These aspects of the study provided a pathway for answering the research questions pertaining to the relational experiences of African American students who were the first in their families to attend college as a part of the millennial generation in a place known as Strive ECHS. Qualitative research based on the experiences of African American students dually enrolled in high school and college may, therefore, be a challenge. Nevertheless, the interpretive perspective described in this chapter allows me to enter into the natural environment of the participants and allow their voices to be heard. Allowing these students’ relational experiences with White college faculty members to be explored in the context of Critical Race Theory while intersecting with the concept of care, may solicit a more in-depth understanding of dual enrollment initiatives that are beneficial to the academic and institutional success of those stakeholders involved, especially the students.

This qualitative research allowed select African American high school students who are a part of the millennial generation dually enrolled in high school and college perspectives to be heard. Understanding the experiences of young African American college students and how the concept of “caring” is perceived in their lives through their student-teacher relationships in education may contribute to college retention and completion. There is a need for more research to expand the body of literature that
focuses on the meaning of student-teacher relationships in higher education particularly with first-generation college students.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the recruitment questionnaire, interviews, observations, and field notes related to this study. These findings interpreted students’ perceptions of their student-teacher relationships with White college faculty members and their academic achievement. There were five males and two females interviewed and observed individually in seven different college classes; they also participated in one focus group interview in the fall semester of 2013. Findings were used to answer the following research questions based upon the analyzed data collected:

1. How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, perceive their student-teacher relationship with their White college instructors/professors?

2. How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, define their personal academic achievement?

3. How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, perceive the relationship between their White college instructors/professors caring about them as students and their academic achievement?
This chapter also includes figures that provide a visual representation of the themes that emerged through the analytical process. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings from the seven African American students enrolled in ECHS that participated, and how they perceived their student-teacher relationships with White college faculty members.

**Description of ECHS Participants**

Each of the seven African American students in this study are briefly described below. Their descriptions include details related to their physical appearance and other unique characteristics that they displayed.

**A. Lias**

A. Lias was the only participant who responded via email and said that he could meet at 9:00 a.m. in the ECHS Office because it was closer to his next class that started at 10:15 a.m. The office we used was well lit with open space. He was tall and thin with a Mohawk haircut. He had a bright smile and wore a red T-shirt with funny faces. We sat at a round table in the office with plenty of space for our meeting. He stated on the recruitment questionnaire that he was curious about the ECHS program and decided to participate. He described being a high school senior on a college campus as: “Yeah it’s like 70 in a sea of 30,000 (chuckles)” (INV. A.LIAS, p. 2). A. Lias planned to attend college after completing the ECHS program. He had four college courses that totaled 15-credit hours during the fall semester of his senior year. A. Lias self-reported that his Grade Point Average (GPA) was between 3.5 and 4.0. He planned to graduate from ECHS with an Associate of Science Degree. He also had a younger sister who was
enrolled in ECHS. During our interviews, A. Lias mentioned that he would be conducting an admissions telephone interview with Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He seemed enthusiastic about the opportunity to attend MIT. While he was not sure if he wanted to attend that particular college, he submitted his application based on his parents’ strong influence to apply to colleges that were away from home. A. Lias appeared anxious to learn more about his options at MIT.

**James Black**

James Black responded by text message and requested to meet in the Student Union at 8:00 a.m. for the initial interview because his first class began at 9:05 a.m. James was on time for our initial interview. We met in the Student Union and James walked fast. We went to the lower level of the Student Union, which was somewhat empty perhaps because it was still early in the morning. James wore a gray hoodie sweatshirt that had the ECHS school logo. During our initial interview, I asked him to tell me a little about himself and he stated, “I’m Vice-President of Early College 2014, I am president of the prom committee, I volunteer at the zoo, I am a server at an Italian restaurant, [and] this is my fourth job” (INV. JAM.B, p. 1). He also shared that he mentored other ECHS freshmen through the student mentoring program. James shared that he chose to attend the ECHS program because his older sister had also been in it; he planned to go to college after completing ECHS and major in Dentistry. He took six college courses during the fall semester of his senior year. James listed his classes as “Visual Arts, World Civ. Latin America, Anatomy and Geology, Economics, oh and I counted the Geology lab so that’s six” (INV. JAM.B, p. 2). James self-reported his GPA was between 3.5 and 4.0.
Layla

Layla responded by text message and mentioned that she had a break in between classes and requested to meet at 10:00 a.m. in the ECHS Lobby. We were able to meet and at that time of day there were a lot of younger ECHS students. These students were sitting at tables in the lobby area that resembled more of a study hall but was a little less structured. We used a small office in the ECHS Office area, and it was a nice and quiet location with two desks that were facing each other. Layla was tall with long curly black hair and she had a big smile on her face when we saw each other. Layla’s bright bubbly smile was comforting. She wore a T-shirt and sweat pants. She had braces on her teeth and she was very articulate. Layla stated she chose to attend ECHS because she had outstanding grades, and she had received recommendation letters from her former teachers. Layla planned to attend college after completing the ECHS program. She would like to major in Anthropology; her favorite subject is History. She took five classes during her senior year of ECHS. She discussed the classes that she had taken during our interview as follows “Greek Mythology, Western Traditions, the discussion of Western Traditions, World Civilizations with Latin America, World Civilizations Japan, and Survey of Basic Economics” (IND.INV.LAYL, p. 2). Layla’s self-reported GPA was between a 2.5 and 2.9. Layla also had a sister who had graduated from the ECHS program with her Associates degree. There were three of the seven students who had siblings who had attended or were currently enrolled in ECHS. All of the participants seemed proud to have their siblings there to learn from their experiences or to be taught about what to expect.
Mike

Mike responded by text and said he could meet with me any time after noon because he did not have any classes for the remainder of his day. We met in a well-lit ECHS office with a round table that we used during the interview. Mike was very soft spoken and was rather tall with a short haircut. Mike appeared somewhat frazzled during our initial interview. Mike carried a few folders in his hands and the papers in the folder were hanging outside of the folder. Mike shared with me that he wanted to apply to the ECHS program in the seventh grade but discovered that he had to wait. He also mentioned that he worked approximately 20 hours a week, and he had a lot of chores he was responsible for at home. He was not sure what his plans were after completing the ECHS program but he mentioned that he would like to pursue a career in Philosophy or Psychiatry. He also indicated that he did not have a favorite subject, yet he had five college courses during the fall semester of his senior year. These courses included “Technical Physics Mechanics 1, Survey Mechanical Engineering, Technical Math 4, Earth Science, and Senior Seminar” (INV.MIK.SMI, p.3). Mike self-reported his GPA was between 2.0 and 2.4.

Optimist

Optimist responded by text message and he said that we could meet after noon in the Student Union. He had a Mohawk haircut, a plaid shirt and jeans during our initial interview. We found a quiet location on the second floor of the Student Union with comfortable chairs. Optimist mentioned that he chose to participate in the ECHS program because of his mother. Optimist planned to attend college after graduating from the ECHS program, and he wanted to work for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI);
he took seven college classes during his senior year. Like some of the other ECHS students, he worked part-time when he was not taking classes. During our interview, I asked him which classes he was taking. He shared: “Criminal Justice, Math for Modern Technology, Introduction to Sociology, Humanities and Western Tradition, and Basic Chemistry, plus a lab for Chemistry and a discussion for Humanities; this makes it seven classes” (INV.OPTI, p. 2). Optimist self-reported his GPA was between 2.5 to 2.9.

Sasha Brown

Sasha responded by text and requested to meet in the morning for an hour after her first class. We met at the Starbuck’s located on the top level of the ECHS building. Sasha seemed serious about being an ECHS student and she was very articulate. She was a tall chocolate brown complexion with long straight black hair and wore glasses. She was dressed like a typical college student who appeared confident about her decision to participate in this research project. Sasha planned to attend a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) after graduating from ECHS to pursue a degree in Medicine with an emphasis on Obstetrics and Gynecology (OB/GYN). She mentioned that her favorite subject while in ECHS was History, and she took a total of four college courses during the fall semester of her senior year. Her four classes consisted of Humanities and Western Traditions, Baroque, Astronomy, and Spanish. When asked what she was learning in the Baroque class, her response was, “It’s like a music class; you start like with the Middle Ages and go up until present day” (INV.SASH.BRO, p. 2). Sasha self-reported her GPA was between 3.0 and 3.4. Sasha chose to attend the ECHS program because of her mother’s influence and she was happy that she decided to attend. Sasha attended small private schools before attending ECHS.
Shawn responded by text message and he wanted to meet in the Student Union which he stated was a mid-point for him from one class to the next. Shawn spoke softly during our interview. He was thin with a well-groomed Afro hairstyle and he wore a black T-shirt and skinny jeans. Shawn slouched down in his chair during our interview. When I asked how he chose to be in the ECHS Program he stated, “It wasn’t my decision. My parents heard about it and made me do it” (Recruitment Questionnaire, p.1). Shawn was truthful about not wanting to attend ECHS; he was more interested in the arts. Shawn was unsure of his plans after completing high school. He was taking five college courses during his senior year. He wanted to go to film school after graduation and attend a college in New York; he seemed to believe that ECHS does not allow him to express his artistic skills as much as he could. When I asked him did he take art classes in ECHS, he responded, “This semester I took film just so I wouldn’t be bored, but I don’t want to take classes that aren’t like specific to what I need to do because I don’t want to waste credits and stuff.” (INV.SHAW, p. 5) He also mentioned his specific goals and aspirations. “I want to produce music, and like I’m trying to save up so I can get a camera and record videos and stuff. I know I want to do stuff like that, like I know for a fact that that’s what I want to do. But that type of stuff doesn’t pertain to school” (INV.SHAW, p. 7) Shawn self-reported his GPA was between 2.0 and 2.4.

The information in Table 6 provides an overview of the ECHS participants. The students’ names are listed in the first column of the table, the second column lists the number of college courses that each participant took the fall semester of their senior year in ECHS, the third column lists their plans to attend college after graduation, and the
fourth column lists their future career paths or college majors. The last column provides their self-reported GPA during the fall semester of their senior year.

Table 6
Overview of the Description of ECHS Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>No. of College Courses</th>
<th>College or Career after Graduation</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Self-Reported GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Lias</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>Between 3.5 and 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Black</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Dentistry</td>
<td>Between 3.5 and 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layla</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Between 2.5 and 2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Smith</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Between 2.0 and 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimist</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>FBI Agent</td>
<td>Between 2.5 and 2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasha Brown</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>OB/GYN</td>
<td>Between 3.0 and 3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawn</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Film/Music</td>
<td>Between 2.0 and 2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Data for this study were collected from seven African American ECHS students to gain a more in-depth understanding of their perceptions of their student-teacher relationships, their definition of their personal academic achievement, and other aspects of their experiences in ECHS with their White college professors. Five emergent themes were developed from the diverse detail-rich experiences of the participants in this study. These emergent themes supported the recurrent and unifying ideas regarding the subjects of student-teacher relationships, care, and academic achievement (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007). They also characterize the experiences of the individual participants which evolved from conceptual and relational codes and subcodes (Bradley et al., 2007). The codes and subcodes used to develop the emergent themes were established through a constant comparative method, which included an inductive analysis of the data (Merriam, 2009). The emergent themes also captured the recurring patterns that cut across the data.
and were named to reflect what was in the data (Merriam, 2009). In addition, examples of participant responses were used to support the findings and the development of emergent themes for each research question.

**Research Question One: Student-Teacher Relationships**

Research question one asked: How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, perceive their student-teacher relationship with their White college instructors/professors?

There were two emergent themes revealed that answered research question one, which demonstrated how the African American students from the millennial generation in ECHS in this study perceived their student-teacher relationships with White college instructors/professors. The two emergent themes were: 1) interactive and 2) interpersonal.

The interactive theme captured the connections that were experienced between the students with their instructors based on interrelated actions and responses that occurred inside and outside of the classroom. These actions and responses were acknowledged and noticed by students as well as their instructors. The actions and responses could be initiated by either the students or the instructors which consistently happened throughout their student-teacher relationship. The students felt that these actions and responses that occurred between them and their instructors were important and provided a genuine connection for them as students to their instructors.

**Interactive.** African American ECHS students from the millennial generation in this study consistently made reference to how their relationship was interactive. They discussed various examples of the actions and responses between them and their
instructors that created a connection. According to the students, the connection between them and their instructors required both parties’ involvement. Students gave specific examples of the actions and responses that they believed their instructors noticed and acknowledged. Some examples were as follows: (a) behaviors, (b) attendance, (c) academic abilities, (d) where they sat in the classroom, or (e) when they saw their instructors on the campus. Students constantly made reference to how being acknowledged and noticed by their instructors contributed to their interactive student-teacher relationship.

Figure 2 illustrates how African American students enrolled in ECHS perceived their student-teacher relationship with White college faculty members. This figure demonstrates the student and teacher as the center of the relationship while being connected to each other by their actions and responses, which presents a model for the emergent theme interactive.

Figure 2. The first emergent theme, interactive, for research question one.
Each of the African American ECHS students shared how they perceived their student-teacher relationships. From an analysis of the data, the perception of their student-teacher relationship was interpreted as interactive actions and responses between them and their instructors that created a connection. Students believed that the connection they made with their instructors based on their interactive actions and responses allowed their instructors to know them personally. Students felt as though the knowledge that the instructors had about them as students within the relationship was not necessarily because they were ECHS students, but because of who they were as individuals. Students shared how being “known” by their instructors allowed the students’ perceptions to be interpreted as relationships with their college faculty members as both interactive that made students feel special. Layla made the statement below to refer to her experience of how interactive her relationship was with her instructor that she thought contributed to her genuinely being known by her White college professors:

The teachers know me; they think that I’m a really good student and that I try my hardest. My one class or whatever I was on a borderline C+ and B- and the teacher saw that I came to class every day and that I actually tried and participated so she bumped my grade to the B-. I needed to get a good grade. I try to keep a stable ground with my teachers so that I don’t run into them later on in life and they like have an attitude with me. . . . I don’t really do anything to make them mad. (IND.INV.LAYL, p. 3 & 4)

Layla’s comment revealed how important it was for her to consistently interact with her instructor in class because she mentioned how she “tried” and “needed” a particular response from her instructor. She felt as if she could maintain the student-teacher relationship when she consistently attended class every day and participated. Students viewed these interactions as genuine and demonstrated how much Layla cared about how her teachers viewed her as a student and what that could mean for her later in her life.
Layla saw her genuine interactions as beneficial to the student-teacher relationship. Not only does her comment illuminate how much she cared it also shows that the teacher also cared enough to take time and respond to Layla’s actions.

James’ too shared his perception of his student-teacher relationship with White college faculty members while being enrolled in ECHS as an African American male. He stated the following:

Yeah, see that is why I try to stay. I do not want to say connected, but I try to make sure that I know my teachers and my teachers know me just so if I do know something they do not have to scramble through the files just to find out who I am, so I just make sure for me, you know that I take the initiative to try and get to know my teachers, do the little assignments or whatever, sit in the front so they can recognize my face. (INV.JAM.B, p. 3)

James’ response showed his willingness to take action that allowed him to click with his instructors. Although he did not want to say the term “connect,” one may note that James wanted to ensure that he was willing to relate to his instructor. While being interviewed he clearly articulated that he does not want the instructor to only know him by a file but rather by him taking the [personal] initiative to complete his assignments. There seemed to be a fear on his part that if he were less familiar to his instructors that his hard work may go unacknowledged or lost.

Student participants often discussed how they felt about their teachers interacting with them on a personal level and how they cared about their teachers who responded to them in different ways. Sasha Brown shared this when I asked her about her perception of the student-teacher relationship with White college faculty members:

I’m okay, well, I’m starting to get into my major so there are smaller classes so I know my teacher’s more personally now so I like that. It is better and I like that personal feeling like they know my name, I know your name, it has a good effect and a bad effect because if they know you they may pick on you more but also
because they know you, they know what you can do, and they know how to push you. (IND.SASH.BRO, p. 4)

Sasha’s comment showed the bond she had with her instructor because he or she knew her name. She believed that because her teacher responded to her it made their relationship better. Sasha also mentioned that instructors who know a student’s capability may challenge them to do more. Although she never specified what was bad or good about being pushed more or being picked on more, she stressed how the student-teacher relationship supported an individualized connection that was personal not simply academic.

Optimist had this to say about his perception of the student-teacher relationship and teachers knowing him as a student, he saw it as having a positive and important effect on the relationship:

It’s a pretty genuine relationship. I mean I don’t know all of my teachers personally but I can talk to them mostly about anything if I just went up to them and asked them anything about the class or anything personal. I guess, (pauses) I think what makes a good relationship is when the teacher knows your face and they notice that you’re doing the work that they teach and they appreciate it, so they don’t have favorites or anything but they take the time to know who’s doing the work and who’s not, but I feel like what defines your relationship is (pauses) it’s hard to explain basically when they know you. It doesn’t have to be personal. (INVI.OPTI, p. 4 & 5)

Optimist used the term “genuine” to describe how he perceived his student-teacher relationship with White college faculty members. He focused on the genuine actions associated with being known by his teacher such as them taking time to know and acknowledge that he was completing his work.

Finally, A. Lias and James continued to discuss how their perceptions of their student-teacher relationship to be interactive. They gave examples of how they believed their individual actions contributed to their connection to their teachers. Alias felt as
though his actions caused his teacher to respond. He felt as if their interactive
cconnections with each other contributed to him being his teacher’s “favorite” student.

James shared how being recognized by his instructors outside of class was important and
they cared enough about him to speak to him when they saw him. Their interactions as
student and teacher allowed them to have a connection inside and outside of class.

No, No, I feel like I’m pretty active so they remember me. And they question me,
so like even the scatter brained teacher, I was her favorite student. I would
always be showing up, and be like what are we doing. I mean, I don’t know . . . I
think that they know who you are. (INV.A.LIAS, p. 5)

James continued:

It’s sitting in the front, participation in class is a lot, asking a question if its inside
or outside, or something like that even through email or something like that, just
make sure that you’re not that kid in class that doesn’t say anything and they saw
you outside of school, they would never recognize you because that’s another
thing, I still see teachers all the time that I know and we will speak. I mean just
stuff like that. (INV.JAM.B, p. 4)

The comments above indicate how students believed their student-teacher relationships
were fundamentally interactive. Although A. Lias referred to his instructor as a “scatter
brain,” he still viewed himself as her favorite student as a result of their relationship.

Importantly, students’ shared that their student-teacher relationships continued inside and
outside of the classroom. Throughout the study the ECHS students shared how the
actions and responses that occurred contributed to the connection they had within their
student-teacher relationship. I noted from my classroom observation of A. Lias the
following:

CL.OB.A.LIAS-2: The instructor is taking attendance at the beginning of class
and has mentioned A. Lias’ name even before class begins, this leads me to
believe that he does know A. Lias. . . . The instructor seems to know A. Lias on
more than just a name basis; it appears they have had discussions. I’m not sure if
it was in-class or outside of class.
During the classroom observations I noted the classroom seating location of Early College High School student participants, only Shawn and Mike Smith sat in the back of the classroom; the other five students sat in the front of the class and the instructors acknowledged them by name.

The interpersonal theme revealed how students felt valued when they were engaged by their instructors academically, socially, or emotionally. Students’ felt important or as if they were their instructors’ “favorite” student when their instructors acknowledged and noticed them. Students experienced interpersonal elements from their instructors who took extra time to help them understand a lesson, who noticed their willingness to work harder, and who allowed them to earn extra credit. Students perceived these supportive behaviors from their instructors not only as caring, but also a special and a genuine expression of their relationship. The participants in this study believed their student-teacher relationships required both the student and the instructor to interact in various ways and at different times which allowed their relationship to be perceived as both interactive and interpersonal.

**Interpersonal.** The students in this study perceived their relationships with White college instructors/professors as interpersonal. The students revealed that their interpersonal relationships consisted of and included getting better acquainted with their instructors, having accessibility to their instructors outside of class, one-on-one communication with their instructors, instructors knowing them, and sharing resources. The students also believed that their interpersonal relationships with their White college instructors were genuine. The interactions within their student-teacher relationships provided the foundation for students to experience an interpersonal relationship with their
instructors. Figure 3 illustrates the interactive theme expanded to include the interpersonal theme that involved the student, teacher, actions, and responses within the student-teacher relationship.

Figure 3. The second emergent theme, interpersonal, for research question one.

Students felt as though their instructors knew them, and knowing them was fundamental in building their interpersonal relationships. James Black’s statement below described how interpersonal his relationship was with his instructors:

> It was because I recognized how important the teachers were in my academic life and life period because they helped me through a lot of stuff, and a lot of the times the teachers whose class I was going to, like, they knew my older sister so they already knew me because I would go see my sister all the time. So, like, that already helped me build a relationship with them. (INV.JAM.B, p.4)

He viewed his student-teacher relationship as one that would benefit him throughout his life. I learned that a few of the students in the study already had siblings who either completed ECHS or were currently enrolled. It appeared as if having a sibling in ECHS
provided an added benefit to the student-teacher relationship for the students who participated in the study. The students shared how they either gained or received more insight into what to expect academically and socially while enrolled in ECHS.

Mike Smith, unlike other students, placed the interpersonal aspect of his student-teacher relationship on a more superficial level; however, he still acknowledged how it contributed to his academic achievement. He stated, “It is [the student-teacher relationship] generally on an acquaintance level, like, I mean if I went to them for help they would help me” (INV.MIK.SMI, p. 3). He continued by stating, “There was one teacher last semester, the spring semester 2012 that was, like, I had to go visit his office a few times, and he did help me out a lot. He cared about my success as a student” (INV.MIK.SMI, p. 3).

The students shared the importance of having an interpersonal student-teacher relationship, and how it could benefit them in their future endeavors. Layla and Optimist were very specific about how interpersonal their student-teacher relationships were with White college faculty members which was helpful.

Somebody who steps out of their boundaries to try to help a student, not step out of their boundaries in a negative way but, in a way that you cannot get in trouble, but opening up to being able to help them outside of office hours or whatever, like, being able to communicate with them and try to help them pass the class that you are teaching. (IND.INV.LAYL, p. 2)

Layla shared a specific example of how her interpersonal relationship with her instructor has allowed her to meet new people and think about new opportunities:

Yeah, I think it is [the student-teacher relationship] important to me because they help me in some ways more than one, like, my one teacher for Human cultures was an Anthropologist, that’s my major, and he’s helped me, like, talk to and introduce me to people in the Anthropology and Classical Studies Department at the University, and he’s helped me to find new ways and how to think and what
certain things happened, and why certain things happened, and you know gives me more of an open mind to new things. (INV.LAY, p. 4)

In her comments, Layla explained how her interpersonal relationship with her instructor created a network with other faculty members on campus that would be beneficial for her in the future. Layla seemed to light up when she spoke about her professor and she shared that she would never forget the way in which he helped her.

Optimist had this to say about the interpersonal relationship he had with his Criminal Justice instructor:

Because having a criminal justice background and the instructor being a criminologist pertains to the same type of stuff that I want to go into the FBI, so I pretty much have to keep in touch. Well, I don’t have to, but I will decide to because hopefully he can help me in where I want to go, and have connections and everything. (FINV.OPTI, p. 4)

Both comments illustrated the connection Optimist and Layla had within their student-teacher relationship and how that connection comes from the interpersonal interactions they have with their instructors while enrolled in ECHS. They believed that having a meaningful interpersonal relationship with their instructors was helpful for them and served as a platform for their future. Optimist mentioned that he chose to maintain the relationship with his instructor who is a criminologist, because it could help him as he planned to pursue a career as an FBI agent. It appeared as though the students were mindful of their future, and how the relationships they had with their instructors during high school could benefit them in the workforce and future academic aspirations.

Finally, when Mike Smith was asked if he planned to continue to communicate with his professors in the future, he indicated he would and further explained, “because I know I’ll need help in the future, and I’m definitely going to get it” (FINV.MIK.SMI, p.5). Mike’s perception of the help and the support that he received from his college
instructors was a part of their interpersonal relationship that they shared as student and teacher. Although many of the students recognized how receiving help from their professors could work to their benefit, the students also acknowledged that not getting that support could be just as damaging to them and their overall success.

As a key example, James Black had a very strong response when college instructors did not help him:

If I need help and it’s obvious I need help, and I tell you that I need help, I mean I should be able to receive some type of help, ‘cause if not, then what’s the point in you teaching me? Cause if you’re putting your PowerPoints online and that’s all you’re doing in class, then there is no use for you. You’re supposed to be there to help me, and if all you’re doing is showing me the PowerPoints that’s online, I mean, I could have did that by myself. (INV.JAM.B., p. 2)

As the interviews progressed with the ECHS students, the students constantly emphasized the importance of and appreciation for the student-teacher relationship they experienced based on the wide range of involvement they had with their instructors and on various levels which influenced their interpersonal relationships. Their responses indicated how they were willing to initiate a relationship with their White college faculty members and did not feel as if it was the faculty members’ sole responsibility in the relationship. These students were grateful and appreciative of their opportunity to have an interpersonal relationship with their instructors that would and could be accessed in their futures. Many of the behaviors that the students displayed were consistent with characteristics of the millennial generation. According to McAlister (2009), millennials are characterized as confident multitaskers with the ability to recognize the part they play in their own success. The students exhibited a maturity that reflected their skills and abilities to navigate not only the educational arena of a PWI, but also the social and
relational components associated with being college students while still in high school, particularly with their White college instructors.

**Research Question Two: Definition of Academic Achievement**

Research question two asked: How do African American students in the millennial generation enrolled in ECHS define their personal academic achievement? Academic achievement is used within the student-teacher relationship to build a solid foundation in classroom interactions between students and teachers (Allen et al., 2013). Student participants were able to express their own personal definition of academic achievement based on their individual perceptions and experiences. Throughout the study, I constantly compared and analyzed the data collected until saturation. This process of analysis was based on the students’ definitions of academic achievement the single emerging theme emerging theme that defined academic achievement for the ECHS students participating in this study is learning perseverance.

**Learning perseverance.** There were a variety of terms used by the students that consisted of both abstract and concrete expressions for academic achievement. Students’ defined their own academic achievement as learning perseverance. These students had unique perspectives about what motivated them to learn how to persevere academically that included their grades, family, and teachers. Academic achievement in the United States is seen as an individual endeavor where people are encouraged to create goals that focus on their own needs, interests, and preferences (Tao & Hong, 2014). The participants in this study not only focused on their own needs, interests, and preferences but they also focused on specific and individual approaches to their academic achievement which differed from their parents, peers, or teachers. They wanted to pursue
various academic goals based on their individual academic capabilities. They would not allow themselves to be confined to a standard definition of success or achievement.

Students believed that if they were able to motivate themselves to pass a class [successfully complete], understand the material, or use the information, then they had not failed and those were the lessons they used in order to learn perseverance. Learning perseverance meant that these students were able to achieve diverse academic goals that they set for themselves as individuals. Mike Smith, James Black, and Shawn discussed the concept of passing and what passing [successfully complete or not complete], as a part of learning perseverance and what that meant to them as they compared themselves to their peers in ECHS. Mike Smith stated:

I would say, catching on early and making sure you know all the material so you can always use it. I mean, technically, when people look at your transcripts they will base on that [grades] but I think academic achievement on a personal level is based on your knowledge of whatever you are learning if you are actually good at it or not, as long as you are passing. (INV.MIK.SMI., p. 6)

James Black continued:

I don’t know, I feel like, for different people academic achievement is different things. I know me and my friend took a chemistry class together and what was achievement for me was a different achievement for him because his strong suits are art and history and stuff like that so science wasn’t one of his strong suits; so, for him academic achievement was just being able to understand the material he learned that day, but for me, academic achievement was being able to actually pass that test with a typical grade and stuff like that, but for him being able to learn the material was a good academic achievement. I wanted, I needed to get that A. (INV.JAM.B., p. 6)

Shawn explained how his academic achievement may not be the same as his best friend but he shared how he persevered and that allowed him to be content with his outcome:

Yeah, me and (names a friend), we are two completely different people even though that is my best friend. But, if I take a test and I get a C+, I’ll chill with that because I didn’t fail, I didn’t do terrible; a C is just average but, he’ll be mad over an A-, like, I don’t…I don’t understand that. (INV. SHAW, p. 6)
Each explanation provided by the participants was different, but overall they defined academic achievement as learning to persevere which allowed them to reach their own personal academic goals. These students acknowledged the common outcomes of academic achievement, which is usually based on a grade, yet they chose to focus on how they reached their outcome. Reaching their own outcomes meant they had to learn perseverance and the outcome may or may not be the grade they received.

Sasha Brown explained her perception of academic achievement slightly different and noted how academic achievement is relative to her future:

For me, it’s not only doing well, it’s understanding, somebody can feed the information to you, put it on a test, and you can get an A, but it’s the understanding part of the studies, if you don’t understand it then you’re not going to get it, so when you move on, you don’t know where to go. (INV.SASH.BRO, p. 5)

Sasha’s explanation of achievement goes beyond a grade and taking a test. She shared that she is not satisfied with just getting a good grade, she finds her academic achievement in knowing why she received that grade and her ability to use the information that she has learned from her experience with taking that test helps her in being able to move on in the future. Sasha’s “moving on” academically seemed to be her interpretation of the perseverance she learned in order to attain her academic goals.

Moreover, learning to persevere required the students to continuously self-assess and self-motivate after identifying their individual goals through their educational experiences in ECHS. A. Lias wanted to be challenged which a factor in him was learning to persevere in his academics. When he was asked to define academic achievement, this was his response:

I guess how much you’re pushed, and how well you rise to the occasion. I mean, because, I guess if you’re not really challenged, if everything is really easy, you
haven’t really done much. But, if it’s hard and you, like, you can crumble at the thought of it, and I mean, it’s like you haven’t really done anything. I guess I have been able to answer the challenge pretty well. . . . There have been times when I was, like, you could have done a little bit better, but overall I pull off the desirable results. (INV.A.LIAS, p. 10)

A Lias’ comment also revealed that learning perseverance taught him to “rise” to the occasion which meant he would accept the challenges that he may encounter in order to achieve academically. A. Lias’ comments also showed his ability to conduct a self-evaluation of his progress and recognize how being challenged is a part of his lesson on perseverance and is useful for his future educational endeavors.

The students in ECHS seemed to have an internal confidence when expressing how they learned perseverance through pushing, striving, and working hard as a result of pursuing their future goals. Layla stated:

Just basically strive. Just pushing yourself and trying to work towards a goal that you set your mind on and everything for the future, so that you know that you want it, and you can get it if you work hard enough for it. (IND.INV.LAYL, p. 5)

Layla reveals in her comment how learning how to persevere has made her more determined to reach her imminent goals. During the interview, Layla mentioned how her mother had a life-threatening disease and overcame that situation. She gained a lot of strength through her mother’s experience as well.

Optimist shared how emotional it was for him to learn perseverance in order to achieve academically. Optimist had this to say about his definition of academic achievement:

Academic achievement, I think really differently when it comes to academic achievement because it’s one thing to get good grades on a report card and it’s one thing to understand the material. . . . So, academic achievement is basically what you feel in your heart, and what you know inside your head, not what you put on paper because it is not always that easy to remember things and, always put it down on paper because some people have mental issues and that is not their
fault. What people know, it is not really going to show or tell you on paper. You know how smart you are, it is just nobody can tell you that you are dumb. (INV.OPTI, p. 5)

Optimist’s definition of academic achievement shows that he understands his achievement differently from grades and gaining an understanding of the material being taught in the classroom. His response showed how his learning perseverance and striving to reach his own educational goals was more internal and heartfelt. He also discussed other people who may struggle with mental disabilities and yet they were still capable of learning to persevere and reach their own goals. The students seemed to have gained confidence through learning to persevere as academic achievement. It was as if these students clearly understood what society told them about achieving academically, but they were going to stay true to both internal and external lessons they had learned finding their own way.

Shawn was the only student who said that he is still trying to figure out what he wants to do, and because he really does not want to be in ECHS because he would rather be in a performing arts school, that it makes a difference in how he views academic achievement. Yet, he was able continue in the ECHS program and he was comfortable with his overall performance. “In my opinion, I am, I mean, I have a 2.5 which is not necessarily good but it is not necessarily bad. I am comfortable with where I am at” (INV.SHAW, p. 6). Shawn’s statement reveals how comfortable he is with his performance and he has learned how to persevere as a high school student dually enrolled in college in his senior year even though he does not want to be in the ECHS program anymore.
Many students do not make it to their senior year of the ECHS program for various reasons. There were several intrinsic and extrinsic factors that the students used to develop their own perseverance to pursue and attain their educational goals. Both factors seemed to be a part of students’ ability to learn perseverance. It seemed as though the learning experience helped students meet their own goals in spite of the individual process they may have encountered along the way.

**Research Question Three: Care and Academic Achievement**

The third research question asked: How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, perceive the relationship between their White college instructors/professors caring about them as students and their academic achievement?

Research question three allowed the students to share their perceptions of their White instructors caring about them as students and their academic achievement. In this study, care was operationalized through three lenses: 1) an ethic of care, 2) womanist caring, and 3) critical race theory. Students’ perceptions of care through an ethic of care allowed them to connect with their instructors and view themselves as being cared for by their caring instructor who is considered the carer (Noddings, 1992, 2012). Additionally, students believed their instructors cared by displaying womanist caring characteristics such as challenging them, nurturing them, and encouraging them to succeed as a whole despite their economic or social background (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Douglas, 2006). The students did in fact want to work or try harder because their instructors authentically cared, however, their instructors caring was less important than their own racial image, particularly within their community, as it relates to academic achievement.
Care about their racial image was operationalized through critical race theory as an alternative reality which includes W.E.B Du Bois’ concept of double consciousness along with the concept of intersectionality regarding their perception of themselves and their race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). There were two emergent themes that answered research question three: (a) instructors authentically cared and (b) caring instructors is not required for academic achievement.

**Instructors authentically cared.** The African American students who participated in this study perceived that their instructors authentically cared about them through their attentive behavior towards them as students and their academic needs. Receiving that care from their instructors encouraged the students academically. The students also felt that the attention they were receiving from their instructors was an authentic form of care. Students shared how instructors would go above and beyond lectures and that motivated them to perform academically. Students gave examples of how their caring instructors would take the time to incorporate and access various resources in order to enhance their opportunity to understand course content. The students perceived academic attention from their instructors as a way in which instructors showed that they cared about them as students. James Black gave examples of how his instructors showed care in ways:

Okay, like some of them in different classes they will do things differently like in my World Civilization class like it is not really a question based class it is mainly lecture so he would like he sent out emails to make sure that everyone was on track and you got your grade and like the comments on the paper said good job. But other classes that are question based they would like direct questions toward you to like make sure that you are paying attention wherever you are at and a lot of them do that so. (FINV.JAM.BLA., pp. 2-3)
Layla shared how nice it was to have instructors who cared enough to ask for feedback and if she was adjusting to the class:

I participate a lot in class or whatever well it is a part of our grade or whatever but it is nice because he wants information and feedback about like how we are adjusting into the class and everything and how everything is going smoothly with us and everything. (FINV.LAYL, p. 1)

Mike Smith also expressed his thoughts on the academic attention he received from his instructors:

I would say yes [he cares]. Because he does the group quizzes and group work, like, they are for a cushion for your grades. . . . Yea, and he usually tells us the material to study for the test so I mean he cares about us as a whole, like, individually he probably would not have time to care for us. (FINV.MIK.SMI, pp. 2-3)

Students were able to identify in their own words and through their experiences different examples of attention, experiential examples of care in practice, which contributed to their perception of the authentic care they received. Mike mentioned specifically that his White college instructor cared about the class as a whole. According to Alice Walker (1983) a womanist characteristic includes displaying care and concern as a whole in a culture that oppresses all Black people no matter how they feel about individuals.

Students did not seem to feel as though they were entitled to special attention or care from their instructors because they were in high school. The students in ECHS emphasized how they were operating in the role as a college student on the college campus and they were able to adapt to their environment without being treated differently from other college students. A. Lias stated how important it was for him to be a college student:

I kind of feel like we assume the role as a college student, I mean it is not like we are needles in a hay stack, we see each other everywhere. . . . Sandy University is totally different with all of us from freshman to seniors, you see us everywhere, it
has gone seamlessly, like, you do not even know the difference. We have conquered this, we have conquered the campus. (FINV.FOCUG, p. 2)

The above statement given by A. Lias was one of many which showed that these ECHS students took pride in their role of a college student while still in high school. A. Lias’ comment also showed his confidence that he and his fellow classmates in ECHS had become conquerors. A. Lias seemed to have a certain delight about his ability to master being on a college campus and in classrooms with other adults. While observing A. Lias in his college class he grasped the topic well and also shared his insights about the lesson. I noted during my observation the following question that A. Lias was asked during his class, “Are we being fed a bunch of shit about Muslims?” A. Lias commented that he would see Muslims around the college campus, and not pay them any attention (CL.OB.A.LIAS-7). The classroom conversations during my observations revealed that A. Lias and his instructor had a relationship in which A. Lias was known by name by his instructor, who was a middle-aged White man with gray hair who wore glasses with a nice groomed goatee. As a participant observer in this particular classroom I was impressed with the confidence that A. Lias displayed when he responded to the question and I also gained a particular respect for the instructor for asking the question with such zeal.

During final interviews, I asked the students if they thought that their college instructors in the classes that I observed cared about their academic achievement. This was the response from A. Lias: “Yeah, I think he does care. I am sure if I was, having trouble, he would come up and ask me because, like, kids in my class they are always, oh no, we are going to fail, and he is like, no you are not going to fail” (FINV.A.LIAS, pp. 2-3).
As the interview progressed, A. Lias also mentioned that his instructor was going to write him a reference letter to MIT. A. Lias experienced his instructor’s willingness to encourage him and his other classmates to succeed academically through his actions and words. A. Lias explained how his instructors are attentive to the students’ needs, and help them to prepare for tests to insure that they know what to expect and hopefully have a better chance at academic success. Through the course of the interview, A. Lias was aware and understood that the White college faculty members have a job to do, and they are willing to take time to show that they care about the students, and what they are learning.

The students emphasized some of the ways in which their professors were attentive to their needs in the classroom and outside of the classroom. When asked if the instructor cared about her academic achievement Layla shared:

I think so, I feel like my Latin America teacher does care about it. He gives out a lot of extra credit, just in case people don’t get the full requirements of the class. My Humanities teacher, my discussion teacher at least, she actually cares a lot, or whatever she’ll help them she has extended office hours for mid-terms and finals and stuff. She’s really nice. (FINV.LAYL, pp. 2-3)

Layla’s comment demonstrated her perception of care through her instructors’ willingness to go above and beyond by extending the office hours or allowing students the opportunity to earn extra credit. Layla seemed to appreciate the qualities displayed through the acts of kindness and care that she had experienced from her White college professors. The ECHS students recognized how their student-teacher relationships could be of great value for them in their present and future endeavors.
The ECHS students were also very honest about how they could recognize the
difference between those teachers they viewed as caring and those that they viewed as not
as caring. Sasha explained:

Monica: So, did your college professors show you they cared by pushing you and
knowing you?

Sasha: Yeah.

Monica: Okay. Did this help with your academic achievement?

Sasha: Yeah, because I can tell, which teachers care, more like my Astronomy
teacher. He just teaches and then he does not give structure of anything and it is
just like, okay, so where do I go from here, and it is hard to get help from him
because he don’t email back, and it is like really hard, but then on the other hand,
my Humanities discussion teacher, she would like email me, form study groups,
anything you need help with, like, I’m here and it is just, like, okay, I know
where you stand, and where he stands. (FINV.SASH.BR, p.2)

The answers that Sasha provided demonstrated how she distinguished the attributes of a
caring teacher and a teacher that did not care. She mentioned that if a teacher pushed her,
it helped with her academic achievement and showed that they care, however, it appeared
as if she perceived the caring teacher as one who is also willing to return her emails or
give her help that she needed, and the teacher who was not as structured or may not have
responded to her emails showed that they did not necessarily fit her definition of care.

Through the classroom observations there were other authentic caring
characteristics from White college faculty members displayed that were consistent with
what the students shared in their interviews. I noted from a classroom observation in a
Criminal Justice class with Optimist the following:

CL.OB.OPTI-3: The teacher gives an impromptu extra credit assignment which
was to go and print off a copy of the constitution. . . . Optimist waited around
after class to ask the instructor about the extra credit. . . . The instructor is
interesting, and I even want to participate in the conversation. I finally raise my
hand and ask a question about the definition of equity and liberty.

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The data revealed that the African American ECHS students perceived their White college instructors/professors as caring about them as students, in general, as well as their academic achievement. The data also identified specific womanist characteristics from male or female instructors that were expressed by through the relationship being social, political, and ethical encounters that included the teacher, student, and community to a public sphere in higher education (Cozart & Gordon, 2006)

**Caring instructors are not required for academic achievement.** While many of the students shared how having instructors who authentically cared motivated them to work and try harder, they believed having a caring instructor was less important than being treated equally and projecting a positive racial image through their academic achievements. While students openly expressed how they were willing to work a little harder when they had an instructor that cared, they also emphasized how they cared more about their own academic achievement. Students felt as though academic achievement would help them prove something to themselves and their community as it related to negative stereotypes as African Americans, pressures to succeed, or being “hated on” for being too smart. James Black made this statement when asked about his experiences among the peers in his community:

Actually, we get a lot of hate because we are so smart and everybody think that we think that we are better than them but I mean so, I do not feel a lot of pressure to succeed we just get a lot of hate. (FINV.FOCUG, p 3)

Optimist stated:

I would have to say the expectation and I would say pressure but it is mostly expectation like other people expect you to be that smart kid they think that you are the smart one and like yeah you are but you are going into the same stuff that they are going into so it is really weird being a high school person getting better grades in a college class and getting what a college student should be getting. (FINV.OPTI, p. 4)
Shawn gave an example of what he experienced from a Black professor while taking classes in ECHS:

Umm, me and him (referring to James Black) had Black Experience together and the professor was Black and it was just in a way it felt like he expected more out of us because most of the class was White and it was just weird. You could tell he wanted, it is hard to tell rather he wanted us to succeed a lot because we were Black or like in a negative way. Like it was weird it was weird. (FINV.FOCUG, p. 4)

It asked during the focus group how they viewed themselves as African American ECHS students in a predominantly White college. The students had a variety of responses:

A. Lias: You gotta represent[the African American race] (laughs).

Monica: How do you represent? Even when I was observing in your classes, it was probably just one or two black students?

Sasha Brown: I feel like with being Black Early College students you gotta, like, you cannot be ratchet, [slang term for using inappropriate behaviors], I know that is a strong word to say right now, but people are expecting you to fail, like you 17, you in college, and you black, people is, like, alright she set-up to fail, but you cannot do what they expect you to do, you gotta be, alright I am going to get this done, I am going to do what I need to do, and then I am going to get this done, I am going to get out, have my stuff and, like, you still sitting’ in college while you thinking’ I am still ready to fail, but you failing.

Monica: So, did that motivate you?

Sasha Brown: Yeah. (FINV.FOCUG., p. 2)

I expanded the questions about race to relate to some of the recent racialized events that were occurring in the local community and society. Many young African American males in the city had been killed, the young men were asked specifically if they were motivated to stay in ECHS and achieve their academic goals. James Black stated:

One thing that motivates me to not be a stereotypical Black male is looking at those who are, and just imagining what they could do with the rest of their life. I seen some people that I went to high school with, they dropped out of school, they still living with their mom, their older brothers live with their mom, and they, like,
25 or 26, and I just think that . . . I mean, what possibly can you do right now unless you make a major change. And it is nothing there you can do, so I just do not want to get there to that point where I look at myself and think that there is nothing else I can do besides what I am doing now. (FINV.FOCUG, p. 4)

The students’ explanations revealed that they wanted to prove that they were capable of reaching their academic goals and that is what contributed to their own individual drive to achieve their academic goals. In addition, they felt like they had to be a positive representation for the African American race while staying motivated despite the negative perceptions that others may have, or some of the issues within the community that have affected African American males in particular.

Through the lens of critical race theory, these students have turned their critique inward which looks at power and authority within the African American community specifically through the aspect of intersectionality (Delgado & Stefacic, 2012). The students emphasized that they were responsible for reaching their own academic goals, although they may have had negative experiences that were racially stimulated through their community. Intersectionality examines race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation and how their combination play out in certain settings which can be disavantaging factors (Delgado & Stefacic, 2012). The students in this study are male and female combined with being African Americans who have to play out being college students in their community of oppressive issues such as teenage pregnancy, high school drop outs, and negative stereotypes. There is a tool of multiple consciousness that is useful with intersectionality because it holds that most of us experience the world in different ways on different occasions because of who we are (Delgado & Stefacic, 2012). For these students they were experiencing the world differently as African American young men and women from the millennial generation pursuing a college degree while
still in high school at a Predominantly White College. Where do they belong based on their experiences they are at an intersection of separate oppressions that stems from their own community or society as African Americans? They did not want special attention from their teachers because they were in high school or because they were Black, however, they did want to prove to themselves and their community that they were capable of succeeding academically despite the multitude of positive and negative experiences.

Students preferred their instructors to treat them fairly in all areas academically, socially, and racially. Students believed that they were ultimately responsible for their own academic achievement and they felt as if they were being intrinsically motivated by many of their experiences as African American students. They shared how their experiences were both negative and positive. According to Shawn:

Yeah, if I messed up, it is because I messed up. The teacher, whether I think they care or not, do not affect me. If I try to do good, I am going to do good, and if I do not do what I need to do, then I am going to do bad, and it is going to be my own fault. Whether they care or not does not affect me. (FIN.FOCUG., p. 6)

Shawn’s comment is clear. Shawn seemed to take responsibility for his own academic actions. He was honest about not wanting to be in the ECHS program; however, he was content with the fact that he had made it to his senior year of the program, while maintaining a slightly lower GPA than other participants in this study. He was proud that he had gone this far without flunking out. Shawn’s ownership of his own behavior demonstrated how his perception of care and his teachers had no bearing on him personally or academically. Mike Smith commented about taking responsibility for his own academic achievement by stating: “I think it is because I cared. Because I can only
help myself. Like the professor will not be like a I need to help you, I have to go to the professor for help” (FINV.MIK.SMI, p. 3).

Optimist continued by stating:

I feel like a lot of my teachers have cared about me because I usually do go for help even though I’m a stubborn person, and I don’t like help all the time, but when there is a teacher that cares, I will sometimes try harder because I know that teacher well, and they know me well, and they know how my work ethic is, so like, when a teacher says, like, if they get disappointed or something, that personally doesn’t affect me because if it disappoints them, I don’t want to say that I don’t care, but I will just keep trying to do my hardest to get my grade up because I’m not getting a good grade for them, I’m doing it for me to make myself happy, and if they like it then they like it, and if they don’t, then that’s not my problem. (FINV.FOCUG., p. 6)

Optimist disclosed that having a caring teacher motivated him to seek help despite his own stubborn attitude because he did not want to disappoint his teacher, although he stressed that the disappointment that his teacher may have does not affect him personally or was not as important to him; he is still willing to make the effort. He also shared how he is more concerned about making himself happy and getting a good grade. Optimist’s comments showed a greater concern for his own personal academic achievement although he also recognized the importance of care in the student-teacher relationship.

All of the students had the opportunity to address the topic of race and academic achievement during their initial interviews, focus group, and final interviews. While interviewing the students, they focused on their wanting to be treated equally and their positive and negative experiences as African American students which included the racial image they sought to project to their community and society as it relates to academic achievement. According to Broido (2004) millennials bring with them a different demographic profile than previous generations as well as different views about diversity and social justice. Critical race theorists may argue that the students from the millennial
generation lack the experiences (Degaldo & Sefancic, 2012) or awareness associated with W.E.B. Du Bois’ concept of double-consciousness which he describes as a world that yields an African American minority no true self-consciousness, but they are only seen through the revelation of the eyes of the White majority (DuBois, 1994). The African American millennial generation of students in this study has some characteristics that are different from previous generations which may contribute to their openness to diversity that allows them to view race from a more open-consciousness. Nevertheless, through the lens of critical race theory the students critiqued themselves inwardly through intersectionality which is a combination intersecting categories such as race and sex with recognized sites of oppression. The young Black men discussed the negative stereotypes they encountered in their community such as being better than others, and the young women experienced having friends that were teenage mothers within their communities. These multiple forms of oppression contributed to the students wanting to academically succeed in order to display a positive racial image.

The students from the millennial generation have a much more expansive understanding of race which better reflects the demographics of people of color in the United States and not primarily historical discussions about Black and White people (Broido, 2004). One way in which their revelations are broadened is through their access to information. The millennial generations’ characteristics include having access to technology, as well as, their ability to embrace diversity, and their confidence (McAlister, 2009). These millennial students have had the opportunity to experience mixed messages about race that include having the nation’s first Black President, Trayvon Martin, a Black teenager being killed by a White man while walking through a neighborhood in Florida,
legalized gay and lesbian marriages, and legalized marijuana. These current issues in society have made them aware of the wide range of public and governmental racialized topics (Broido, 2004).

I asked the students, how can White college faculty members help African American students in ECHS in the future? James Black responded in this way:

I feel like if they want to help us, they need to let us do what everybody else does; don’t look at me like I automatically need your help because I’m: 1) in Early College, and then 2) [because I am] Black. Look at me like I’m a college student in your class. You need to give me that test, and you’re going to grade it like you do everybody else. If I do badly, then you say now do you need help, but if I do fine, like I’m going to do, then just give me my test back and say I did a good job. Don’t grade easier on me because I’m a black Early College kid, don’t automatically give me extra credit because I don’t need it. Just give me the test and treat me like you treat everybody else, and I’ll be fine. (FINV.FOCUG, p. 6)

It seemed as if James gave a strong response with respect to being treated equally both academically and racially. Researchers describe characteristics of those from the millennial generation as an all-inclusive generation who accept diversity and want equal treatment (Broido, 2004; Elam et al., 2007; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). James Blacks’ comment during our focus group shows how important it is that he is treated equally, and how important it is that he has the same opportunities as anyone else. A. Lias agreed with James Black by stating, “If they assume an attitude like this kid belongs here, and this kid knows what he is doing, and you know I have faith in you, then, I have a certain standard to uphold” (FINV.FOCUG, p. 6). A. Lias viewed having an equal opportunity to prove that he is capable of upholding a standard set by those instructors who care enough about him to have faith in his ability to succeed.

The students seemed to embrace their relationships as African American students with their White College faculty members. Although they were open to diversity they
shared their experiences of being stereotyped which seemed to serve as motivation to achieve their academic goals. Students were encouraged to freely discuss their positive and negative experiences as African American students. During their interviews, they felt that there were negative stereotypes associated with being Black. Examples of their diverse experiences as of being young and Black, particularly from the males’ perspectives were not very positive. The students did not reveal that stereotypical actions that they underwent came from their White college instructors. Students shared how their experiences with being stereotyped came from society, their own community, or the media. Although they encountered some negative experiences as it relates to their race, students used these experiences to prove society wrong and rise to the challenge of meeting their own academic goals.

During the final individual interviews and focus group session, I gained more confidence and comfort while conducting interviews. Throughout the interviews the students talked about their perception of courses; they expressed their experiences with good teachers, bad teachers, and what that meant to their student-teacher relationship and their academic achievement. The African American students who participated in this study are part of a generation of students who are the first to graduate HS, and attend college which contributed to their desire to take responsibility for achieving their academic goals. The participants in this study displayed self-pride because of who they were in their blended experiences of being a high school student and a college student.

The selected African American ECHS students expressed their desire for the opportunity to show that they are more than capable of succeeding not only in college, but also in their future endeavors on their own terms. Despite their negative experiences,
students believed they were capable of achieving academic success and felt a sense of freedom while being in ECHS. When James Black was asked to share the best part about being a college student while in ECHS, he responded:

The freedom, because I look at regular high schools and stuff and see that they are in that one building all day, and they really cannot go anywhere, but, I mean, if I was not here with you, I could go back home and go to sleep if I wanted to. I could go to the mall and do whatever I wanted, and then come back to class, so I think that’s the best part. (FINV.JAM.BLA., p. 6)

Sasha responded to the same question in this way:

“...I like it because I get the freedom and um like I can do my own thing and stuff. But, then I do not because like I want to have that high school experience where I want to see my friends every day every class. (INV.SASH.BRO, p. 2)

Mike also emphasized the freedom of being a student in ECHS:

… because of the freedom like I can go on campus and get free wi-fi I mean you gotta love free wi-fi you know the Bistro you know all the food and stuff like the student union and then the thing that I would not like about being a college student is the difficulty of the classes cause we are taking classes at college level and of course that is like a good amount of work.(INV.MIK.SMI, p. 2)

Layla was asked the best part about being in a college course, she responded:

That is tough. People would say freedom. I like the freedom, but that is the downfall of everybody. Just so much freedom and you just fall. I think, being in a different environment instead of, being stuck in, a dainty classroom or whatever, like, one building or whatever, where you actually move around and everything, and get to know the campus. And, like, new people and what you are going to experience some time in the future. (FINV.LAYL, p. 5)

Optimist was also asked the best part about being in a college course, he responded:

Umm, freedom I can pretty much do whatever I want I can keep track of my grades like on springboard but in high school I cannot really do that like if I ask for my grades they will either tell me another day and then I will forget and then I will ask them about it again but college courses my grade is right there and I get everything back like almost immediately (FINV.OPTI, p.4)

Layla also mentioned that the worst part for her being a college student is that she can sometimes get lost and procrastinate, that there is so much freedom she does not know
how to manage it at times. The students were a part of a college campus that exposed them to a lot of different age groups, different buildings, and different cultures. The students took advantage of all of the amenities and freedoms associated with being a college student while focusing more on their freedoms as students.

Shawn was the only ECHS student that mentioned adults as the worst part about being in a college course, “because I am surrounded by grown people and in early college. They do grown people stuff, but I am still 17 and making those decisions. I am not all the way there” (FINV.SHAW, p. 4). The other students appear to enjoy being exposed to other adults in the classroom because it made them feel more like college students and not high school students. It seemed as if these students enjoyed their independence and freedom while on the college campus.

I recognized that the ECHS students were a group of high school students who blended into predominantly White campus of Sandy University as college students; the students seemed more like a group of college students who had high school classes to complete. The students met me in a restaurant on campus for the focus group session. All of the students were able to participate in the focus group discussion except for one, Layla. Layla mentioned during the initial interview that her mother was diagnosed with cancer; however, it was in a remission state. She sent a text message on the day of the focus group stating she needed to go to a doctor’s appointment with her mother at the time of our group meeting. Like Layla, all of the participating students had family responsibilities that were mentioned throughout the study; and they also expressed how they had some self-pressure from family, seeing some of their friends struggle to finish school, or needing to work a part-time job while in school. The students shared how
these situations motivated them as African American students to not only succeed but to prove that they were capable of accomplishing their goals in spite of the pressure. Mike stated:

I feel pressure to succeed ‘cause there is a lot of stuff counting against me, but I do not know, I just feel like I just have to do it. I do not feel pressure in a sense from other people telling me I have to succeed. I just feel self-pressure like I have something to prove. (FINV.FOCUG, p. 3)

Mike expressed how he felt as if he has no other choice but to succeed. During my interviews with Mike, he seemed a bit unorganized. He mentioned that he was responsible for taking care of the household chores and maintaining a job, as well as being a full-time high school student taking college classes. His comment was not unusual. Although Mike had a lot of responsibilities at home, it seemed as if getting a better education would give him opportunities to be able to become more independent.

Sasha Brown also expressed how she felt some of the pressure that she experienced as a high school student in college:

I feel pressure from a friend and a family aspect because my family never really got to go to college because of, money issues and then all the people I grew up with, like, everybody has a baby now and it’s, like, I don’t want to end up like that . . . they’re struggling and I see they’re struggling. I want to get there and I want to be, okay, I did this and now I can have kids, and now I’m okay without having to struggle, so I feel pressure but not like bad pressure, it is pressure that motivates me. (FINV.FOCUG, p. 3)

Sasha talked about her pressures and how she had to watch her friends struggle as teenage mothers. She also talked about the issues that her family had with money and never attending college. Sasha talked about how she felt about the pressure that she had in her life in order to succeed; she used the pressures that she had experienced as motivation, not as discouragement.
It appeared as though the students wanted to be examples of success for their family members, friends, community, and most importantly for themselves. They wanted to be examples of beating the odds, overcoming personal struggles, and not allowing their experiences with a stereotypical perspective of race to dictate who they were as individuals and what they could accomplish. The students’ ability to verbalize how they perceived themselves as African Americans, particularly the Black male participants, seemed to contribute to their emphasis on their motivation for their own academic achievement while having teachers who authentically cared about them as students.

Summary

During this qualitative study, seven African American students from the millennial generation were able to share their perceptions of their student-teacher relationship with their White college instructors/professors while enrolled in Early College High School. The students’ defined their own personal academic achievement, and they discussed the ways in which their White college instructors/professors showed that they authentically cared about them as students; however, the students shared how having a caring instructor was less important than the positive racial image they wanted to portray to society and their communities through their academic achievement. These conversations and interpretations were captured through interviews, a focus group, classroom observations, and field notes. Through the analysis of over 100 pages of typed transcripts, five themes emerged to answer the three research questions in this study:

1. **Interactive**: students perceived their student-teacher relationships as interactive which was critical and connected the students with their instructors. Their connections were made through classroom involvement,
being acknowledged and recognized by their names and faces, or because they were well-behaved while attending classes.

2. **Interpersonal**: students believed that their interpersonal relationships consisted of actions and responses from the faculty members which support learning. The interpersonal aspect of their relationship allowed them to have access to various resources such as networking with other professionals, writing reference letters, or perhaps going above and beyond lecturing in class but taking time after class to ensure students received the support necessary for their academic success.

3. **Learning perseverance**: students shared how they learned perseverance from grades, teachers, and family situations they encountered while dually enrolled in high school and college.

4. **Instructors authentically cared**: students experienced academic attentiveness from their instructors which showed the authenticity of care in their student-teacher relationship. Students wanted to be treated equally and given the same opportunities that other college students were given in order to academically succeed.

5. **Caring instructors are not required for academic achievement**: students believed that they were responsible for their own academic achievement. Although the students shared their willingness to work harder because their instructors cared, that was less important than their wanting to project a positive racial image they would obtain through academic achievement. They believed that they had something to prove to themselves and others who may
have stereotyped them because of their racial background or due to other personal struggles.

The emergent themes in this study were used to answer each of the research questions. The students believed their student-teacher relationship was interpersonal through their interactions with White faculty members. Additionally, students defined their own academic achievement as learning perseverance. The students perceived academic attentiveness from White college faculty members as a form of genuinely caring about them as students and their academic achievement. Finally, the participants perceived that their instructors genuinely cared and were concerned about their academic success; however, they believed that care was not as important for them to achieve academically they believed they were ultimately responsible for their own academic achievement.

Only one student throughout this study articulated that he did not want to attend ECHS; however, he was honest about his desire to focus on the arts and was unable to see the relevance in what he was learning through ECHS while also learning how to persevere and pursue his own academic goals. Many of the students believed that they had a lot of freedom in ECHS and were not confined to just being in one building like a traditional high school. They noted that having this freedom was a good thing, but it could also become a hindrance. Some of the students expressed how having freedom contributed to their ability to procrastinate, which could have a negative effect on their grades. The students blended into the college community and saw themselves as college students. They attended classes using a schedule that they created for themselves which allowed them the ability to come and go as they desired.
Throughout the study, it was discovered that the selected African American students, from the millennial generation and were enrolled in ECHS, were learning many things about themselves and wanted to take responsibility for their own academic achievement. Students expressed that having a teacher who genuinely cared and was concerned about them as students is helpful; however, it was not the most important factor in their perception of the student-teacher relationship. The students placed pressure on themselves and learned to persevere in order to complete the program. They mentioned how they did not want to be viewed as stereotypical African Americans who were incapable or not committed. They wanted to be first in their families to receive a college degree. Individual goals and aspirations were added motivation to prove that they were capable of successfully attaining their own educational goals.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of seven African American students from the millennial generation and their student-teacher relationships with their White College instructors/professors while enrolled in ECHS. The study used Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998) as a theoretical perspective to view race in this study with a conceptual framework that overlapped the concepts of womanist caring (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002, 2005), and an ethics of care (Noddings, 1992, 2012) to operationalize care in the student-teacher relationship. There has been an increase in research studies conducted on student-teacher relationships, educational partnerships, and educational transitions from high school to college (Docan-Morgan & Manusov, 2009; Mokher & McLendon, 2009; Zhang & Smith, 2011). However, the purpose of this study was to gain a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of the African American students in Early College High School and their perceptions of their own student-teacher relationships and academic achievement.

An interpretive perspective of qualitative inquiry was used in this study building on research in dual enrollment programs, student-teacher relationships, and concepts of care. Through the combination of various strategies for data collection and interpretive data analysis, this study was informed by critical and interpretive epistemologies. Data were collected through a questionnaire, initial interviews, focus groups, final interviews,
and classroom observations of seven African American ECHS students in class. These students believed that their professors cared about them authentically and acknowledged them as students. They were willing to help them by providing them with various resources and wanted them to succeed academically, socially, and personally. This final chapter discusses the findings of the study based on the three research questions, implications, limitations of the study, areas for future research, and conclusions.

**Overview**

The Early College High School Initiative has provided first-generation minority students an increased opportunity and access to higher education by connecting the high school and college experiences for participating students (Edwards & Hughes, 2011). According to Bourne-Bowie (2000), although there is research on minority students and the retention of those students, there are significant factors affecting the interpersonal elements of their college experience that need to be addressed. College courses offered to high school students for both high school and college credit are defined as dual enrollment (Barnett & Bragg, 2006). Early College High School is a program that provides a dual enrollment option for minority first generation college students, while also having the opportunity to earn an Associate Degree. During the academic year of 2009-2010, there were over 45,000 students enrolled in ECHS, yet, 25% of those students were African American when compared to 30% of their White counterparts (Webb & Mayka, 2011). The seven African American students who participated in this study attended an ECHS that was housed on the college campus of a predominantly white institution.
There is an increasing focus on teaching and learning and its impact on academic achievement and educational completion, particularly in college. In particular, one of the supportive processes in teaching and learning is a meaningful relationship with educators that are also caring (Calabrese et al., 2005). As cited by Thompson and Ongaga (2011), Candace Thompsons’ (2006) case study on ECHS revealed how an ethics of care can support, or constrain teaching and learning, particularly for African American students. This qualitative study serves as an extension of Thompson’s study and investigates the perceptions of African American ECHS students from the millennial generation and their student-teacher relationships with White college faculty members at a PWI, and their academic achievement.

This study strived to answer the following research questions: 1) How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, perceive their student-teacher relationship with their White college instructors/professors? 2) How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, define their personal academic achievement? and 3) How do African American students, who are a part of the millennial generation and enrolled in ECHS, perceive the relationship between their White college instructors/professors caring about them as students and their academic achievement? There were five themes that emerged from the answers to the three research questions above.

**Discussion and Findings for Research Question One**

According to Guiffrida (2005), there has been limited research that investigated the relationships between college faculty members and African American students. Guiffrida (2005) went on to mention that African American students may experience
difficulty connecting with White college faculty members because they felt as though White faculty members do not believe in their academic abilities. Research has shown that some African American students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) believed that White faculty members were unwilling to establish a caring relationship and create a climate that makes them feel that they do not make important contributions to learning (Crowley et. at. 2004; Stuhlman et al., 2002).

Research question one had two emerging themes that revealed the perceptions of seven African American ECHS and their student-teacher relationship with White college faculty members while enrolled in Early College High School. These two themes were: (a) interactive and (b) interpersonal. The students in this study perceived their student-teacher relationship as one in which they were able to interact with their instructors through actions and responses. The students shared various actions and responses such as attending classes, being involved in their classes, through hard work, or being acknowledged by where they were seated in the classroom. Students mentioned that their instructors would often speak to them outside of the classroom as well and acknowledge them by name. Through their interactions within their student-teacher relationship, there were connections made that allowed the students to believe they were known by their instructors.

In addition, the students viewed their student-teacher relationship as interpersonal. Students shared that they were better acquainted with their instructors because they were accessible to them outside of classroom hours. All students mentioned how the various resources they received from their instructors helped their interpersonal relationship. The students mentioned how many of the resources gave the opportunity to network with
others. The students spoke of how this network connected them to other professionals who could furnish them with additional knowledge and insight for their future academic or career endeavors. Based on the emerging themes in research question one, the ECHS students in this study experienced little difficulty with their student-teacher relationship which served as a link for them with their White college instructors/professor. During student observations, it was apparent that faculty members engaged the ECHS students like they would a traditional college student.

Overall, the students in this study expressed how they experienced a positive student-teacher relationship with their White college faculty members. Relationship building that is positive between students and faculty helps to motivate and engage students, which are necessary for student success (Stuhlman et al., 2002). Although Adams (2005) found in his research on minority students’ experiences on PWI campuses that college faculty members may be unwilling to establish a caring relationship with high school students participating in ECHS, this study had different results. The ECHS students in this study perceived that White faculty members were willing to connect with them as students as well as provided them with resources and cared enough to acknowledge them in their student-teacher relationships. According to the participants in this study, their interactive and interpersonal relationship with White college faculty members allowed them to be acknowledged by their names, faces, and the unassigned seats they would occupy during their classes. Engaging students, particularly African American students, by knowing them in the classroom contributes to the students’ academic achievement (Gordon, 2013). Students in this study often commented on how their instructors took time to develop their lessons, provided opportunities to improve
their grades, spent time helping them outside of the classroom to make sure they understood their lessons, or to discuss their academic or personal concerns. McGlynn (2008) noted that students from the millennial generation need to be engaged, inspired, and motivated in order to make a connection between how they learn and how they are being taught.

The students in this research began taking college courses in ninth grade and have had more classroom experiences with White college professors/instructors than other students in the ECHS program. Their student-teacher relationships are based on the care they have received in the form of student acknowledgement and resources that are provided through the relationship. Schools must purposefully create conditions that enable teachers and students to come to know and be known by each other (Sinner, 2004). The research findings in this study emphasize the importance of content and connections to students in the educational setting. As educational practices often change and adjust to our ever changing environment, relational practices within education must also be considered that provide an avenue for students to establish a relationship with their teachers that is interactive and interpersonal.

**Discussion and Findings for Research Question Two**

Research question two asked the students their own personal definitions of their academic achievement. Research question two had one emerging theme that defined academic achievement for the student participants in this study which was learning perseverance. The students were able to articulate in their answers to research question one that their student-teacher relationship allowed them to become better acquainted with their college faculty members; however, the emerging theme in research question two
revealed they felt as if they had to learn perseverance through various experiences which allowed them to stay motivated. According to Gordon (2013) “Student [positive] perceptions of teacher-student interaction positively influenced their academic success” (p. 13). The students in this study shared many of their interactions with White faculty members that included caring characteristics; however, their definition of academic achievement was viewed as an individual lesson of perseverance through their experiences with their grades, peers, family, or other teachers.

Caring teachers through the lens of womanism displayed authoritative behaviors as they provided structure with high expectations while encouraging their students to succeed (Patterson et al., 2011). In this study, the students often commented on how their instructors pushed and challenged them to work harder, which motivated them, and ultimately supported their academic achievement. Care lays a foundation in the student-teacher relationship which not only helps students’ academic success but also improves retention (Calabrese et al., 2005).

The students placed an emphasis on learning perseverance as a way in which they could reach their goals. Their goals consisted of their grades, using their resources, or their future aspirations. The students believed that if they learned perseverance they could reach their goals and that would be academic achievement. While the students often re-iterated that grades were a common indication of academic success or failure, their personal academic achievement were more than the grades they obtained on their final transcripts. They used their diverse strategies to learn perseverance in order to successfully complete their classes, yet all the students discussed this internal force to achieve academically. There have been few studies that explored African American
students’ perceptions of what they need to succeed academically (Williams & Portman, 2013). The students in this study assessed themselves by identifying their own goals and overall experiences in ECHS as a way to accept the challenge for themselves and learn perseverance and achieve academically.

Williams and Portman (2013) also explained that “without such information, efforts to promote achievement among urban African American students whose circumstances place them at risk for school failure may be limited” (p. 14). Students reflected on the outcomes of their assignments that they had and the White college instructors who engaged them differently throughout their experiences in ECHS, however, they communicated their definition of academic achievement as one which required them to take responsibility and learn to persevere which was their academic achievement.

**Discussion and Findings for Research Question Three**

Finally, the third research question examined care and academic achievement in the student-teacher relationship of African American students in ECHS with their White college faculty instructors. The students were able to reflect on their experiences with White college faculty to determine if these individuals cared about them as African American students and their academic achievement.

There were two themes that emerged to answer research question three which were (a) instructors authentically cared and (b) Caring instructors are not required for academic achievement. Through the faculty members’ academic attentiveness experienced by the African American ECHS, these students indicated that their White college instructors authentically cared about them as students and receiving that care
motivated them to work harder and they believed they cared about them as a whole student. Womanist caring characteristics includes strategies of wholeness that contribute to Black people living as free human beings that keep the Black community striving for liberation (Douglas, 1994). The care the teachers provided gave them a sense of liberation in order to achieve their goals. Caring provides an allegiance to the student from a womanist caring perspective and not necessarily the oppressive systems in schools, the students in this study believed their instructors cared authentically cared about them as a student (Cozart & Gordon, 2006). Care operationalized in a student-teacher relationship has similar affective needs as mentioned by McGlynn in his article titled, *Millennials in College: How Do We Motivate Them?* An ethic of care focuses on the strength of the caring relationship that occurs between the carer [college faculty/instructor] and cared-for [ECHS student] where the carer listens, is attentive, observes, and is receptive to the needs of the cared for (Noddings, 2001). This research demonstrated how the student participants perceived their caring student-teacher relationship. Students mentioned how their White college instructors listened to them, engaged them in the classroom by knowing who they were, and assisted them in various ways inside and outside of the classroom. The relationship that occurred between the African American ECHS students [cared for] and their White college faculty instructors [carer] is not an example of virtue caring, which is more concerned with the merit involved with caring, but their student-teacher relationships are expressed through an ethic of care which is less interested in the moral credit, and more interested in the depth of the relationship (Noddings, 2012). The findings from the data in this study indicated
that the African American students have experienced an ethic of care in their student-

teacher relationships with White college faculty members while participating in ECHS

The students shared that the academic attentiveness that their instructors provided
them included going above and beyond their lectures. The students were adamant that
their attentive behaviors had nothing to do with them being African American. The
students experienced the instructors being active listeners, engaging them, and also
challenging them academically which are also attributes and characteristics of womanist
caring (Beaubof-LaFonte, 2005). Another way in which womanist caring provided a
lens through which to view care in the student-teacher relationship was through the
characteristics of the admirable educational practices of African American women, those
who taught during segregation and after segregation (Beaubouf-Lafonte, 2005). These
pedagogical practices included holding high expectations of their students and
encouraging them to succeed for the betterment of all African Americans (Patterson et
al., 2011). Womanist caring allowed the student-teacher relationship between the African
American students in ECHS and their White college professors to be negotiated based on
care that is expressed through their instructors’ instructional practices inside and outside
of the classroom. As a participant observer in the study through classroom observations,
the interactions that the students had with their White college instructors appeared
supportive and their knowledge about their subject matter was taught with passion.
Student participants experienced various types of instructional methods which seemed as
if they enhanced their learning experiences. Instructors took time to allow the students’
use of technology, integrated group activities, or encouraged in-depth classroom
discussions to re-iterate and emphasize the lessons.

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These student-teacher relationships, through the lens of womanist caring, ceases to purely be personal and is also conceptualized socially, politically, and as an ethic of risk (Cozart & Gordon, 2006). Conceptualizing the student-teacher relationship through the lens of womanist caring allows care to be emphasized based on their racial and social awareness, as well as their commitments. Socially, the students perceived that their relationship with their White college instructors allowed them to have a social network that could be advantageous for their future endeavors. The students used their network of college professors as references for college recommendations or career advice. In the student-teacher relationship, through the lens of womanist caring, “teachers demonstrate a commitment to students that go beyond the classroom, as they help students to see their worth and encourage them to fulfill their potential as human beings” (Patterson et al., 2011, p. 271). Furthermore, an ethic of risk within the viewpoint of womanist caring the students expressed how White college faculty members displayed their commitment to them as students and their academic achievement, which contributed to them being treated equally.

These educational methods also support the research by Ferreira and Bosworth (2001) which indicated that caring contributed to the activities that teachers used in the classroom such as encouragement, guidance, and checking for understanding. Students were interacting with their instructors who chose to wait around after classes to answer questions that the students might have and to provide clarification and feedback. The findings from this research indicate that the students experienced a variety of womanist caring characteristics in their relationships with White college instructors, which also
supported the emerging theme in research question three, that White college faculty/instructors who care show academic attentiveness to their students.

While the students acknowledged their willingness to work harder because of their caring instructors, it was more important for them to project a positive racial image through their academic achievement for the community and society. The student participants in this study wanted to experience racial, social, and educational equality in their relationship with their White college professors. Critical race theory was also used as a part of the theoretical framework to help expose how the ECHS cared about their racial image through academic achievement to their community and society. Critical race theory holds that race is an influential reality in Western society (Comeaux, 2010). CRT also draws on the African American experiences to analyze dominant paradigms on race (Tuitt & Carter, 2008). The findings indicated that the seven African American students in this study did not want to be treated as “special” because of their race. In fact, the students seemed somewhat dismissive when the topic of race was mentioned during interviews. According to Maybee (2009), some minority students often shared how they were not aware of much racism in their daily lives. This same author went on to state that “White privileges are often invisible to whites—namely, because racism does not happen to whites—the disadvantages of being colored may often be invisible to minorities—because White privileges don’t happen to people of color” (Maybee, 2009, p. 859). The students shared their experiences as African Americans and understood how their race can be negatively portrayed by society or media because of dropout rates for African Americans, the issues of young Black men being murdered or murdering each other, or teenage pregnancy. Although having a caring teacher inspired them to work
harder, the students believed it was not as important as their wanting to project a positive racial image through academic achievement to themselves and society based on their self-motivation.

While the students never discussed the issue or used the term racism, they commented that they wanted to be a positive representation the African American race and make their race proud of them and their academic accomplishments. They believed that society and the media has stereotyped African Americans negatively. The findings show how the students felt as if society and the media make them feel as if they are expected to fail based on their race. While the students shared their thoughts about race, they never gave any specific examples of why they felt that they were expected to fail, and they did not attribute their beliefs about stereotypes of society as racism.

According to Lopéz (2003), racism has been seen as a thing of the past with explicit acts such as name calling and lynching, however, the subtle acts of racism has been ignored, and now operates at a deeper more systemic level. This same researcher goes on to mention that racism is now being viewed as an individual construction and deviant behaviors in a neutral world as opposed to a broader sociological web of power in which racism functions (Lopéz, 2003). The students’ answers to research question three indicated that the students are conscious of the negativity associated with certain viewpoints or treatments they received as African Americans; however, their experiences were based on subtle outlooks of a larger system of power such as the media. Operationalizing their racial experiences through CRT, revealed that these students experienced race and racism at intersecting sites based on a combination of their gender and race through a personal critique of the power and authority within their communities.
(Delgado & Stefacic, 2012). These students wanted to make sure that they were able to overcome negative stereotypes and situations that were encountered such as being perceived as better than other people within their communities because they were smart.

The students in this study wanted to get the same rigor and respect as any other college student on the campus regardless of his or her race. They were very open to diversity and were motivated by being in a place that gave them an opportunity to attend college with people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds while in high school as African American students. The students wanted to be an example for others and not allow stereotypes driven by the media, their community, or society of teenage pregnancy or dropping out of school to interfere with their success.

Overall, the students were a part of a rigorous program such as ECHS and were able to be interactive and interpersonal with White college faculty members who were committed to providing opportunities for students such as extra credit or meeting with them more to ensure they could answer questions about assignments that would allow them time to increase their grade. The political aspect of their student-teacher relationship allowed students to recognize that they wanted to have equal treatment as students, despite their race and the fact that they were a small number of high school students among a large number of college students at a PWI. Many students were consciously aware of how race could impact them either negatively or positively, yet they insisted that they did not want to receive special treatment. The students shared that the commitment, pedagogical practices, as well as the racial and social awareness in their student-teacher relationships were not only displayed by faculty members who were White women, they were also displayed by White men as well. These characteristics
were a benefit to the African American students who participated in this study and served as an additional enhancement to their student-teacher relationships.

**Significant Implications**

There is a growing trend in education which is blending secondary and postsecondary systems to become more aligned and interdependent on one another in order to increase college completion rates and decrease costs. There is also a growing demand to prepare the future workforce by ensuring that they have the required skills and education in order to become gainfully employed. This study provides implications for the political, business, and educational sectors to consider in gaining a better understanding of the next largest generation of students known as the millennial generation.

**Political Sector**

In the State of Ohio, there has been a recommendation made by the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents to the Governor to have all school districts participate in the revised dual enrollment program referred to as the College Credit Plus program (Chancellor John Carey’s recommendations for Ohio’s dual credit program, College Credit Plus, 2014). With more school districts involved in dual enrollment programs, more high school students will have the opportunity to enroll in college courses. This study offers an in-depth understanding of how the student-teacher relationship with college faculty is perceived by those students who are dually enrolled in high school and college, particularly minority students who are first-generation college students. There are specific areas of importance to consider as the educational landscape continues to
evolve. The findings in this study suggest that it is important for African American students, who are in the millennial generation, to be interactive and interpersonal with their college professors and have access to resources that can benefit students both inside and outside of their classroom experiences. Moreover, this study provides more insight from the student perspective and what they have experienced in order to be considered academically successful in a dual enrollment program and in college. The students’ ability to learn perseverance and push themselves in order to succeed academically can contribute to research on characteristics of student success and college completion for minority students.

**Business Sector**

As we prepare the next largest generation, the millennial generation, to become skillful participants in our global society, we must also prepare them to sustain relationships with the people they may encounter in the workforce. The millennial generation will encounter the workforce with three other generations, for the first time in history all four generations will have to work together (Tulgan, 2009). Therefore, the more we understand the perception that this generation has about relationships, the more beneficial our society will be in education and the global workplace. Education is the pathway to a career; therefore, it is crucial that we begin to acknowledge the importance of student-teacher relationships within the core of our educational curriculums.

**Educational Sector**

The rich and descriptive data in this study also suggest that African American students in ECHS recognized that White college faculty care about them as students and
their academic achievement. These instructors listened to their students, engaged and
callenged their students, and took time to meet with students to help with their academic
needs. These types of characteristics are a part of the conceptual framework used for this
study to operationalize care in the student-teacher relationship. Although some research
emphasizes the empirical data associated with academic achievement in today’s
educational system (Allen et al., 2013), this study used the findings drawn from
qualitative data collected and analyzed to provide the students’ perspectives of academic
achievement, as well as their student-teacher relationships.

Programs that encourage academic achievement and designed for minority
students, such as ECHS, can only be successful if students perceive that teachers are
supportive of them as well as the program (DeCuir-Gunby, Taliferro, & Greenfield,
2010). The participants in this study perceived that the authentic care and helpful
characteristics displayed by their instructors positively contributed to their academic
success. The student participants in this study will graduate from high school with a
college degree and a high school diploma. They were able to share their experiences and
were proud to have the opportunity to prove to themselves and others that they were
capable of learning perseverance in order to meet academic challenges and succeeding.

Areas for Further Research

There are various stakeholders that can be considered for further research. These
stakeholders include university instructors, ECHS students who have graduated from the
program, high school and college administrators, parents of ECHS students, and school
counselors.
**University Instructors**

There remains research to be done that explores college faculty members’ perspectives about their experiences teaching students in dual enrollment programs. It is important to have research that will include the voice of those faculty members who are teaching high school students participating in dual enrollment programs such as ECHS. More research is needed from the faculty’s perspective to determine if they adjust their pedagogical practices for dual enrollment students or feel the need to treat them differently because they are high school students, particularly minority students. The research from faculty members who are teaching students in dual enrollment programs could enhance college campus faculty development which could enhance academic achievement through college completion for all students in higher education.

**ECHS Graduates**

There is also a need for more research on what happens to these students after they graduate from the ECHS program. The future studies can analyze the type of degrees that the students in ECHS are pursuing after graduating (i.e., Bachelors, Masters, Juris Doctorates, PhDs, etc.), and if the courses that they are taking have led them to a particular career path. The students in ECHS choose the Associate Degree option that they believe will lead them to an additional degree, career, or both. There are some ECHS students who were not sure what they wanted to do after completing the ECHS program. There were several students who began ninth grade interested in a particular program and by their senior year they had chosen something different. There should be longitudinal research that can analyze the types of Associate degrees earned when students graduate from the ECHS program in order to identify future career interests that
will impact our future workforce. Moreover, that research can be expanded to include how those degrees transfer toward a four-year degree or if they have utilized their skills to enter into the workforce.

**High School and College Administrators**

There is also a need for additional research on the relationship between the administrators in ECHS and the administrators in higher education. There needs to be specifically an exploration of how these educational administrators collaborate and combine teaching resources used within dual enrollment programs in order to maintain academic accountability. There is no real alignment of systems that allow the communication that must occur between high school and college administrators. There must be a joint effort to recognize that blending both systems will require an investment of time and fiscal resources in order to ensure that students, teachers, and parents are aware of the different options that are available. There must be a cohesive approach to managing college credits, high school credits, and transferability of courses to other institutions of higher learning or taking classes that will lead to a career. It is economically feasible for students and parents to be able to understand that the credits that are being earned while in college and in high school can be applied to specific programs or careers after graduation, and administrators will be critical in establishing the guidelines.

**Parents of Early College High School Students**

There is also a need to explore the experience of the parents with students who attend ECHS. The parents of these students have not attended college, and may not know
exactly how to support their children while enrolled in college and high school. Gaining more insight into characteristics of these parents and strategies they used in order to contribute to the academic success of their children who are enrolled in rigorous academic program such as ECHS can add to the body of knowledge in education. Being able to understand the parent’s perspective may unveil characteristics or strategies that they may or may not contributed to the academic achievement of their children.

**School Counselors**

Finally, school counselors are typically the first point of contact in sharing dual enrollment options to parents and students. This information can consist of the application process, courses offered, and degree pathways. There is a need for research to understand the various types of resources that school counselors provide to students while enrolled in dual enrollment programs. Identifying dedicated guidelines for school counselors while working with dual enrollment students is critical as dual enrollment options grow. There will be a need for additional resources that outline consistent and cohesive guidelines to help school counselors understand how this information is used to assist with students knowing what is required for graduation, applying to other colleges, and financial obligations. There is a need for research from the school counselor’s perspective, particularly as counseling needs and resources expand to include both high school and college students.

**Limitations**

The results of this study are rich and descriptive because of the specific context chosen for this study. The Early College High School chosen serves a multicultural
student population on a four-year college campus. There are some ECHSs that specifically serve Native American students, some that specifically serve high school drop-outs, and some that serve students who are unsuccessful in traditional high schools (Early College Designs Data Use Toolkit, 2011). There are some limitations in this study which include:

1. The study is limited to the narratives and experiences of seven selected African American participants who are part of the millennial generation from one school district.

2. The study is limited by its geographical location which was located in a Midwestern State at a large Predominantly White Institution.

3. The study is limited because it focuses on African American students, the research cannot be generalized to a larger group; however, it provides greater understanding and insight which can lead to other research projects that are related to dual enrollment programs, particularly those dual enrollment programs serving African American high school students who integrate on college campus and engage in relationships with college faculty and staff. While this study focuses on African American students and their relationships with White college faculty, there is an opportunity for the results of this study to broaden the existing body of literature in educational reform, student-teacher relationships, and curriculum and instruction.

4. I was the human investigator and an instrument in this research, I am limited simply by being human (Merriam, 1998), therefore, mistakes are made, opportunities are missed, and personal biases interfere.
5. This study is limited due the limited longitudinal research related to this initiative because ECHS was established in 2002. As the program matures, the research conducted will provide information to enhance and stimulate the educational achievement levels of students and increase college completion rates.

ECHS serves the millennial generation of students that represent the largest group of people since the Baby Boomer Generation. These future leaders will establish relationships and interact with our global society quite differently from previous generations due to the recent technological advances that have occurred. It is important to understand the relational aspects of these students and teachers because they are being prepared by our educational system for a future global workforce.

**Conclusions**

Student-teacher relationships are a key to academic success for current and future generations. The seven African American students in this study experienced interactive and interpersonal relationships with their White college faculty members that they believed authentically cared about them as students and their academic achievement. While the students were motivated to work harder based on the care they received from their instructors, having caring instructors was not a requirement for them to academically achieve their goals. Students believed it was more important for them to academically succeed in order to project a positive racial image to their communities and society. Students defined their academic achievement as learning to persevere through the challenges and obstacles they may have encountered. These challenges and obstacles came in the form of various racial or stereotypical issues that were often negative from
their community, society or the media. These racial experiences were operationalized through a personal dimension of CRT known as intersectionality based on their inward critique that combined their race and gender as they experienced multiple forms of oppression. There are generational, technological, and racial aspects of this millennial generation that have challenged our traditional educational system and will continue to push the way in which students perceive relationships, race, and academic achievement. As we become a more global society, both locally and worldwide, it is imperative that we understand the concept of care in student-teacher relationships as a motivation for students to work harder. While standardized testing is necessary as we assess the content that is being taught in our classrooms, the relational factors that impact achievement while students are dually enrolled in high school and college are equally important. There are implications provided in this study that can contribute to and extend the body of knowledge in dual enrollment, student-teacher relationships, care, and academic achievement. These implications have both direct and indirect effects on all educational stakeholders such as, students, educators, administrators, policy makers, parents, higher education, and the global workforce. Finally, the rich and descriptive research that occurs from the conversations that we have among educational stakeholders must continue in order to maintain care as a common core of the student-teacher relationships, particularly for minority first-generation college students. As we strive to increase college completion rates for our minority students and provide them access to educational opportunities that will allow them to enter into the workforce, there is an urgency to share research findings that confirm the importance of caring relationships in our blended educational systems of secondary and postsecondary education.
Finally, the experiences that occur within the student-teacher relationship prepare students to embark upon new opportunities, engage new people, and learn new things. These relational experiences are the unspoken skills that are required to successfully pursue a career and navigate a global landscape. Student-teacher relationships while in college are the springboard to relationships for future endeavors, such as careers and research. The unspoken curriculum in education must include the relationships that are established between all students and all educators who authentically care and are willing to connect through interpersonal pedagogical interactions inside and outside of the classroom.
REFERENCES


Ohio Board of Regents, University System of Ohio. (2014). *College credit plus: Chancellor John Carey’s recommendations for Ohio’s dual credit program.* Retrieved from https://www.ohiohighered.org/ccp/background


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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

Notice of Approval

April 1, 2013

Monica S. Womack

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 20130330 “African American Students’ Perceptions of their White College Instructors and Academic Achievement while Enrolled in Early College High School”

Thank you for submitting an IRB Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects for the referenced project. Your protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and has been approved under Expedited Category #7.

Approval Date: April 1, 2013
Expiration Date: April 1, 2014
Continuation Application Due: March 18, 2014

In addition, the following is/are approved:

☐ Waiver of documentation of consent
☐ Waiver or alteration of consent
☐ Research involving children
☐ Research involving prisoners

Please adhere to the following IRB policies:

☒ IRB approval is given for not more than 12 months. If your project will be active for longer than one year, it is your responsibility to submit a continuation application prior to the expiration date. We request submission two weeks prior to expiration to ensure sufficient time for review.
☒ A copy of the approved consent form must be submitted with any continuation application.
☒ If you plan to make any changes to the approved protocol you must submit a continuation application for change and it must be approved by the IRB before being implemented.
☒ Any adverse reactions/revolutions must be reported immediately to the IRB.
☒ If this research is being conducted for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, you must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.
☒ When your project terminates you must submit a Final Report Form in order to close your IRB file.

Additional information and all IRB forms can be accessed on the IRB website at:
https://www.uakron.edu/research/crasp/compliance/IRBHome.php

Cc: Jennifer Milam – Advisor
Cc: Valerie Callanan – IRB Chair

☒ Approved consent form/s enclosed

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APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How did you choose to be in the Early College High School Program?
2. What do you like most about being in the Early College High School Program?
3. What do you like least about being in the Early College High School Program?
4. What are your plans after completing the Early College High School Program?
   a. College
   b. Career
   c. Unsure
5. What is your favorite subject in the Early College Program?
6. Do you have classes taught by College Instructors?
   a. Yes
   b. No
7. How many college courses are you taking?
8. How do you describe a teacher who cares?
9. Would you like to participate in a project that allows you to talk about your experiences with college instructors? (if yes, please include your name)
   a. Yes
   b. No
10. If yes, when are you available and how can you be contacted (cell phone, email, etc.)?

11. What is your GPA?
   a. Between 3.6 and 4.0
   b. Between 3.0 and 3.5
   c. Between 2.6 and 2.9
   d. Between 2.0 and 2.5
   e. Less than 2.0

12. Were you born between the years 1982 and 2002?
   a. Yes
   b. No

*Disclaimer—Forms completed by the participants are voluntary, and findings from this study in no way represent the philosophy and beliefs of the school district*
APPENDIX C

STUDENT INITIAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction of the researcher.

Share the Purpose of the Study.

RESEARCH Question #1: How do African American students enrolled in Early College High School who are a part of the millennial generation perceive their student-teacher relationship with their White college instructors/professors?

1. Tell me about yourself and what made you decide to attend Early College High School?
2. Who helped you decide to attend ECHS?
4. Do you like being a “college” student?
5. Which classes are you taking this semester?
6. How many classes are you taking with High School Teachers?
7. How many classes are you taking with College Faculty?
8. What makes a teacher a “good” teacher?
9. What makes a teacher a “bad” teacher?
10. Describe a teacher that cares?
11. Do you think your college teachers can’t to relate to you as a teenager? Please explain?
12. Do you take time to meet with your college instructors?
13. What is your relationship like with your teachers, particularly the college faculty?
14. What makes the relationship with your college teacher a good or a bad relationship?
15. How does that relationship affect you in the classroom?
16. Have you always had good or bad relationships with your teachers?
17. Is your relationship with your college teacher important to you? Please explain?
18. Do you think your college teachers care about you and your success in ECHS?
   Please explain?
19. What makes you successful in ECHS? Please Explain

**RESEARCH Question #2: How do African American students enrolled in Early College High School who are a part of the millennial generation perceive their own personal academic achievement?**

1. How would you describe your college courses?
2. How do you define academic achievement?
3. Do you think that you are learning a lot in your college courses?
4. Can you compare your high school courses with your college courses?
5. Do you think that you are successful in your high school courses?
6. Do you think that you are successful in your college courses?
7. How would you rate your current academic achievement in Early College High School?
8. What do you think your academic achievement will be in the future in Early College High School?
9. Describe how academic achievement impacts you as a student in the Early College High School Program?

10. Do you think that the college courses that you are taking will help you complete a college degree?

11. Do you think college prepares you for a career?

12. Do you think your academic achievement will impact your career choices?

*Disclaimer—Forms completed by the participants are voluntary, and findings from this study in no way represent the philosophy and beliefs of the school district
APPENDIX D

STUDENT SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Introduction of the researcher.

Share the Purpose of the Study.

RESEARCH QUESTION #3: How do African American students enrolled in Early College High School who are a part of the millennial generation perceive the relationship between their White college instructors/professors caring about them as students and their academic achievement?

1. Tell me about how you became a student in Early College High School?

2. Do you have the option to choose the classes you take in Early College High School?

3. Do you like being a student in Early College High School?

4. Which college classes are you taking this semester?

5. How many other Early College High School students do you have in your college courses?

6. What makes a teacher a “good” teacher?

7. What makes a teacher a “bad” teacher?

8. Describe a teacher that cares?

9. Do you think your college instructors can relate to you as a teenager? Please explain?

10. Do you take time to meet with your college instructor/professor?
11. What is your relationship like as an ECHS student, with your White College Instructors?

12. Do you see your relationship with your White college instructors/professors as good or a bad relationship?

13. How does that relationship with your college instructors/professors affect you in the classroom?

14. Have you always had good or bad relationships with your teachers?

15. Is your relationship with your college instructors/professors important to you? Please explain?

16. Do you think your college instructors/professors care about you and your success as a student? Please explain?

17. What makes you a successful teacher with ECHS students specifically? Please Explain?

*Disclaimer—Forms completed by the participants are voluntary, and findings from this study in no way represent the philosophy and beliefs of the school district
APPENDIX E

STUDENT FINAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How is your relationship with your college instructors/professors?

2. How does your relationship with your college instructors/professors compare with your high school teachers?

3. Did you think that your college instructors/professors cared about your academic achievement this semester? How did they show they cared? Did this help you with academic achievement this semester?

4. Compare your college instructors this semester with last semester; do you think you had a better relationship this semester compared to last semester? In what ways?

5. Did you have a favorite college instructor/professor this semester? What made him or her your favorite? Do you think he or she cared about your academic achievement?

6. How would your student-teacher relationships changed throughout this semester? Do you think it changed because you cared or your professors cared about your academic achievement?

7. How do you think your student-teacher relationships with your college instructors/professors motivated you compared to your high school teachers?
8. Do you think that your experiences with college instructors/professors would be different if you did attend Early College High School?

9. Do you think that your parents and peers help your academic achievement in Early College High School? In what ways?

10. Do you think that you will continue to communicate with your college instructors/professors after you complete this semester? Why or Why not?

11. What’s the best part about being in a college course as a high school student?

12. What’s the worst part about being in a college course as a high school student?

13. Do you meet with your college instructors/professors before or after classes? Why or Why not? What types of discussions do you have during your meetings?

14. What has been the best part about being a college student while in high school?

15. What has been the worst part about being a college student while in high school?

*Disclaimer—Forms completed by the participants are voluntary, and findings from this study in no way represent the philosophy and beliefs of the school district*
APPENDIX F

STUDENT AND PARENT LETTER

Date

Dear Early College High School Student and Parent/Guardian:

My name is Monica S. Womack and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Curricular and Instructional Studies, at the University of Akron. I would like to invite Early College High School students to participate in a research project titled: African American Students’ Perceptions of Their White College Instructors and Academic Achievement While Enrolled in Early College High School.

The purpose of this study is to allow me to ask questions in a semi-structured format about student-teacher relationships and academic achievement in Early College High School. Questionnaires will be distributed to some Early College High School students to determine their willingness to participate. There will be eight students selected for more in-depth interviews, based on their affirming responses on the questionnaire and their expeditious return of signed forms. I would like to ask your student to answer questions on the initial questionnaire and if he or she is selected for participation in this study, the following will be asked of the participant:

- Students will meet with me twice for interviews at the site where Early College High School is located, in a classroom or an office at least three times throughout the semester 45-60 minutes each meeting. The first meeting will be an initial interview, and students will meet with me one-on-one to discuss their student-teacher relationships with college instructors/professors. Each discussion will be audio recorded and notes will be taken. The interview will be transcribed later for my review. Students will have an opportunity to review all transcripts after transcription to ensure accuracy.
- Next, students will have the opportunity to speak in a focus group with other students to elaborate on their student-teacher relationship and academic achievement. This group meeting will also be audio recorded, notes taken, and later transcribed for my review.
- Finally, students will be observed by the researcher in one of their college classrooms to see their interactions with their college instructors and to refine interview questions for the final interview session.
There are no known risks or discomforts while participating in this study. There will be no post-study follow-up at the completion of this study. The students may experience the anticipated benefit of developing a community of support among like-minded peers while participating in this study, also the information may help educators and administrators to better understand student-teacher relationships and academic achievement in Early College High School. Participation is voluntary and refusal or withdrawal from the study at any time will involve no penalty. No identifying information will be included in the data provided. Copies of all transcribed interviews and documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet and I will be the only person that has access to the electronic files in a password protected computer. Electronic data files will be stored on The University of Akron’s secure server; data will be kept for five years and will be destroyed when the project is completed.

If you have any questions about this study, you may call me at (330) 612-0960 or my advisor Dr. Jennifer Milam at (330) 972-8538. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the IRB at (330) 972-7666.

With warmest regards,

Monica S. Womack
Doctoral Student
Department of Curricular and Instructional Studies
The University of Akron

Disclaimer—Forms completed by the participants are voluntary, and findings from this study in no way represent the philosophy and beliefs of the school district
APPENDIX G

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT AND PARENT

PART I—TO BE COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT

I have read the information provided in the letter and I agree to take part in the study on African American Students’ Perceptions of Their White College Instructors and Academic Achievement While Enrolled in Early College High School. I would like to participate in the following:

(Please select one or more by checking the corresponding box)

□ Initial Recruitment Questionnaire
□ Three One-on-One interviews
□ Group Discussion
□ College Classroom Observation

I know what the study includes and the part of the project that will require my participation.
I know and understand that I do not have to answer all the questions that will be asked and that I can withdraw at any time.

Name (printed)__________________________________________________________

Signature_______________________________________________________________

Date_________________________

Disclaimer—Forms completed by the participants are voluntary, and findings from this study in no way represent the philosophy and beliefs of the school district
APPENDIX H
PARENT CONSENT FORM

PART II—TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

I have read the information provided in the letter for this study and I give permission for my child to participate in the parts of the study that have a check mark in the box below. (Please select one or more by checking the corresponding box)

☐ Initial Recruitment Questionnaire
☐ Two One-on-One interviews
☐ Group Discussion
☐ College Classroom Observation

Parent/Guardian Name (printed)_________________________________________________

Student’s Name (printed)_____________________________________________________

Signature of Parent/Guardian__________________________________________________

Relationship of signer: ______________________________________________________

Date_______________________________

Disclaimer—Forms completed by the participants are voluntary, and findings from this study in no way represent the philosophy and beliefs of the school district
APPENDIX I

FACULTY LETTER

Date

Dear College Professor/Instructor:

My name is Monica S. Womack and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Curricular and Instructional Studies, at the University of Akron. I am conducting a research study titled: *African American Students’ Perceptions of Their White College Instructors and Academic Achievement While Enrolled in Early College High School*.

The purpose of this study is to focus on African American students who are a part of the millennial generation and their perceptions of their student-teacher relationship with White college faculty members and academic achievement while enrolled in an Early College High School (ECHS). I would like to observe your class for this study as a faculty member teaching a class with Early College High School students. I will take written notes while observing the class.

There are no known risks or discomforts while participating in this study. There will be no post-study follow-up at the completion of this study. The students may experience the anticipated benefit of developing a community of support among like-minded peers while participating in this study, also the information may help educators and administrators to better understand student-teacher relationships and academic achievement in Early College High School.

Participation is voluntary and refusal or withdrawal from the study at any time will involve no penalty. No identifying information will be included in the data provided. Copies of all transcribed interviews and documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet and I will be the only person that has access to the electronic files in a password protected computer. Electronic data files will be stored on The University of Akron’s secure server; data will be kept for five years and will be destroyed when the project is completed.

If you have any questions about this study, you may call me at (330) 612-0960 or my advisor Dr. Jennifer Milam at (330) 972-8538. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the IRB at (330) 972-7666.

With warmest regards,

Monica S. Womack

Doctoral Student
Department of Curricular and Instructional Studies
The University of Akron

Disclaimer—Forms completed by the participants are voluntary, and findings from this study in no way represent the philosophy and beliefs of the school district
APPENDIX J

FACULTY AGREEMENT FORM

PART I—TO BE COMPLETED BY FACULTY/INSTRUCTOR

I have read the information provided in the letter for this study and I agree to participate in the parts of the study that have a check mark in the box below.

(Please select by checking the corresponding box)

☐ College Classroom Observation

Faculty/Instructor Name (printed)_______________________________

Signature________________________________________________________________

Date_______________________________

Disclaimer—Forms completed by the participants are voluntary, and findings from this study in no way represent the philosophy and beliefs of the school district