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**MATTERING VERSUS MARGINALITY: AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT  
PERSPECTIVE AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY**

by  
Dante Dandridge

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Educational Services and Leadership  
College of Education  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Master of Arts in Higher Education  
at  
Rowan University  
August 27, 2018

Thesis Chair: Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.



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## Abstract

Dante Dandridge

MATTERING VERSUS MARGINALITY: AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT  
PERSPECTIVE AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY

2018-2019

Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.

Master of Arts in Higher Education

The purpose of this study was to gauge the perceptions of African American students in the areas of social interaction, classroom climate, faculty interactions and administrative support and determining if these students felt marginalized or if they matter in those areas. The study also intended to find correlations between mattering and academic success as well as active campus participation with a feeling of mattering. The survey used was adapted from Lovely Durham, who condensed the survey *Perceptions on Community*, and handed out to a portion of the African American students at Rowan University.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Parents send their children to school trusting that the institution will be safe and treat the children in a positive manner. Although there are some helicopter parents who cannot help but cling to their children, a good amount of students will be on their own and under the protection of the institution they are attending. With this realization comes the understanding that as students, they must learn how to be self-regulated and responsible young adults. Some students of color experience culture shock by attending an institution where the majority of students are predominately white. They may have attended a school with a large number of students who resembled their appearance and may not know how to handle themselves in unfamiliar surroundings. Colleges and universities have a responsibility to help that students of all races and ethnicities become acclimated to their new home.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In 2008, Lovely Durham, wrote a thesis on *Mattering and Marginality Among African American Students at Rowan University*. Durham wished to study “the perceived level of satisfaction or comfort of African American students enrolled at Rowan University” (Durham, 2008, p.1). It has been 10 years since her study was completed and the political and educational climate has changed on college campuses, including Rowan University. There has been no study since Durham’s research into level of comfort among African American students enrolled at Rowan University. It is essential to keep research about underserved populations current to see if proper steps are being taken to

serve those communities and the steps that have been taken, to see if they have had any positive impact.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study follows similar assumptions of Durham's research which suggested that universities are a home away from home. By understanding that a university is a second home, students should feel safe and at ease on campus. Rowan University specifically has the goal to "eliminate any patterns of prohibited unequal treatment from a community that prizes inclusion and fosters an environment of civility and respect" (Rowan University Website). The goal of equal treatment gives responsibility to the institution to help shape perceptions of campus to its students.

When students feel that they matter at an institution, they integrate into campus life more effectively. Mattering is also important because it can be used in "evaluating the effectiveness of university programs that claim to increase feelings of mattering and for identifying students with low feelings of mattering" (France & Finney, 2010, p.48). The idea of mattering is closely related to that of feeling important, with importance in this context being defined as, feeling that other people care about us and are concerned about our wellbeing. The France and Finney article goes on to further discuss how mattering has a relation to psychological stages of depression and anxiety. The mental states of students due to mattering is then directly related to that of academic stress, which the authors found using Schlossberg's theory "mattering could reduce students stress and facilitate a sense of belonging." (France & Finney, 2010, p.49).

The importance of mattering has been linked to student performance in the classroom, therefore by having an updated study on the subject is in the best interest of Rowan to track the campus climate and make sure mattering is being felt by all students on campus. The findings in this study can be used to identify problem areas on campus where students feel marginalized in order to create solutions.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore African American student perceptions of mattering and marginality at Rowan University. I am using perspective rather than attitudes in my study because, I am attempting to replicate the work of two researchers who my work is modeled after. To keep continuity, perceptions rather than attitudes are what I intend on studying. Further the study examines how the perceptions of the African American students on campus relates to how those students are perceived by the faculty and administration.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

The study assumes that the programs at Rowan University are constructed to be inclusive of different cultures and belief systems. This study assumes that programs in place since Durham's study in 2008 have focused on improving the campus climate for all students. This study assumes that students would want to feel that they matter rather than marginalized, because that feeling leads to a better outlook of the campus and participation in campus activities.

The sample size was limited to those students who frequented the Social Justice Inclusion and Conflict Resolution Center (SJICR) during the Spring 2018 semester at

Rowan University. The students, while present in the SJICR Center, involved in this study are those who are more likely to be involved in on campus activities than those who are not involved in this study. The sample size for the study is approximately 225 students. Even more of the sampling size will come from those individuals who attend the Multicultural Centers biweekly Dining for Diversity talks. This event involves actively engaging in discussions about current events with students of all cultures and backgrounds from Rowan University.

This study is limited by possible researcher bias, which can play a part in how the conclusions are portrayed. Most of the students taking the survey for this study will come from an African American culture, which may not give a complete picture of mattering research.

### **Operational Definitions**

1. African American: A term used to describe those born in the United States who come from African descent.
2. Diversity: For the purposes of this paper when diversity is mentioned its mostly in terms of black and white.
3. Institution of Higher Education: Any educational arena where knowledge is offered past the high school level.
4. Marginality: The opposite of mattering, the individual has no importance and the feeling nobody cares for your well being.
5. Mattering: The feeling of importance and that others care about your well being.

6. Predominately White Campus (PWI) : A campus where over 50% of the student body is of European descent.
7. Rowan University: A public university located in Glassboro, NJ of over 18,500 students enrolled in both full and part time graduate and undergraduate courses during the 2017/2018 academic year.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are selected African American students' perceptions of the dimensions of the institutional environment: academic and personal advising, interaction with members of the administration, classroom climate, interactions with faculty, interaction with peers, and the diversity of campus services?
2. In which dimensions of the campus environment do African American students at Rowan University perceive they matter most and are most marginalized?
3. Is there a relationship between the student's perception of mattering or marginality in the six dimensions of the institutional environment?
4. Is there a relationship between Rowan University's African American undergraduate students' perceptions of mattering and marginality and student expressed levels of involvement in student organizations?

## **Overview of the Study**

Chapter II provides a literature review focusing on prior research on mattering and marginality as theories and its relation to higher education.

Chapter III describes the methodology and data collection procedure for the study, including a description of the survey instrument used, how data was analyzed, who was targeted (demographics), and the context of the study.

Chapter IV addresses the research questions by summarizing and discussing my findings from the previous chapter.

Chapter V provides my conclusion and recommendations that address the questions posed in the research. Included in this chapter is the summary of my major findings of the study.

## Chapter II

### Review of the Literature

#### Campus Climate

During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s in the United States, there was a fight for equality by African Americans to be seen as on the same level as their White counterparts. This fight for equality extended to higher education, and during the 1960s “the decade witnessed the beginning of dramatic increases in the number of African American students attending predominately White colleges and universities.” (Allen, 1992, p.26). According to Allen, the decade led also to many programs and changes in higher education institutions that were seen as “favorable” for Black equality. The changes in programs led to broaden diversity even in schools that were not keen on accepting those who were not White. As time passed the fight for equality seemed to be met with complacency, and with the new attitude towards the fight for equality, the attention paid to programs that benefited students of color may have suffered. Allen states this feeling of complacency may be the direct cause for racial incidents on campuses such as those that occurred at University of California and University of Texas (1992). A focus on campus racial composition in a study can help identify if being at predominately white institution plays any part towards mattering for African Americans. Adding a focus of gender differences in a study can show if pressure of gender plays any affect on African Americans, because according to Allen, “Gender affected Black women’s choice of college major, both directly and through its influence on career aspirations and traditional sex-role orientations.” (Allen, 1992, p.31). According to the study done by Lovely Durham, when studying



“traditional indicators of persistence” the model created by Tinto was not enough to explain African American student patterns.

“Social factors, especially the subjective experience of marginality, are strongly related to retention and graduation.” (Bruno, 1988; Doob 1996; Grant & Breese, 1997, p.192). Grant and Breese article discusses prior work done on the concept of marginality and the responses from individuals. From prior studies on marginality the reaction focus was on the negative “without considering that individuals in this situation are capable of generating a myriad of responses to this status” (Grant & Breese, 1997, p.192). The article is saying that although the feeling of being marginalized is one that many see as negative, most studies do not consider that those individuals studied, can change how they feel by possibly changing their situation. Emphasizing this point, the authors go on to report that those who feel marginalized focus on that aspect that has them feeling marginalized, they take that aspect and magnify it. By magnifying that aspect that they feel makes them different, the individual creates a gap between themselves and those they consider to be “normal” (Grant & Breese, 1997). What the authors want to convey is that, it’s important to acknowledge “several possible reactions to the conditions of marginality” (Rimstead, 1995, p.199).

Understanding the mindset and backgrounds of students of color who will be attending the PWI’s is very important because it will show empathy towards important causes in that community. “Only 15.9% of Black students in 2000 were enrolled in historically Black colleges and universities” (Fischer, 2007, p. 125). The article discusses how attending an institution of higher education can be a new and

frightening experience because of the culture that people of color may come from. Examples of the culture include, being first generation college students, low socioeconomic backgrounds and family backgrounds that can possibly be hinderances to acclimating to a predominately white campus (Fischer, 2007). Someone who is first generation may not understand the demands of college, just as someone from a low income family may need to work side jobs just to stay in school. Integration is a big factor in mattering, because those who do not integrate into campus and its activities may feel marginalized, and according to Tinto and his student integration model, and those students will eventually reevaluate their commitment to the school. It has been hard for students of color to integrate into campus programs because “minority students perceive many traditional campus organizations as exclusive and insensitive to their social needs” (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001, p.31). The perceptions that students of color have are reflected in the data in various studies such as, volunteer programs having 3% African American membership compared with that of 82% of White membership. The perception can mean there is either a lack of multicultural programs or the programs there are have not been given the proper advertisement to its target audience.

### **Mattering to African American Students**

Mattering is a concept where feelings, caring and interest are present. To counteract a feeling of African American students feeling possibly marginalized at PWIs the more multicultural organizations an institution offers the better the students of color may feel. This assumption is based off of a study done in 1996, and still holds true, that “suggested that multicultural organizations promote mattering by

offering support and confidence to persons who otherwise are made to feel alienated and desolate” (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001, p.32). What separates multicultural organizations and those that are not, is that the group membership is normally overwhelmingly nonwhite members. As recently as 1997 there were several studies done on the study of social organizations and specifically cultural student organizations. A qualitative study completed by Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel (1991) showed that by having multicultural organizations the campus could be viewed on a micro level instead of the uncomfortable whole campus atmosphere. “Once integrated into an ethnic enclave, students felt more comfortable exploring and integrating into the larger campus community.” (Guiffrida, 2003, p. 305). African American students are not just seeking out multicultural organizations because they are the best options, for the most part “for White students, off campus options are more readily available than for Black students” (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001, p. 33). The concept gleaned from how multicultural organizations affect mattering in African American students can explain why these students of color perform better in most aspects at historically black campuses (Allen, 1992). If students of color feel no connection to the campus and there is no outlet for them to gravitate towards, the research shows that those students will feel marginalized.

Knowing when students begin to feel marginalized is very important to an institution. According to Schlossberg (1989), freshman students feel marginalized immediately after setting foot on campus, often due to what Schlossberg describes as a difficult transition from high school to college. Schlossberg believed that staying on campus should be a priority for first year students. If the students feel more a part of

school, Schlossberg argued the students will then believe they matter to the school (Schlossberg, 1989). The research shows marginalization to be a direct effect of project loads, project timetables, and difficulty dealing with instructors (Ragheb & McKinney, 1993). To combat the stress of heavy workloads and college transition, researchers connected the idea of mattering in the college environment “and its relation to college students academic stress and social support from friends and family.” (Rayle & Chung, 2008, p.25). The study conducted by Rayle and Chung confirmed mattering is reinforced when friends and family support students attending school. By association the authors claim “greater mattering to individuals may lead to greater mattering to groups and organizations, such as college campuses.” (Rayle & Chung, 2008, p.30). The perception of having support from friends and family was directly linked to less academic stress, which researchers believe makes the level of support from family and friends a good indicator of level of academic stress (Rayle & Chung, 2008).

In the report done by Rayle and Chung, they discovered that of all the variables that go into factoring if a student feels marginalized or not on campus, “only social support from college friends was a significant predictor of students mattering to the college environment” (Rayle & Chung, 2008, p.30). Students in that study reported that having support from friends eased stress from academics and everyday life. Easing students’ stress correlates with previous findings that suggested stress was a factor in mattering. Handling stress with the help of friends and academic advisors increased feelings of mattering on campus. The social support garnered by students allows students to become socially integrated on campus “which may increase their academic persistence

and decrease their reported academic stress levels” (Rayle & Chung, 2008, p.30). Becoming more involved on campus is a focal point of several studies mentioned in whether students will feel as if they matter on campus.

What makes doing updated reports and studies on mattering to students and specific cross sections of the campus population important, “the current study highlights the experiences of mattering with a 21<sup>st</sup> generation of college students who are likely facing different familial, financial, sociopolitical, and academic concerns than those students in the 1980s” (Rayle & Chung, 2008, as cited in Kuh et al., 2005, p.30). The experiences of college students during the Civil Rights era of the 1960s are not comparable to the students of the Vietnam era in the early 1970s, and this trend continues. What the study is conveying is that although eras are different, the researchers have noticed that mattering in the college environment is still key to the success of college students.

### **African American Student Social Engagement**

“African American students face unique challenges to becoming academically and socially integrated into PWIs because their norms and values may be incongruent with those of the White majority.” (Giuffrida, 2003, as cited in Tinto, 1993, p.304). Rayle and Chung (2008) analyzed African American student college outcomes using academic achievement, social involvement, and career aspirations as variables to measure. The study was important because as Tinto and Schlossberg had stated, a college student’s social involvement is directly correlated to how they feel about school and how a student feels about school states a lot about if a student feels marginalized on campus. Measuring academic success as a predictor of mattering versus marginality

has led to results of Rayle and Chung's to show racial composition of a campus as an important (second most important) factor in predicting student achievement (Rayle & Chung, 2008). The results showed that it was more likely for African American students to feel as if they matter at historically black college and universities more than at predominately white institutions. The feeling of mattering more happens because social involvement and academic achievement is higher at the HBCU's due to more faculty involvement and a sense of family that is not as strongly felt at predominately white institutions (2008).

In addition to an imbalance in perception of mattering on campus between White and African American students, Tinto believes White students interact mostly through informal interactions. On the opposite end of that spectrum, Tinto believed "social integration among students of color at PWIs was influenced more by formal forms of associations, such as involvement in student organizations." (Giuffrida, 2003, as cited in Tinto, 1993, p.305).

Allen (1991) conducted a study that showed that a "significant number of African American students perceived PWIs as socially isolating and alienating" (Allen, 1991, p.29). Furthermore, the same students in his study felt there was no attempt made by the administrations to bring African American students together with the rest of the population. Since that survey, universities have made great strides since then in investing in African American student organizations. According to Guiffrida, "African American student organizations benefited members in establishing out-of-class connections with faculty, provided them opportunities to give back to other Blacks, and allowed them to feel comfortable by being around others perceived as like them" as

cited in (Durham, 2008, p.14). The idea of multicultural organizations is not to just give people of color a place to feel at ease, but it also is a place for everyday contact with African American culture.

### **African American Racial Identity**

William Cross is a researcher and theorist who is known for the Nigrescence Model, which details a five-stage theory of Black identification. Those five stages include, the pre-encounter, encounter, immersion, internalization and internalization commitment. In an article by Parker and Flowers (2003), the authors tried to connect the perceptions of African American racial identity to connectivity to a college. Depending on what stage of the model the students are in, the students can avoid the White population as much as possible. In other stages, students may have their own race (African Americans) at the center of their everyday activities (Parker & Flowers, 2003). The authors believed that there had not been much work in racial identity being connected to academic success. The importance of such a study is that, academic success has already been shown to be linked to a sense of mattering on campus. The higher the academic success the more students feel appreciated and connected to the campus which equates to feeling important to the campus. After conducting the study, the findings concluded that there was no connection of racial identity with academic success. They also discovered that during the stage of immersion, African American students “were less likely to perceive the campus as welcoming, friendly, and inclusive.” (Parker & Flowers, 2003, p.180).

Durham (2008) sought to understand the students at PWIs. A study was done to see why organizations that are geared towards the African American population, are a

necessity. The study showed that there was a “considerable difference between African American and non-African American perceptions of marginality” (Durham, 2008, p. 15, as cited in Gossett et al., 1996). Examples of the differences included, how African American students perceived the lack of sensitivity by the administrations was noticeable to those students, and how African American students felt marginalized by faculty. What was interesting in that same study was the perception that African American students did feel a sense of mattering when it came to advising. The study concluded in saying that it thought the campus needed to pay more attention to student needs and specifically the climate of the student body (Gossett et al., 1996).

The racial identity model can go a long way in helping to breakdown barriers and help professionals in academics understand students of color. Park (1928) wrote an article, on human migration and the marginal man, where he discusses the marginal man (man meaning both men and women). Park spoke of crisis that consisted of periods of “inner turmoil and intense self-consciousness” (Park, 1928, p.893). For students who are considered in the minority, the crisis period is permanent. This permanent crisis Park considered a personality type. He would go on to claim that the turmoil experienced by the minority would manifest in ways obvious to an observer. In looking at higher education, the obvious way turmoil is presented is possibly through, resentment of Black students against White students who do not have to struggle with acclimation of a PWI. Resentment can be a cause or effect of other feelings that create a perpetual feeling of marginality on campus.



## **Student Affairs Professionals**

Research has showed that academic success is not directly related to racial identity, but what the findings have shown is that racial identity plays a role in whether African American students, belong on campus. Park and Flowers (2003) believe that “student affairs professionals are aware of their own attitudes and feelings toward racial and cultural groups” (p.180). With this belief of academic professionals, it was still recommended that institutions require “proper training on how to interpret racial identity theory and learn how to best use the overall framework in program planning and evaluation efforts.” (Parker & Flowers, 2003, p.180). What this means is that as academic professionals are held to a standard that they should already be prepared to encounter a wide range of students that covers numerous backgrounds. The administrations are not expecting proficiency in all things just that as a professional, you are understanding and sensitive to different peoples that a professional may encounter. The author also suggested that the academic professionals on campus should be doing more outreach and program development aimed at specific issues that African American students may currently be facing on campus. In order to accomplish the objective, it would call for faculty that is competent and knowledgeable in that subject area, possibly leading to hiring of a more diverse faculty.

## **Summary of the Literature Review**

The research done on mattering versus marginalization has shown the factors that create feelings of marginality and that of mattering in relation to campus climate at PWIs. The research looked at the history of past studies and applied them to current situations, which resulted in recommendations for institutions and individuals who are looking to do

further research. The research showed that both qualitative and quantitative were used to find if expected factors of mattering were indeed creating an impact on students of color at PWIs. Most of the research centered on how students felt they mattered to the campus environment, but there was not much current research on how students felt they mattered to the administration. This study intends to focus and extend the available research on the matter of the administrations effect on mattering to the students at Rowan University.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

#### **Context of the Study**

This study was conducted at Rowan University located in Glassboro, New Jersey. Founded in 1923 as a teacher's college, in 2018 Rowan University educates over 14,000 students at the bachelors (80+ programs), masters (60+ programs) and doctoral (5 programs) levels. According to the Rowan University website, the school is "one of just 56 institutions in the country with accredited programs in business, education, engineering and medicine." (Rowan University). There are seven colleges within the University which are, School of Business, School of Communication, School of Education, School of Engineering, School of Liberal Arts & Sciences, School of Fine & Performing Arts, and the School of Continuing Studies.

#### **Population and Sample Selection**

The targeted population for this study were African American undergraduate students enrolled at Rowan University during the 2017-2018 academic year. The sample size was approximately 150 subjects. The subjects are all students who identify as African American, which is due to the nature of the study examining that specific minority group. The students involved were both commuters and those who lived on campus. The students who participated were students picked through convenience sampling through some contact with groups or offices at the Social Justice Inclusion Conflict Resolution Center.

Recruitment occurred during counseling meetings, one on one sessions, programs and organization general meetings at the SJICR. The organizations approached for the study include: The Asian Cultural Association, The Black Culture League, The Council for African American Studies, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Rowan Rangeela, Student Organization for Caribbean Awareness, The United Latino Association, Black Student Union, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc., Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. and participation by members of the LGBTQA center. Using a strategy from a prior study, students were also selected from the Multicultural Office annual Multicultural Organizations Retreat.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument used to assess student's mattering and marginality was a quantitative instrument adapted from a previous study conducted last in 2008. That study adapted its instrument from previous research. This instrument is named Perceptions on Community/Environment created by Dr. Michael Cuyjet. The instrument is used to "assess students' perception of matters pertaining to their relative acceptance in a college or university environment with particular emphasis on issues related to the racial/ethnic identity" (Durham, 2008). According to the prior study the instrument has been modified to half of the items (30) from the original instrument (60), based on research done by researcher Lovely Durham in a pilot test conducted with a small sampling of students.

The instrument will employ a 4-point Likert scale with 4 – strongly agree, through 1 – strongly disagree. It must be noted that neutral is not an acceptable answer as it would not serve the study's purpose. The 30 statements in the first section are related to Schlossberg's idea of mattering and the factors related to that feeling: importance,

dependence, appreciation, attention and ego-extension (Durham, 2008). To address issues of prior studies Durham made sure the instrument not only covered the campus environment but also covered interactions with faculty and the rest of the campus administration. By focusing on more aspects of campus life the hope is to get a more accurate representation of mattering versus marginalization on the campus. Permission to use the instrumentation was granted through email correspondence with Lovely Durham. Upon approval to conduct the survey from the Institutional Review Board of Rowan University (IRB Board), the survey was administered.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection was performed at the Social Justice Inclusion and Conflict Resolution (SJICR) Center located at Hawthorne Hall at Rowan University in an informal setting. The opinions were gathered during organizational meetings and other various organization events, where permission was given by the appropriate member of that organizations leadership. Authorization was given to perform the survey in the center by the Director of SJICR Mr. Gardy Guiteau. The survey was conducted during the Spring 2018 semester months of March through June 2018. The participants were informed that the survey was voluntary and would be kept confidential. The data was collected over a four month period.

### **Data Analysis**

As a reflection of the original study at Rowan University by Lovely Durham, the independent variables and dependent variables were the same. The independent variables of the study included race, enrollment status, residence and work status. The dependent

variables were the student opinions on interactions with various campus entities which included, classroom climate, members of the campus administration, campus peers and services provided by Rowan University. The method gauged to analyze the opinions of the students was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) application provided for use by Rowan University. Correlations and descriptive statistics were used to examine the data responses to answer the research questions.

## Chapter IV

### Findings

The results of the survey were collected over a four month period to gauge Rowan University students' perceptions of the campus environment based on six criteria. The perceptions will be analyzed to discover whether students feel if they are marginalized or if they matter. The survey responses were analyzed with the SPSS application.

### Profile of the Sample

The targeted population for this study were African American undergraduate students enrolled at Rowan University during the 2017-2018 academic year. One hundred fifty students were surveyed. The survey is a convenience sample because the selection was based on availability of students at the location it was conducted. There was a selection of students who participated who were chosen due to affiliations in organizations of the target population of the survey.

Of the 150 surveys handed out to the students, only 140 were returned properly filled out to give reasonable feedback for the study. The return rate for this study was 93% as compared to the return rate of Lovely Durham's study of 70%. The surveys were handed out until the target number of students was reached.

In relation to gender, racial ethnicity, class level, enrollment status and residence, the percentages are presented in Table 4.1. Of those surveyed, 64.3% identified as female and 35.7% identified as being male. The target population for this survey was African American students and the response came back with 85.7% identifying with that ethnic group. In terms of percentage, next came Hispanic or Latino with 7% identifying,

Multiracial with 6.4% identifying and Asian American with .07% identifying. There were no American Indian identifying students who took the survey.

Table 4.1 also presents class levels of those surveyed, and all four underclass levels were well represented. Juniors were 36.5% of the responders, Sophomores and Seniors were within 5% of each other with 25.7% and 22.8% respectively, and freshman totaled 15%.

Table 4.1

*Demographic Profile of Subjects (N=140)*

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Female	90	64.3
Male	50	35.7
Ethnicity		
Black/ African American	120	85.7
Hispanic or Latin	10	7
Asian American	1	0.07
Multiracial	9	6.4
American Indian	0	0
Class Level		
Freshman	21	15
Sophomore	36	25.7
Junior	51	36.5
Senior	32	22.8



Table 4.1 (continued)

	<i>f</i>	%
Enrollment Status		
Full Time	138	98.6
Part Time	2	1.4
Residence		
Residence Hall	110	78.7
Fraternity/Sorority	5	3.6
House or Apt w/ Friends	23	16
House or Apt w/ Family	2	1.4

Table 4.1 indicated the enrollment status of the students with 98.6% reporting attending classes full time and only 1.4% attending part time. The table reflected that 78.7% of students utilized residence halls to live in on campus. Housing with friends off campus came in next with 16% response and fraternity and sorority housing followed with 3.6%. The lowest rate was 1.4% of responders claiming to live off campus with family.

Table 4.2 presents work status of subjects at Rowan University. Of those who were surveyed a majority responded (70%) that they did not work on campus and the remaining 30% said they did. The response rate of those who did not answer the question of hours worked per week was 30%. Approximately 33% of the respondents claimed to not work any hours during the week. The majority of those who did respond to the

question, responded with working at least 20 hours per week (10.7%). The average hours worked per week was 8.57.

Table 4.2

*Work Status of Subjects (N=140)*

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>M</i>
Work Status			
Works on campus	42	30	
Does not work on campus	98	70	
Reported average number of hours worked each week			8.57
0	46	32.9	
2	3	2.1	
3	2	1.4	
4	2	1.4	
5	5	3.6	
6	12	8.6	
7	1	.7	
8	2	1.4	
10	8	5.7	
20	15	10.7	
Greater than 20	2	1.4	
Missing	42	30	

Table 4.3 presents the responses for off campus status of students. The majority (57%) of students reported that they did not work on campus while 43% said they did work on campus. When reporting the work status and the status of on and off campus work, surveys were submitted that had blanks in key areas. The average number of hours worked reflects the missing information on the surveys. Most students responded that they worked an average of 20 hours per week off campus.

Table 4.3  
*Off-Campus Work Status of Subjects (N=140)*

	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i>
<b>Work Status</b>			
Works off campus	60	42.6	
Does not work off campus	80	57.4	
<b>Reported average number of hours worked each week</b>			
0	42	58	
5	3	5	
6	1	1.7	
8	3	5	
10	15	25	
15	5	8.3	
18	10	16.7	
20	17	28.3	
Greater than 20	6	10	
Missing	12	20	

Table 4.4 reflects the data of student involvement in student organizations on campus. Most of the students (62%) reported being in one student organization on campus. The maximum number of organization membership reported was 5, and the percentage of students in that amount of organizations was 9.2%. Of the students who reported back with the survey, 1.4% claimed to not affiliate with any student organization.

Table 4.4

*Subjects Active Involvement in Student Organizations (N=140)*

	<i>f</i>	%
Reported number of student organization		
0	2	1.4
1	87	62
2	10	7
3	12	8.6
4	15	10.7
5	13	9.2

Table 4.5 presents the number of meetings between students and faculty during the Fall 2017 academic semester. According to the respondents, 42% did not meet with their professors outside of the classroom. More than a quarter of the students (27%) said they met with their professor at least once during the semester outside of the classroom.

Under 15% of the students surveyed had met with their teachers more than four times outside of the classroom.

Table 4.5

*Subject Out-of-Class meetings with Faculty* (N=140)

	<i>f</i>	%
Reported number of student and faculty meetings		
0	59	42
1	38	27
2	20	14
3	7	5
Reported number of student and faculty meetings		
4	5	3.6
5	5	3.6
6	2	1.4
7	3	2.1
10	1	.7

### Analysis of the Data

**Research question 1.** What are selected African American student's perceptions of the dimensions of the institutional environment: academic and personal advising, interaction with members of the administration, classroom climate, interactions with faculty, interaction with peers, and the diversity of campus services?

To create a replication of Lovely Durham’s study, a customized 30 item Likert scale instrument was implemented based off of Durham’s findings of its effectiveness with the student body and questions to be asked. The original scale was created by Cuyjet in 1996, *Perceptions on Community Survey*. Each statement will be broken down separately and then compared later.

Table 4.6 are the responses to academic and advising relations with the students. The statement “My advisor remembers my name” had a mean of 1.95 (SD= .723), where 24.3% strongly agreed, 60.7% agreed and 15% combined either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The item stating, “I have an academic advisor who is helpful,” had a mean of 1.98 (SD= .734), with 23.6% strongly agreeing, 59.3% agreeing and 17.2% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The mean for this statement was 1.98 and an SD of .734. The highest mean value belonged to the statement: “There has always been an advisor available to talk with me if I need to ask a question,” with a mean of 2.08 (SD= .769). Those who agreed were 57.9% and those who disagreed was 16.4%.

Table 4.6

*Academic and Personal Advising (N=140)*

*(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Disagree=3, Strongly Disagree=4)*

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
My advisor remembers my name.	34	24.3	85	60.7	15	10.7	6	4.3

SD=.723, M=1.95

Table 4.6 (continued)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I have an academic advisor who is helpful. SD=.734, M=1.98	33	23.6	83	59.3	18	12.9	6	4.3
There has always been an advisor available to talk with me if I need to ask a question. SD=.769, M=2.08	28	20	81	57.9	23	16.4	8	5.7
When my advisor does not know the answers to my questions, he or she will seek out the answers. SD=.724, M=1.98	32	22.9	85	60.7	17	12.1	6	4.3
I know what I need to graduate. SD=.720, M=1.99	32	22.9	83	59.3	20	14.3	5	3.6

In Table 4.7 the data reflects the responses to campus relation interaction. The statement with the highest mean was “The administration seems to consider African

American students priorities as important as White student priorities,” with 2.16 (SD=.761) as the mean. Conversely, the statement with the lowest mean was “Administrative staff treat African American students differently than they do White students,” which had 1.79 (SD=.747) as the mean. A high percentage of people reported that they agreed, 57% that they feel welcomed on the campus compared to 17.9% that did not feel welcome on campus. When responding to “The administration focuses its attention mainly on the issues of ethnic majority (Caucasian) students,” 25.7% disagreed with the statement

Table 4.7

*Administration (N=140)*

*(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Disagree=3, Strongly Disagree=4)*

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I feel like I'm treated fairly by the university. SD=.833, M=1.94	45	32.1	67	47.9	20	14.3	8	5.7
I feel welcome on campus SD=.683, M=1.98	32	22.9	81	57.9	25	17.9	2	1.4
The administration focuses its attention mainly on the issues of ethnic majority (Caucasian) students.	23	16.4	77	55.0	36	25.7	4	2.9



Table 4.7 (continued)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
	SD=.719, M=2.15							
Administrative staff treat African American students differently than they do White students.	53	37.9	68	48.6	15	10.7	4	2.9
SD=.747, M=1.79								
The administration seems to consider African American students priorities as important as White student priorities.	26	18.6	71	50.7	38	27.1	5	3.6
SD=.761, M=2.16								

Table 4.8 displays the responses to the statements on classroom climate. The highest mean value was 2.07 (SD=.828) for, “I am often expected to represent my entire race in discussion in class,” with 42% of responders saying they agree with the statement and 27.1% saying they disagree. When responding to the statement “It is (or seems to me that it would be) uncomfortable to be the only African American student in an entire class,” 57.1% of students agreed as to 17.1% disagreeing. Classroom climate

statements had no less than 59% of students agreeing with the statements. The lowest mean was 1.94 (SD=.756) for the statement “I find it easy to speak out in class.”

In Table 4.9 displayed are the items related to faculty interaction with students on campus. The statement with the highest mean was “My professors will not make time to talk with me out of class,” 2.74 (SD=.955) and 50% of students disagreed with the statement compared to 14.3% saying they agree. The students responded to the statement “My professors seem open to having a diversity of students in their classes,” which had a mean score of 2.76 (SD=.718), with 62.5% disagreeing and 6.9% saying they agree. The response was somewhat like the next statement “My professors make the classroom experience good for students of all races” with a mean score of 2.76 (SD=.718) with 45% disagreeing.

Table 4.8

*Classroom Climate (N=140)*

*(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Disagree=3, Strongly Disagree=4)*

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
The atmosphere in my class makes me feel like I belong. SD=.894, M=1.99	46	32.9	59	42.1	25	17.9	10	7.1
I find it easy to speak out in class.	41	29.3	69	49.3	27	19.3	3	2.1

Table 4.8 (continued)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
	SD=.756, M=1.94							
I am often expected to represent my entire race in discussion in class.	38	27.1	59	42.1	38	27.1	5	3.6
SD=.828, M=2.07								
It is (or seems to me that it would be) uncomfortable to be the only African American student in an entire class.	31	22.1	80	57.1	24	17.1	5	3.6
SD=.734, M=2.02								
Unless I have another student of my race in class, it is difficult to want to be there.	29	20.7	66	47.1	38	27.1	7	5
SD=.810, M=2.16								

Table 4.9

Faculty (N=140)

(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Disagree=3, Strongly Disagree=4)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
	My professors will not make time to talk with me out of class. SD=.955, M=2.74	22	15.7	20	14.3	70	50	28
Faculty use examples relevant to people of my race in our lectures. SD=.775, M=2.30	24	17.1	53	37.9	60	42.9	3	2.1
My professors seem open to having a diversity of students in their classes. SD=.718, M=2.76	10	6.9	27	18.8	90	62.5	13	9.3
My professors make the classroom experience good for students of all races. SD=.718, M=2.76	14	10	42	30	63	45	21	15
My professors seem to recognize the White students in class, but not the African American students.	23	16.4	42	30	67	47.9	8	5.7

Table 4.9 (continued)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
	SD=.856, M=2.43							

In Table 4.10 the findings represent responses related to peer interaction perceptions of African American students. The highest mean for peer interactions involved the statement: “African American students are not considered to be serious students by White students,” with a mean of 2.56 (SD=.798). There was a 6% differential between those who agreed with the statement (37.1%) and those who disagreed with the statement (43.6%). The similar situation occurred with the statement “My race sometimes gets in the way of my interactions with my fellow students,” which had a mean of 2.37 (SD=2.37), those who agreed were 40.7% and those who disagreed were 39.3%. The highest percentage was 75% agreeing with the statement “It is fun to compete academically with students of different races.”

Table 4.10

Peer Interaction (N=140)

(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Disagree=3, Strongly Disagree=4)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I get support from my classmates when I need it. SD=.906, M=2.41	20	14.3	62	44.3	38	27.1	20	14.3
I interact with my fellow students of other races out of class. SD=.708, M=2.13	24	17.1	77	55	36	25.7	3	2.1
It is fun to compete academically with students of different races. SD=.536, M=2.17	7	5	105	75	25	17.9	3	2.1
African American students are not considered to be serious students by White students. SD=.798, M=2.56	12	8.6	52	37.1	61	43.6	15	10.7
My race sometimes gets in the way of my interactions with my fellow students. SD=.799, M=2.37	20	14.3	57	40.7	55	39.3	8	5.7

Table 4.11

*Campus Services (N=140)**(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Disagree=3, Strongly Disagree=4)*

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
	There are student services on campus I have needed but have not been able to get. SD=1.013, M=2.18	45	32.1	41	29.3	38	27.1	16
There are services on campus designed specifically to help African American students. SD=.730, M=1.89	44	31.4	70	50	24	17.1	2	1.4
There is a meeting area on campus where African American students feel at home. SD=.479, M=1.85	28	20	105	75	7	5	0	0
There are sufficient extra curricular activities for me on campus. SD=.702, M=1.82	47	33.6	73	52.1	18	12.9	2	1.4
There have been extra curricular activities that appeal to my interest	22	15.7	79	56.4	37	26.4	2	1.4

Table 4.11 (continued)

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
	SD=.681, M=2.14							

In Table 4.11 the responders gave their perceptions on campus services. The responses were positive for the statement: “There are services on campus designed specifically to help African American students,” where a combined 81.4% of students agreed or strongly agreed. The average mean for that statement was 1.89 (SD=.730). The statement that had an overwhelming response for one perception over others was “There is a meeting area on campus where African American students feel at home,” the mean was 1.85 (SD=.479) and 75% of students agreed with the statement compared to 5% who did not. “There are student services on campus I have needed but have not been able to get” had similar perceptions across the board with 32.1% strongly agreeing, 29.3% agreeing and 27.1% disagreeing.

**Research question 2.** In which dimensions of the campus environment do African American students at Rowan University perceive they matter most and are most marginalized?

The mean scores are what was determined to be the statistic for student perception on where they mattered. Table 4.12 displays the mean scores from highest to lowest. The



category with the highest mean was *Faculty* with a cumulative score of 12.99 and average mean of 2.6. All five items scored in the top 6 based on mean score. The next highest mean was *Peer Interaction* with a mean score of 11.64 and an average mean of 2.32. The bottom three in terms of mean score were, *Administration* (10.02), *Academic and Personal Advising* (9.98), and *Campus Services* (9.88).

The specific rankings of the dimensions as shown in Table 4.12, has “My professors seem open to having a diversity of students in their classes” (M=2.76) as the highest tied with “My professors make the classroom experience good for students of all races” (M=2.76). The next highest was “My professors will not make the time to talk with me out of class” (M=2.74) followed by “African American students are not considered to be serious students by White Students” (M=2.56). Finishing off the top of the chart was “My professors seem to recognize the White students in class, but not the African American students” (M=2.43). The lowest ranked scores were for the dimensions that stated, “There are services on campus designed specifically to help African American students” (M=1.89), “There is a meeting area on campus where African American students feel at home” (M=1.85), “There are sufficient extracurricular activities for me on campus” (M=1.82) and “Administrative staff treat African American students differently than they do White students” (1.79).

Table 4.12

*Statements by Descending Means*

<i>Statement</i>	<i>M</i>
My professors seem open to having a diversity of students in their classes.	2.76
My professors make the classroom experience good for students of all races.	2.76
My professors will not make the time to talk with me out of class.	2.74
African American students are not considered to be serious students by White students.	2.56
My professors seem to recognize the White students in class, but not the African American students.	2.43
My race sometimes gets in the way of my interactions with my fellow students.	2.37
Faculty use examples relevant to people of my race in our lectures.	2.30
There are student services on campus I have needed but have not been able to get.	2.18
It is fun to compete academically with students of different races.	2.17
Unless I have another student of my race in class, it is difficult to want to be there.	2.16
The administration seems to consider African American students priorities as important as White student priorities.	2.16
The administration focuses its attention mainly on the issues of ethnic majority (Caucasian) students.	2.15
There have been extracurricular activities that appeal to my interest.	2.14
I interact with my fellow students of other races out of class.	2.13
There has always been an advisor available to talk with me if I need to ask a question.	2.08
I am often expected to represent my entire race in discussion in class.	2.07
It is (or seems to me that it would be) uncomfortable to be the only African American student in an entire class.	2.02
The atmosphere in my class makes me feel like I belong.	1.99

Table 4.12 (continued)

<i>Statement</i>	<i>M</i>
I know what I need to graduate.	1.99
I have an academic advisor who is helpful.	1.98
When my advisor does not know the answers to my questions, he or she will seek out the answers	1.98
I feel welcome on campus	1.98
My advisor remembers my name	1.95
I find it easy to speak out in class	1.94
I feel like I'm treated fairly by the university	1.94
There are services on campus designed specifically to help African American students.	1.89
There is a meeting area campus where African American students feel at home.	1.85
There are sufficient extracurricular activities for me on campus.	1.82
Administrative staff treat African American students differently than they do White students.	1.79

**Research question 3:** Is there a relationship between the student's perception of mattering or marginality in the six dimensions of the institutional environment?

The two highest means belonged to *Faculty* and *Peer Interaction* and the two lowest dimensions were *Campus Services* and *Academic and Personal Advising*. Using these dimensions is logical to explore any possible relationship of student perceptions of marginality and mattering in the six dimensions of the institutional environment.

Table 4.13 shows comparison of agree versus disagree for “There are sufficient extracurricular activities for me on campus” (52% agree, 12.9% disagree) in comparison to both “African American students are not considered to be serious students by White students”(37.1% agree, 43.6% disagree) and “My professors seem open to having a diversity of students in their classes” (18.8% agree, 62.5% disagree). The percentage that agreed were both below 50% for the dimensions with the highest mean. There was very little comparison between the dimensions with the higher mean values compared to that of the dimension with the lowest mean value.

Table 4.14 shows comparison between “There have been extracurricular activities that appeal to my interest” (56.4% agree, 26.4% disagree) to “African American students are not considered to be serious students by White students”(37.1% agree, 43.6% disagree), “My professors seem open to having a diversity of students in their classes” (18.8% agree, 62.5% disagree), “Faculty use examples relevant to people of my race in our lectures” (37.9% agree, 42.9% disagree), “My professors make the classroom experience good for students of all races” (30% agree, 45% disagree) and “I interact with my fellow students of other races out of class” (55% agree, 25.7% disagree). In this comparison there were more of an alignment in agree versus disagree with some dimensions having very little disparity between agree or disagree.

Table 4.13

Campus Services: There are sufficient extracurricular activities for me on campus

(N=140)	Agree %	Disagree %
There are sufficient extracurricular activities for me on campus.	52%	12.9%
African American students are not considered to be students.	37.1%	43.6%
My professors seem open to having a diversity of students in their classes	18.8%	62.5%

Table 4.14

Campus Services: There have been extracurricular activities that appeal to my interest

(N=140)	Agree %	Disagree %
There have been extracurricular activities that appeal to my interest	56.4%	26.4%
African American students are not considered to be serious students by White students.	37.1%	43.6%

Table 4.14 (continued)

(N=140)	Agree %	Disagree %
My professors seem open to having a diversity of students in their classes	18.8%	62.5%
Faculty use examples relevant to people of my race in our lectures	37.9%	42.9%
My professors make the classroom experience good for students of all races	30%	45%
I interact with my fellow students of other races out of class	55%	25.7%

**Research question 4.** Is there a relationship between Rowan University's African American undergraduate students' perceptions of mattering and marginality and students expressed levels of involvement in student organizations?

In Table 4.4 where student involvement was discussed, 1.4% of students reported not being in a student organization. Those students who are not on campus and are

instead working, account for 42.6% of those students surveyed. This may indicate a negative correlation.

## Chapter V

### Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Summary of the Study

This study investigated the perceptions of African American students mattering and being marginalized at Rowan University during the 2017-2018 academic school year. Using a sample size calculator, it was determined that I needed approximately 140-150 students to take the survey. The target population was chosen using a sample of convenience at the Social Justice Conflict Inclusion Resolution Center. I was able to get 140 responses in return which was my intended target. The students who completed the survey had a makeup of 64.3% female, 35.7% male, 98% full time and approximately 86% African American identifying. The survey focused on six dimensions that would be used to measure perceptions. The scale was arranged from 1-strongly agree, 2-agree, 3-disagree, 4-strongly disagree.

The study is a reproduction of a prior study conducted by graduate Lovely Durham. The study was intended to be “based on the premise that students who perceive they matter to their institution would be more involved and engaged resulting in more positive academic gains” (Durham, 2007). The outcome of the study was to determine which areas did African American students perceive the most mattering or marginality, was there a relationship between environment and student involvement in student organizations and was there a relationship between the different dimensions.

The survey was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Services (SPSS), a computer software package. The statistics used were means, frequencies, percentages



and standard deviations. In this survey the mean was a representation of perception of most mattering and marginalization. Percentages were used to see if there were any relationships between variables.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

**Research question 1.** What are selected African American student's perceptions of the dimensions of the institutional environment: academic and personal advising, interaction with members of the administration, classroom climate, interactions with faculty, interaction with peers, and the diversity of campus services?

The survey results suggested that in the dimension of campus services, the students perceived they matter the most. The results reflected the surroundings in which the survey was taken. The SJICR was originally a place for students of color to meet and have a safe space. It has expanded to include groups catering to religious affiliations and various rights groups. In Durham's study, campus services was the third worse dimension in terms of perception of mattering. At the time of the study Durham had began, SJICR did not exist and there was only an office in the Student Center where one administrator with the title of Director of Multicultural Affairs sat. There was 75% agreement on the statement "There is a meeting area on campus where African American students feel "at home"", which can be connected to the creation of the SJICR as well as show that without it, the perceptions would reflect what Durham had recorded. The statement "There are services on campus designed specifically to help African American students" had 81% of students either agree or strongly agree compared to Durham's study where approximately 66% agreed. This dimension suggest that the administration has taken

steps to improve perceptions of mattering, since Durham's study in 2007, for those who don't identify as White.

The dimension of academic and personal advising was an area in which Durham stated students had a perception that they mattered. The same dimension also proved to be an area where students currently perceive that they matter. At least 75% of students agreed or strongly disagreed on every statement in academic and personal advising. This area having remained consistent shows commitment on the behalf of Rowan University to ensure the students know what they need to graduate, that the students have the sense of feeling important and that the advisors who are employed are helpful and knowledgeable. Durham referred to Tinto in her statement on his findings stating, "students who feel more comfortable in their environments are more likely to be successful and persist." (Durham, 2007).

The administrative dimension featured less positive outlook of how students perceive to be treated. For the statements relating to feeling welcome and being treated fairly by the university the responses were positive. Looking at the numbers, approximately 98% of students are in a student organization which shows heavy involvement with student leaders and organization advisors who handle university relations for the student groups. Those who do not have advisors can go through SJICR, which will advocate for the groups. This facilitation reflects a mostly hands-off approach to administrators and only dealing with those administrators housed specifically in SJICR. The students have a positive look on SJICR so they feel they are treated fairly and have a place to feel welcome. When the other statements dealing with administration views of ethnic majority compared to the ethnic minority and the SJICR administrators

are not involved, students reflected that they perceive they are viewed differently. When asked if students feel they are treated differently compared to White students, the response was approximately 86% agreeing or strongly agreeing. The students when left to their own do not perceive they have a chance at getting help or being heard as often as White students would be. Durham had discussed from her literature review that there is a lack of integration on predominately white campuses (SJICR being a place where minority students are predominately found further exacerbates this perception) and that Gossett, Cuyjet and Cockriel had findings suggesting that African American students perceive administrators to have a lack of sensitivity to their presence on campus (Durham, 2007).

When analyzing the dimension of classroom climate, the results were not giving a complete story. When asked if the atmosphere in the class made the students feel as if they belong, approximately 74% of students agreed. When asked if being the only African American made students feel uncomfortable, 79% agreed or agreed strongly. The results show that if the question is referring to a class that has more than one African American then yes, students feel at ease in that environment. Yet, if the question wants to know if they are the only one of their kind in the room then no, they are uncomfortable with the situation. The approximate percentage of 70% of students reporting agreeing or strongly agreeing to represent their race in class, it can be assumed that most classes the students who responded are sitting in have 2 or less students of color. This would lead to a belief that students perceive to be marginalized in the classroom climate. The findings are consistent to that of Durham in 2007.

In the area of faculty perception, students perceived that when it came to being open to a more diverse group of students in their classroom and being available to talk after class, African American students are marginalized. The faculty seems to stick to school and the class topic but anything not doing with their in-class time or the class subject they do not make any efforts. The topic of diversity in the classroom had 75% of students perceive that their educators would have no desire to improve diversity in the class, which may show a lack of awareness of who their students are or may show an unwillingness to promote a comfortable atmosphere in class for all the students. Park and Flowers in 2003, studied the push for more diversity and awareness trainings for academic professionals and found there was more of a push being had to get faculty trained on how to incorporate diversity in the teachings and classroom. The responses from the students reflect that the training has not progressed as far as expected since 2003 when the original study was done.

**Research question 2.** In which dimensions of the campus environment do African American students at Rowan University perceive they matter most and are most marginalized?

According to the study, students perceived the dimension of campus services as where they matter the most. This is due in fact to Rowan University creating more spaces for African American students to feel welcome as well as the creation of more student groups that have created comfortability for African American students, which was not the case in 2007 for Durham's study. Students reported perceiving faculty as an area of more marginality. This is due to a lack of diverse hiring for classroom instructors and a lack of desire to contort curriculums to encompass students from all backgrounds.

**Research question 3.** Is there a relationship between the student's perception of mattering or marginality in the six dimensions of the institutional environment?

The responses suggest that students perceive that their White counterparts do not take students of color seriously. To counteract this perception there are more students involved in student organizations that give them a more comfortable environment than if they were not involved students who were like minded. The same perception also applies to faculty not being open to diversity in the classroom, students must take it upon themselves to interact with other students who identify as a different ethnicity than themselves. Allen (1991) had mentioned African American students felt isolated at PWI's and the results showed that in the lack of class diversity. That same isolation is counteracted with the high number of students involved in student organizations, which is an involvement that promotes mattering on campuses (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001).

**Research question 4.** Is there a relationship between Rowan University's African American undergraduate students' perceptions of mattering and marginality and student expressed levels of involvement in student organizations?

There seems to be a relationship between student organization involvement and perceptions of mattering and marginality. Students who were involved in student organizations felt confident in the classroom and felt that the campus had much to offer them. Responses that involved faculty had perceptions of marginality and had no implications on the students being involved in student organizations.

## Conclusions

The study was indicative of Durham's original research in that there were many similarities in perceptions and those that were not similar were different due to changes the administration at Rowan University had made. The survey instrument used was successful because it yielded results that were able to answer my research questions of measuring mattering and marginality.

There were findings in this study that differed from those in Durham's largely due to the higher engagement levels of African American students in the current academic year than in 2007, the year in which the study was originally conducted. The higher levels of engagement altered perceptions of the administration as well as mattering on campus. Students now have a place to congregate and feel they are in a safe space, which was a luxury not afforded to African American students in 2007. The interactions in the student groups and the ability to congregate increased perceptions of mattering on the Rowan Campus. Durham had concluded that greater comfort could result from increased enrollment of African American students at Rowan University, this was a reality in this study where enrollment increased for African Americans and as a campus.

There were mixed perceptions in a few dimensions, but the perceptions arose from lack of communication between students and faculty. With high involvement in student organizations who have regular interactions with the administration, student meetings could be a place where faculty can understand a need for diversity and the benefits it could provide for their classrooms.

## **Recommendations for Practice**

1. An intensive curriculum for faculty where the end goal is to educate and promote diversity in the classrooms. An end of course capstone project for the faculty could be an objective.
2. Student organization advisors encourage more involvement from their peers. A new policy in which a member of the administration is an advisor for an organization as well as a member of the faculty as an alternate. This will promote involvement between students and faculty.
3. An anonymous and voluntary survey of who is enrolled in classes in which only the faculty member teaching and their supervisor have access to. This will allow the member of faculty to be able to see who is in their class and how to adjust their teaching methods to connect to the students in an equal way.
4. Annual end of year surveys of mattering and marginality sent out by the campus administration to gauge strengths and weaknesses of programs, faculty, administration and diversity efforts on Rowan campus.

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

1. Further research should have different criteria for selecting students to participate in the study rather than one centralized area.
2. Further research should encompass a comparison between how faculty perceives mattering and marginality at Rowan University and how African American students perceive the same.

3. Further research should have a qualitative method added to get a firsthand account of how students perceive mattering and marginality that may give further information than a survey could provide.



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## Appendix A

### Institutional Review Board Disposition Form



\*\* This is an auto-generated email. Please do not reply to this email message.  
The originating e-mail account is not monitored.  
If you have questions, please contact your local IRB office \*\*

#### DHHS Federal Wide Assurance

Identifier: FWA00007111

IRB Chair Person: Harriet Hartman

IRB Director: Sreekant Murthy

Effective Date:

#### eIRB Notice of Approval

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#### STUDY PROFILE

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Study ID: [Pro2018002243](#)

Title: Marginalizing versus Mattering at Rowan University

Principal Investigator:	Burton Sisco	Study Coordinator:	None
Co-Investigator(s):	Dante Dandridge	Other Study Staff:	There are no items to display
Sponsor:	Department Funded	Approval Cycle:	Not Applicable

<b>Risk Determination:</b>	Minimal Risk	<b>Device Determination:</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Review Type:</b>	Exempt	<b>Exempt Category:</b>	2
<b>Subjects:</b>	200		

CURRENT SUBMISSION STATUS

<b>Submission Type:</b>	Research Protocol/Study	<b>Submission Status:</b>	Approved		
<b>Approval Date:</b>	4/13/2018	<b>Expiration Date:</b>			
<b>Pregnancy Code:</b>	No Pregnant Women as Subjects	<b>Pediatric Code:</b>	No Children As Subjects	<b>Prisoner Code:</b>	No Prisoners As Subjects

<b>Protocol:</b>	Protocol Permission for Survey Survey Instrument	<b>Consent:</b>	There are no items to display	<b>Recruitment Materials:</b>	There are no items to display
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\* Study Performance Sites:

Glassboro Campus      Hawthorne Hall Rowan University Glassboro N 08028

There are no items to display

## Appendix B

### Permission to use Survey Instrument

From: **Lovely Durham** <[lovelydurham@gmail.com](mailto:lovelydurham@gmail.com)>  
Date: Thu, Feb 22, 2018, 11:32 AM  
Subject: Re: Dr.Sisco Thesis Permission  
To: Dandridge, Dante <[dandri76@students.rowan.edu](mailto:dandri76@students.rowan.edu)>

Dante,

Thank you for reaching out to me. I am excited that you are interested in exploring Mattering and Marginality.

Do you need a copy of the instrument from me?

Please let me know if you need anything or would like to bounce some ideas off me.

Best,

Lovely Durham  
856-392-6678

**Appendix C**  
**Paper Survey (Alternate Consent)**



I am inviting you to participate in a research survey entitled “Mattering Versus Marginality: African American Perspective at Rowan University”. We are inviting you because you are African American undergraduate students. In order to participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older.

The survey may take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this paper survey. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be 200.

The purpose of this research study is to explore African American student perceptions of mattering and marginality at Rowan University. I am using perception rather than attitudes in my study because I am replicating the work of two researchers whom my work is modeled after. To keep continuity, perceptions rather than attitudes are what I intend on studying. Further, the study examines how the African American students view the faculty and administration at Rowan University.

Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. All data are anonymous and contain no personally identifiable information, you may help us understand how selected African American students perceive the campus and how they feel on the campus could serve as potential benefits to campus faculty and administrators.

Your response will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact me at the address provided below or my thesis advisor, Dr. Burton Sisco, [Sisco@rowan.edu](mailto:Sisco@rowan.edu), but you do not have to give your personal identification.

[Dandri76@students.rowan.edu](mailto:Dandri76@students.rowan.edu)

## Appendix D

### Mattering versus Marginality Survey

#### PERCEPTIONS ON CAMPUS COMMUNITY/ENVIRONMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

**SA – Strongly Agree      A– Agree      D – Disagree      SD – Strongly Disagree**

There is no “neutral” response; please make a choice of agreement or disagreement. If an item asks you about your “professors” or “classmates” or “administrators” or “classes” please generalize your response.

Please check <b>one</b> :	SA	A	D	SD
1. There has always been an advisor available to talk with me if I need to ask a question.				
2. I feel like I’m treated fairly by the university.				
3. The atmosphere in my classes makes me feel like I belong.				
4. My professors will not make the time to talk with me out of class.				
5. I feel welcome on campus.				
6. I know what I need to do to graduate.				
7. Faculty use examples relevant to people of my race in their lectures.				
8. I get support from my classmates when I need it.				
9. There are student services on campus I have needed but not been able to get.				
10. I find it easy to speak out in class.				
11. I interact with fellow students of other races out of class.				
12. I have an academic advisor who is helpful.				
13. The administration focuses its attention mainly on issues of ethnic-majority (Caucasian) students.				
14. There are services on campus designed specifically to help African American students.				
15. There is a meeting area on campus where African American students feel “at home.”				
16. My professors seem open to having a diversity of students in their classes.				
17. It is fun to compete academically with students of different races.				

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

**SA – Strongly Agree**

**A– Agree**

**D – Disagree**

**SD – Strongly Disagree**

	Please check <b>one</b>			
	SA	A	D	SD
18. I am often expected to represent my entire race in discussions in class.				
19. My professors make the classroom experience good for students of all races.				
20. It is (or seems to me that it would be) uncomfortable to be the only African American student in an entire class.				
21. African American students are not considered to be serious students by White students.				
22. My advisor remembers my name.				
23. Administrative staff treat African American students differently than they do White students.				
24. There are sufficient extra-curricular activities for me on campus.				
25. My professors seem to recognize the White students in class, but not African American students.				
26. There have been extracurricular activities that appeal to my interests.				
27. Unless I have another student of my race in class, it is difficult to want to be there.				
28. My race sometimes gets in the way of my interactions with fellow students.				
29. The administration seems to consider African American student priorities as important as White student priorities.				
30. When my advisor does not know the answers to my questions, he or she will seek out the answers.				

**Please continue to the last page.**



**Please provide the following information about yourself:**

**Please create an ID number with your birth month and day (for data tracking purposes)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Racial/Ethnic description**

(Check all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaskan native
- Asian American or Pacific Island
- Black, African American
- Hispanic, Latino or Chicano
- White, Caucasian, not of Hispanic origin
- Multiracial (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender**

- Female
- Male

**What is your class level?**

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Post-baccalaureate

**What is your enrollment status?**

- Full-time student
- Part-time student

**How many semesters have you been a student at your current institution?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where do you live? (Please check one)**

- in a residence hall
- in a fraternity/sorority house
- in a house or apartment with friends
- in a house or apartment with family or spouse/partner
- other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you work on campus?**

- Yes
- No

**Do you work off campus?**

- Yes
- No

Average number of hours worked each week?

\_\_\_\_\_

Average number of hours worked each week?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Number of student organizations in which you are currently a member.**

(If none, write "none.") \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of times all last semester you met with your instructors outside of class.**

(If none, write "none.") \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU!**