EXAMINATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES' EDUCATIONAL

ATTAINMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Thesis

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by

Shayla Deola Walker

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Graduate and Professional Studies in Education

Abstract

of

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Statement of Problem

This study examined African American males' educational attainment by

evaluating the impact of programs and services and analyzing factors influencing

students to persist to graduation. It introduced literature focused on persistence and

attrition of African American male students who matriculated at higher educational

institutions to explore the factors impacting their educational experiences. The study

explored challenges and barriers African American males' encounter, which affect their

educational outcomes at a college campus. It also used theoretical frameworks as a

foundation to gain insight into how academic and social engagement, racial micro-

aggressions, and student involvement impact educational outcomes of African American

males in higher education. Additionally, the study examined personalized support

services and programs that can directly impact African American males' engagement on

a college campus such as mentoring, advising, and campus clubs and organizations.

Sources of Data

The sample for the study was taken from the population of approximately 24,000 undergraduate students enrolled at Dynamic University (DU) during the 2012/2013 academic school year and from alumni of DU. Participants in this study were African American males involved or currently participate in retention programs, clubs, organization, and fraternities at the university. The survey was provided to students enrolled at the time of the study or who graduated from a public four-year university, Dynamic University. African American male students involved (at the time of the study or previously) in the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), the Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program (CWC), clubs and organizations, fraternities, or who utilized other support services and programs on campus were surveyed. The sample size was 84 EOP students, 55 CWC students, and 50 alumni who graduated from Dynamic University. The survey yielded 38 respondents, of which over 47% had indicated receiving their bachelor's degree from Dynamic University.

Conclusions Reached

Various components of support programs and services have a huge impact on African American males' educational experiences in higher education. For many students, being engaged or involved inside and outside the classroom environment has influenced educational attainment at the university. The data from African American male participants involved in supportive programs, services, fraternities, clubs, or organizations showed engagement having a major impact on student's motivation to

persist to degree completion. In addition, family, career goals, and mentoring seem to also be important factors that have encouraged African American males surveyed to persist. Although the respondents were unaware of resources, services, and programs available upon first matriculating to the institution, the majority of African American male respondents became involved because of personal development and networking opportunities, components in certain programs and services on campus. The significant amount of respondents indicated encountering challenges with financial aid assistance and personal obstacles affecting their academic performance at the institution. African American males surveyed seemed to be overall satisfied with services, programs, and resources provided by the institution. Furthermore, African American male respondents' levels of satisfaction and interactions with faculty members seemed to play a critical role in students' academic performance and educational experience at the university.

_____ , Committee Chair
Geni Cowan, Ph.D.

_____
Date

DEDICATION

I would like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for giving me the strength, confidence, and support to complete this program. Without His guidance and love I would not be where I am today.

Mom and Dad—I am so very blessed to have you both as my foundation of encouragement and support. You always believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself. I know that is cliché but this degree is as much yours as it is mine because you shared my pain and struggle and kept pushing me forward. There are no words to thank you enough. I love you!

To my close friends and family—Thank you for always listening to me complain about trying to get my thesis completed. It probably annoyed you, but it meant a lot to me having your encouragement. You mean so much to me and I am so blessed to have such amazing people in my life. I love you.

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

Recent trends in higher education point out a huge disparity in persistence and

degree attainment at colleges and universities among certain ethnic groups. Laws and

bills have been passed to ensure people of color have the opportunity to access higher

education; however, the focus has shifted from getting students to matriculate into a

university to assisting students in successfully persisting to graduate school to attain their

degree. Historical events opened the doors for African Americans to advance in their

educational attainment; however, several barriers have recently made it more challenging

for African American students to persist to graduation. With increasing tuition costs,

remediation programs being cut, and a lack of financial aid assistance, African American

students – especially African American males – face just as many obstacles today as they

did during the Civil Rights Era.

The U.S. has historically been "less supportive of African Americans in social and

education institutions, particularly with regards to educational attainment" (Palmer,

Davis, Moore, & Hilton, 2010, p. 107). Despite educational reform over the few past

decades, the gap in educational achievement is still massive, especially for African

American males (Shuford, 2009). During the 1980s and 1990s, there was a considerable

increase in African American males attending higher-education institutions, but African

American males continue to fall behind White and female counterparts in relation to college participation, retention, persistence, and degree completion (Noguera, 2003; Polite & Davis, 1994). Researchers have found that in contrast to other major demographic groups, African American males have the lowest educational results in the United States (Palmer et al., 2010; Jackson & Moore, 2008; Levin et al., 2007; Tate, 2008). Specifically, African American males have the highest attrition rates and lowest completion rates among all ethnic groups and genders. Perhaps more alarming is African Americans' educational outcomes, which continue to plummet with no resolution in sight. Some researchers have predicted that if the current trend of low graduation and enrollment continues, African American males may not be involved with higher education by the year 2070 (Cross & Slater, 2000). Such conclusions may seem like predetermined fate for African American males, but more recent research focusing on the successes of students is being conducted so policymakers, educators, and administrators are able to emulate and provide services aiding in African American males' educational advancement.

Thomas (as cited in Brock, 2010) stated student success in higher education is based on persistence and degree attainment. In his research, he "argues that the nation has to do more to promote student success," especially for low-income and first-generation students (p. 109). He stated that the "characteristics used to define nontraditional status—delayed entry into college from high school, working full-time, single parenthood, and so on—are considered 'risk factors' because they are negatively

correlated with persistence" (Brock, 2010, p. 115). African American males are faced with several risk factors influencing their persistence to graduation, ranging from being academically underprepared to a lack of financial support. Cuyjet (1997) stated:

> Among those African American men who make it to college, [a] significant portion of the group are burdened with what can be generally characterized as "underpreparedness" for [the] academic challenges of postsecondary educations, which include attending academically poorer elementary and secondary schools, lowered expectations of peers, significant adults with attitudes toward academic achievement, peer pressure to disdain educational accomplishments and education as an outcome, financial hardships limiting educational access, lack of appropriate role models, and barriers owing to racism. (p. 6)

Financing a college education remains a critical problem in postsecondary education for African American males. The struggle to pay for a college education has worsened for students, particularly as educational institutions increase tuition without increasing student need-based aid. Consequently, many students, particularly low-income and underrepresented ethnic minority students, are less likely to attain a degree (Hunt, Carruthers, Callan, & Ewell, 2006; Haycock, 2006; Tinto, 2008). African American males afforded the opportunity of enrolling in four-year public institutions are oftentimes placed into remediation programs, which, if removed from campuses, would add another barrier for students to overcome. Also, parental involvement and academic advising can impact African American males' desire to persist at an institution.

Pascarella and Terrenzini (2005) found academic advising plays a role in students' decisions to persist and also affects their chances of graduating. Many students who depart prematurely from college often equate poor academic advising experiences as one of the main components affecting degree completion. It is necessary for practitioners and educators to first identify challenges and barriers these students encounter to provide adequate services and programs contributing to educational experience and success.

Student engagement is an important factor proven to impact persistence and graduation rates of college students. Important factors of student engagement include how institutions employ resources, curriculum, and support services to encourage students to participate in activities impacting their educational experiences (Harper & Quaye, 2009). Social and academic engagement or involvement on college campuses can directly affect institutional commitment and grade point averages and can potentially increase persistence and graduation rates of African American males. Tinto's (1993) research showed one reason undergraduate students dropout or leave an institution is because they feel disconnected from peers, faculty, and staff. Astin (1982) suggested the institutional environment should promote healthy and supportive peer and faculty relationships while simultaneously contributing to social and academic integration. Support services and programs can influence African American males' social and academic satisfaction at an institution. Although there are equity and retention programs assisting students with specialized needs, it is important to assess and understand if

current programs and services offered are meeting the needs of African American male students at public four-year institutions.

Statement of the Problem

This study examined African American males' educational attainment by evaluating the impact of programs and services and analyzing factors influencing students to persist to graduation. It introduces literature focused on persistence and attrition of African American male students who matriculated at higher-education institutions to explore the factors impacting their educational experiences. The study explored challenges and barriers African American males encounter that affect their educational outcomes at a college campus. It also used theoretical frameworks as a foundation to gain insight on how academic and social engagement, racial micro-aggressions, and student involvement affects educational outcomes of African American males in higher education. Additionally, the study examined personalized support services and programs that can directly impact African American males' engagement on a college campus, such as mentoring, advising, and campus clubs and organizations.

The research intended to determine what outreach strategies and services can be implemented with the most impact to increase persistence rates and engagement of African American males on a college campus. The study aimed to address the following questions:

1. To what extent do student services and programs impact African American males' educational experiences in higher education?

2. What challenges do African American males face in higher education regarding graduation persistence?

3. What services and activities do African American males utilize in and outside the classroom while matriculating at the university?

When answering the above questions, the research study aimed to provide institutions with recommendations for personalized services and support programs for African American males to increase involvement in and awareness of services offered that can promote academic success at public higher educational institutions.

Definition of Terms

Attrition Rates

Used to describe a decrease of student numbers resulting from low persistence and retention rates. This term is incorporated to describe the negative impact the increase in dropout rates has on African American males in higher education.

Intrusive Advising

A proactive approach to advising that builds relationships with students by anticipating their needs and connecting them with resources and support at the beginning of their academic careers

Matriculation

      Matriculation and enrollment are used interchangeably to describe a student entering a college institution.

Persistence

      Staying in school until completing a degree or certificate program

Racial Micro-aggressions

      Racial slights, recurrent indignities and irritation, unfair treatment, stigmatization, hyper-surveillance, contentious classrooms, and personal threats or attacks on one's well-being (Smith et al., 2007)

Significance of Study

California houses some of the most diverse, affordable public higher-education institutions in the nation. Surprisingly, the number of students currently enrolled or who successfully graduate does not reflect the diversity of the golden state. Impaction and budget cuts have created many road blocks for students to attain their bachelor's degree and receive the support needed to achieve their academic goals. Such barriers are huge concerns for African American males today because it will become more difficult for students, especially low-income and first-generation students, to afford and successfully attain their degrees at a public four-year university. The issues of retention and persistence among African American male students have been problematic for many years, with little to no action taken by institutions to find resolutions. Although some

initiatives and strategies have been developed, the data seem to show a need for more outreach efforts or program implementation for this specific student population to get results reflective of the diversity and access promoted by many higher-education institutions in California.

The research examined the barriers and challenges affecting African American males' persistence to degree completion. Studying the obstacles these students encounter helps institutions address student issues and create efforts to influence persistence, ensuring the desired outcomes are reached. Collaboration; partnerships; and support from county, state, and community agencies could also assist in offering students different types of support services. Such mentoring could provide more opportunity and encouragement to African American males. Higher-education institutions establishing and developing opportunities for more peer and faculty interactions in and outside the classroom can also have a positive influence on African Americans' educational experiences. Current research shows institutions engaging African American males in student clubs and organizations and coordinating intrusive-advising efforts can influence persistence rates among students.

The research enhances awareness and shows the importance of creating proactive outreach strategies and services to engage African American males while assessing the effect institutional support services and programs have on improving educational success outcomes of this student population. Some may argue there are already several programs in place for students from low-socioeconomic, first-generation, and at-risk backgrounds,

categories many African Americans males may fall into; however, the unpredictability of the economy has forced universities to cut many programs and services due to lack of funding, staffing, or resources. It is essential for leaders and administrators to facilitate and develop services directly affecting African American males' social and academic integration experiences in a campus environment. Measuring how satisfied African American students are with current programs, services, and support could provide practitioners with knowledge enabling them to design initiatives and strategies that may improve persistence and graduation rates of African American males currently enrolled at public universities.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Following this section, Chapter 2 provides a review of literature discussing the theoretical frameworks, challenges and barriers, and support services and programs impacting persistence of African American male college students. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology and data collection and analysis processes. The results of the survey are highlighted in Chapter 4, and Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study along with conclusions, recommendations, and implications for future research.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERTURE

Introduction

Statistics show African American males have a disproportionately high chance of not reaching degree completion when compared to other populations. As such, the purpose of this study was to examine African American males' educational attainment in higher education by evaluating the impact of programs and services utilized by this population and analyzing factors influencing persistence to graduation. With raising attrition and declining degree completion rates, the role of higher-education institutions has become even more critical to the success of African American males, especially at California four-year public institutions.

Although retention programs and services are available at various college campuses, African American males who enroll at higher-education institutions may not be receiving sufficient support from institutions to encourage persistence. It is important to examine practices and initiatives impacting African American males' educational outcomes to enhance their academic performance and educational experiences. Higher-education institutions must first assess barriers African American males encounter that influence their experience on a college campus. Lack of engagement, academic advising, and parental involvement; remediation; underpreparedness; and financial barriers are a few challenges these students face, most of the time without institutional support.

However, if more institutions designed supportive programs and services tailored to meet the needs of African American males and enhance their educational experiences in and outside the classroom, it could impact their engagement, which, in turn, could influence persistence and degree completion.

This chapter introduces literature focused on persistence and attrition of African American male students who matriculated into post-secondary institutions to understand the achievement gap between them and their female counterparts and other traditionally underrepresented groups. For administration, faculty, and staff to continue developing effective services for African American males, it is important to understand the issues students face to offer the best resources to accommodate their needs. African American males afforded the opportunity to attend a four-year higher-education institution often encounter barriers and are not provided with effective resources from the institution to graduate. This chapter explores the challenges and barriers African American males encounter that affect their educational outcomes at a college campus. Engagement is an important factor influencing students' persistence; several theoretical frameworks are used as a foundation to provide insight on how academic and social involvements, in addition to institutional characteristics, serve as predictors of success. The chapter concludes with research surrounding supportive programs and services offered at institutions to identify specific components effecting African American males' engagement on a college campus.

Challenges and Barriers for African American Males

Lang (1992) assessed the barriers African American students encountered that influenced attrition rates and also the historical context of African Americans in higher education. His research found African Americans had higher attrition rates associated with their socioeconomic background and characteristics of the higher-education institution. Research studies indicate many African American males do not persist to graduation because obstacles such as campus climate, financial barriers, socioeconomic challenges, and lack of faculty support and engagement have prevented students from attaining their degree (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). The preceding challenges are just a few examples of the barriers often preventing many African American male students from persisting to graduation. This section focuses on financial barriers and lack of engagement, parental involvement, remediation programs, and academic advising as the main challenges African American males encounter, affecting their persistence in higher education.

Financial Barriers

Financing a college education has been an issue for a majority of students in higher education, especially when institutions are increasing tuition costs and fees but not increasing student need-based aid. The Higher Education Act of 1965 was created to provide more opportunities for students, especially underrepresented students, to receive financial assistance allowing them to afford to enroll at higher-education institutions. For the past several decades, there has been a huge increase in tuition cost. The average cost

of public four-year institutions from 1976-2005 increased from $617 to $5,491, which, when adjusted for inflation, is more than a 270% increase (College Board, 2006). Ethnic minorities are more likely to encounter problems in successfully attaining their degree based on unmet financial aid (Haycock, 2006). Many students who rely on financial aid are from low-income or first-generation backgrounds. African Americans males who attend college are more likely to be first-generation college students with low socioeconomic status (SES) (Fisher, 2007). Student loans seem to be the main source of aid, but many African American males are reluctant to borrow from the school. Due to lack of financial aid, African American males are more likely to withdraw from an institution or attend a less expensive university due to unmet aid (Harper, 2012). Students who decide to continue may be forced to work part-time off campus to afford tuition expenses, which prolongs graduation attainment.

Lack of Engagement

Disengagement is a factor studies use to explain high college dropout rates of African American males matriculating to colleges and universities. Researchers have discovered that African American undergraduate students are less prepared for the rigors of college-level coursework in comparison to peers from other racial groups (Bonner & Bailey, 2006), which may contribute to their lack of engagement in college classrooms, clubs, structured campus activities, and impactful educational experiences outside the classroom (Cuyjet, 1997; Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004). Spradley (2001) studied institutional needs of African American males and discovered several

interventions that helped increase African American males' engagement on a college campus. He found peer interactions encouraged social integration, which impacted academic experience, and promoting an educational environment with faculty who foster learning skills and knowledge was critical to students' success. In addition, engagement in extra-curricular activities enhanced leadership and personal development of African American male undergraduates. Supportive programs and services such as mentoring, advising, and clubs and organizations can potentially influence institutional commitment and satisfaction by increasing the engagement of African American males in higher education; engagement has a powerful impact on students' educational experience and success.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement and social support play a vital role in many African American males' performance in college. The issues students encounter outside the classroom can greatly affect their academic performance and can influence their decision to continue to graduation. Evidence suggests students who are first-generation college students from low socioeconomic backgrounds encounter lower levels of family support, lower levels of college expectations, and less knowledge of campus environment and values among parents (McConnell, 2000; Terrenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). In contrast, parents who earned college degrees are more likely to promote the value of education and provide their children with resources to prepare students prior to entering college. Several research studies demonstrated the more academically

prepared students are, the more likely they are to succeed at a college institution. For African American males, many studies found family support and involvement are a major indicator of their educational attainment. Parental involvement and support is essential in helping African American male students face the social, cultural, and academic challenges they may encounter at a higher-education institution. In addition to parental involvement, remediation programs and other support services and programs are vital to the success of African American males.

Remediation Programs

Recently, discussions about removing remediation programs from public four-year institutions have ignited more concerns among many students. A recent report showed four-year institutions in 22 states have reduced or eliminated remediation coursework (Parker, 2007). First-generation and low-income students are most likely to be enrolled in some type of remediation courses, take fewer credits, and repeat courses their first year, which influences degree attainment (Pike & Kuh, 2005). Many African American males would be most affected if remediation programs were removed. If institutions remove remediation coursework, it will force many African American males to attend community colleges. It could also decrease the number of students able to attend a four-year institution straight from high school, ultimately influencing persistence. The U.S. Department of Education (as cited in Berger & Horn, 2004) found 80% of students who began at a four-year college or university in 1995-1996 persisted after five years in comparison to the persistence rate of students who began at a

community college, which was only 52%. Since many students who begin at a two-year intuition are less likely to persist to earn a bachelor's degree, removing remediation programs will undoubtedly reduce access and impact the educational outcomes of African American males who would potentially excel at a four-year university.

Academic Advising

Academic Advising plays an instrumental role in enhancing students' academic performance and achievement. Thomas (1990) researched the impact of advising and found it to be one of the most important components of institutional retention efforts. A study conducted by the National Academic and Advising Association and ACT found several colleges and universities were poorly administering their advising programs while simultaneously failing to promote advising to increase persistence and retention rates of students (Lotkowski, Robbins, & North, 2004). Additionally, national studies indicated students were least satisfied with the advising in their educational experiences (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005). African American males failing in their academics due to poor academic advising are either marginalized or removed from an institution all together. It is necessary for institutions to intervene early when these students are experiencing academic difficulties and take a proactive-advising approach to monitor African American males' progress. Discussed further in the chapter are various advising models that would have a positive effect on African Americans' academic success.

It is important to understand the challenges and barriers African American males face in higher education to provide adequate resources directly affecting student educational attainment. The goal of the upcoming analysis is to use theoretical frameworks as a foundation to present possible findings that may transform into solutions.

Theoretical Frameworks

Academic and Social Integration

Vincent Tinto (1975, 1993) introduced several studies focused on student retention, persistence, and attrition rates in higher education. The theoretical framework used to help understand student attrition and persistence is Tinto's Student Integration Model (1975), which hypothesized, "social and academic integration of students increases institutional commitment, ultimately reducing the likelihood of student attrition" (as cited in Swail et al., 2003, p. 7). Tinto's model emphasized the need to understand the relationship between student involvement and its impact on persistence. Academic integration is the experiences students have on a college campus that support academic and cognitive development. Social integration is described as the experiences connecting students to the campus environment (Flowers, 2006). Tinto uncovered the formal and informal academic and social experiences impacting students' commitment, academic performance, and persistence at a higher educational institution. He found:

Interactive experiences which further one's social and intellectual integration are

seen to enhance the likelihood that the individual will persist within the institution

until degree completion, because of the impact integrative experiences have upon

the continued reformulation of individual goals and commitments. (p. 116)

Additionally, Tinto (1987) highlighted intention and commitment to educational

or career goals, such as willingness to work and sacrifice to obtain one's objective, as

indicating factors of achieving college success outcomes. Grayson and Grayson (2003)

provided the following comparison as an example of a student who may not persist: a

student from a disadvantaged background with low educational goals and negative

influences from surrounding peers may be more likely to leave college prematurely in

comparison to an individual engaged in campus activities with high educational goals.

More specifically, Tracey and Sedlacek (1987) studied the differences in educational

attainment between White and Black students at higher-education institutions. The

results revealed non-cognitive factors impacted persistence and dropout rates of African

American students in post-secondary education more than grade point average or

academic ability. The non-cognitive factors contributing most to student persistence

were "positive self-concept, a realistic self-appraisal (seeing extra effort as necessary),

preferring long-range goals to more short-term immediate needs, and having some

leadership experience" (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1987, p. 345). These non-cognitive factors

can be examined and reflected in the encouragement and support African Americans

receive in a campus climate. For African American males, interactive experiences with faculty and the support received from faculty help increase self-esteem.

Various factors impact a student's decision to persist or dropout of an institution. Students' attitudes and behaviors are other components influencing persistence. Examples of what students may experience or encounter at a higher-education institution include feeling disconnected from peers, faculty, and other staff on campus (Tinto, 1997). Like Tinto, Bean (1980) also studied student attrition in higher education. Bean's model of attrition (1980, 1985) theorized that students' beliefs about their experiences impact their intention to stay and persist (Bean & Hossler, 1990). His research also linked external institutional characteristics, student interaction with faculty, and lack of involvement as major indicators in persistence development.

Braxton, Bray, and Berger (2000), using Tinto's conceptual model as a framework, theorized faculty members who regularly practice instructional organization and clarity in the classroom setting can help instill more confidence and create a supportive environment to assist students in their academic achievements. Thus, more time can be spent "to invest the psychological energy necessary to establish membership in the social communities of their college or university" (Braxton et al., 2000, p. 216). For African American male students, increased social integration would enhance institutional commitment and persistence at an institution. Interactive experiences through programs and services and in the classroom can build confidence and create a

supportive campus climate, which would affect academic and social integration of African American male students.

Racial Microaggressions

African American male college students, like some other racial minority students, may encounter racist stereotypes and racial microaggressions, influencing achievement and the sense of belonging on a college campus (Bonner, 2010; Singer, 2005; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007). Racial Microagression is a theoretical framework used to describe the occurrence of subtle racism that demeans people of color. Pierce, Carew, Peirce-Gonzalez, and Willis (1978) defined microagression as:

> subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are put downs of blacks by offenders. The offensive mechanisms used against blacks often are innocuous. The cumulative weight of their never-ending burden is the major ingredient in black-white interactions. (p. 66)

Racial Microaggression, or mini-assaults, includes verbal and non-verbal behavior that denigrates people of color (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). For example, non-verbal behavior may include a White woman clutching her purse as an African American man walks by or a group of Black students being ignored at a restaurant. More obvious are "verbal exchanges such as – he's so articulate – or – you're different from other Black people" (Solórzano et al., 2000, p. 60). Microinequities is a similar term used to describe

"a pattern of being overlooked, underrespected, and devalued because of one's race or gender" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273).

African American males seem to encounter microaggression more frequently through invisibility on campus; dissimilar treatment by faculty; and negative stereotypical perceptions from peers, administration, and faculty in a college environment (Solórzano et al., 2000). Oftentimes, racial microaggression occurs in faculty-student interaction. In the classroom setting, African American men tend to be marginalized, rendered invisible, or put under strict surveillance based on societal stereotypes (Smith et al., 2007). African American males' academic performance and educational attainment are impacted based on the behaviors and attitudes of faculty. Feagin and Mckinney (2003) found racial microaggression incidents could create psychological or emotional reactions in African American students that may be passed to family, friends, and across generations. Results from chronic racial microaggressions can change African American males' perceptions of their educational environment, from being supportive to being an extremely stressful, exhausting, uncomfortable, and frustrating academic climate (Brown et al., 1999). Racial Microaggression could be one of many factors influencing African American males' desire to persist to degree completion due to lack of support from the institution.

Student Involvement Theory

Astin (1975) analyzed student involvement or engagement by conducting a longitudinal study of college persistence. He discovered factors contributing to student persistence correlated to student involvement in college. Lack of involvement is one

factor, in particular, that can influence or affect a student's decision to drop out of an institution. "Student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1984, p. 297). Astin conveyed involvement as behavioral, "It is not so much what the individual thinks or feels, but what the individual does, how he behaves, that defines and identifies involvement" (Astin, 1994, p. 298). There are two main characteristics of student engagement. The first includes the amount of time and effort applied to academic studies. The second is based on the effort institutions put into organizing sufficient learning opportunities, resources, curriculum, and support services to encourage student participation in various activities; such activities affect experiences and outcomes of persistence, learning, graduation, and satisfaction on campus (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). Specifically, for African American males, institutions could provide better outreach strategies to encourage student involvement while simultaneously addressing and creating resources or services to cope with microaggressions and marginalization in and out of the classroom environment, which may also influence persistence rates. Students integrated and engaged in the institution are more likely to persist to graduation; "higher levels of integration into academic and social communities on campus lead to higher levels of institutional commitment and those engaged in campus activities showed increased levels of cognitive and skill development" (Harper & Quaye, 2009, p. 4). For African American males, having interactive experiences through programs and services and in the classroom setting could build confidence and create a

supportive campus climate, which would affect retention and persistence rates at an institution.

There are some theories that can be used to enhance the effectiveness of student services and programs offered at an institution. For example, Chickering's theory addressed the "issues and concerns with which students are dealing but also suggests steps that student development educators can take to foster growth" (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 80). Obstacles students face that influence persistence range from financial barriers to lack of engagement and faculty interaction. However, researchers have examined the critical role institutional characteristics have on student persistence (Braxton, 2000; Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004; Titus, 2004). Titus (2004) discussed Berger and Milem's (2000) model, which claimed:

> Institutional structural-demographic characteristics (e.g., institutional size, control [private vs. public], selectivity, institution type, and location [rural vs. urban]) influence student outcomes. The model further suggests that student experiences (e.g., academic and social integration), background characteristics [e.g., gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES)], and peer characteristics directly influence such student outcomes as persistence. Berger and Milem (2000) assert that student experiences can be measured by both behaviors in and perceptions of three areas: social, academic, and functional aspects of the college environment. (p. 678)

A college environment establishing programs and services that stimulate social and academic growth and promote African American males' cultural awareness and interpersonal relationships with peers and faculty could impact persistence to degree completion. Holland's Person-Environment theory examined a person's behavior in a "social and educational environment" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 33). He (as cited in Evans et al., 2010) found environmental characteristics can sometimes affect and influence students the most. It is important for Student Affairs and faculty to analyze the effectiveness of retention programs and services, and also how African American males react in a college environment, to facilitate and design curriculum to meet their needs. A component of the Chickering theory discussed environmental influences, stating, "Key environmental factors such as relationships with faculty, active learning, and collaboration with other students are stressed" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 80). Creating an atmosphere for students that mirrors the one mentioned above undoubtedly influences learning outcomes and has a vital impact on African American males' student success. The next section examines educational attainment of African American males and also discusses how institutions can create possible strategies and solutions to address the challenges and barriers these students encounter. It also analyzes gender disparities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and institutional characteristics impacting the success of African American males.

African American Males' Persistence toward Graduation

National Demographics

A 2006 U.S. Department of Education report studied the American higher-education system to stress the need for increasing the rate of students graduating from colleges and universities. It mentioned this impactful statement:

> Among high school graduates who do make it on to postsecondary education, a troubling number waste time and taxpayer dollars…some never complete their degrees at all, at least in part because most colleges and universities don't accept responsibility for making sure that those they admit actually succeed. (p. vii)

Retention, persistence, and attrition are issues all students encounter in post-secondary education, but it has been more problematic for African American males. Berkner, He, and Cataldi (2002) and Tinto (1993) indicated more than half of students matriculating to higher-education institutions were likely to fail to complete their bachelor's degree within a six-year time span. Nearly 70% of students who began college did not graduate within six years, African American male undergraduate students in particular (Harper, 2006). African American male undergraduates have the highest attrition rates among male and female students of all racial/ethnic groups in American higher education (Harper, 2006; Nealy, 2009). The future forecast from the U.S. Department of Education (2006), in addressing the need to raise graduation rates of students in higher education, continues to plague colleges and universities with no changes in sight. However, recent research on the educational attainment of African American males conducted by Shawn Harper

(2012) has contributed to understanding the needs, obstacles, and challenges these students encounter and helped provide institutions ideas and strategies for improving their current educational outcomes.

Colleges and Universities Addressing Challenges and Barriers

Harper (2012) administered a national study discussing the successes and the achievement gap of African American males in higher education. He interviewed 219 African American male students at several colleges and universities across the nation. The study found that two-thirds of African American males attending public higher-education institutions were not graduating within six years and also had the "lowest completion rate among both sexes and all racial groups in higher education" (Harper, 2012, p. 5). The alarming amount of African American men not successfully persisting to degree completion today raises the question of what necessary factors will ensure the success of these students. Harper (2012) discussed the achievements of the African American males surveyed at the different college campuses and gave recommendations for improving African American male success in college. The students interviewed had stories of success and were able to overcome the challenges at their institution. Participants in Harper's (2012) study attributed their success to the following: college-readiness programs, freshmen-transition programs, mentoring from peers and faculty, pursuing a degree without the burden of financial stress, engagement in campus activities, and responding productively to racism.

Participants in Harper's (2012) study were able to engage more in their academic and social experiences on their college campus because they did not hold off-campus jobs and they received financial aid and scholarships, which covered their tuition costs. Unfortunately, for many African American males unemployment is not an option, and they may not be aware of certain scholarships or grants accessible to them. Financial-aid counselors and departments should take a more active role in providing alternative resources to students outside of loans. Specifically, institutions removing financial barriers by creating outreach campaigns, events, or activities that increase awareness of financial aid, scholarships, and work-study programs could help alleviate the financial stress and burden on African American male college students matriculating to colleges and universities.

Several higher-education institutions are designed for students to self-direct themselves to resources and services, but these are not effective methods for African American males (Harper, 2012). There are some African American males who are able to demonstrate academic resilience and achieve success with or without engagement on a college campus. However, students coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may not be aware of or feel comfortable seeking out resources, services, or programs that will ultimately help them advance to degree completion. Institutions should take a proactive approach to outreach and engage African American male students when they first matriculate to an institution. Summer-transition programs, first-year orientations, and

remediation programs can create opportunities for administrators and educators to promote on-campus activities and services to African American male students.

Participants in Harper's study highlighted family involvement as playing a major role in their academic success and persistence in college. Parents or family members of these students asked questions about college, enrolled students in college-prep programs, and maintained high expectations which impacted college aspirations. Harper (2012) mentioned the importance of "policy makers and foundations to invest in community based initiatives for parents, particularly those who did not attend college, to understand what is required to strengthen their children's readiness" to succeed in college (p. 20). Higher-education systems should reach out to families from low-income and first-generation backgrounds by offering educational courses, providing resources about the different college and university systems, and promoting programs and services that offer assistance before and during college; such measures could significantly influence enrollment, persistence, and retention of African American male students.

Retaining remediation programs and revising advising approaches at colleges and universities utilized by African American males can influence educational attainment. Studies found a positive correlation between remediation programs and increased likelihood of success for students completing college-level coursework and persisting to degree attainment (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006; Bettinger & Long, 2009). Higher-education institutions requiring tutoring or other support services upon enrollment can help students succeed in remediation programs and could help retain African

American males, especially at public four-year universities in California. In addition, research has found "academic advising…is perhaps the only structured campus endeavor that can guarantee students' sustained interaction with a caring and concerned adult who can help them shape such an experience" (Hunter & White, 2004, p. 20). "Intrusive advising approach [specifically] initiates early contact and helps students develop plans for academic and social improvement" (Smith et al., 2007, p. 814) and is defined as an "advising intervention with an at-risk student that is designed to facilitate informed, responsible decision-making, increase student motivation toward activities in his/her social/academic community, and ensure the probability of the student's academic success" (Heisserer & Parette, 2002, para.1). Implementation of this model at colleges and universities could provide more support and guidance to African American males on a college campus. Later in the chapter, intrusive advising is discussed in further detail.

Before postsecondary policymakers, educators, and leaders can figure out how to enroll, retain, educate, and graduate African American males, they must first understand what helps them persist to successfully attain their degrees (Harper, 2012). Once higher-education institutions understand the needs and challenges of African American male students on their campuses, they will be able to implement and tailor programs and services to provide students with specific resources and strategies for success, as Harper mentioned in his study, which would ultimately influence persistence and graduation rates among students. In addition, examining what factors and resources African

American women are utilizing that have contributed to their success at higher-education institutions could assist African American men in their social and academic endeavors.

Gender Disparities

When comparing African American males to their female counterparts, a huge disparity exists regarding persistence and degree completion rates. In 2006, Black women earned 94,341 bachelor's degrees at U.S. higher-education institutions compared to 48,079 bachelor's degrees awarded to Black men (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). The trend showed a huge educational gap not only between African American men and women, but also in comparison to their past generations and White male counterparts. The supplement *Minorities in Higher Education* (2011) reported African American men are no longer achieving or attaining a higher-education level such as those from past generations, while their White counterparts are at the same "education level as their older age groups" (p. 1).

In the 1970s and 1980s, researchers Allen (1986) and Fleming (1984) discovered more engagement from African American men than from women. The studies found African American men were more actively engaged in the classroom, regularly interacted with faculty, and demonstrated more positive identities and educational goals and career aspirations during this period. Recently, evidence indicated African American women had significantly higher levels of engagement. A research study conducted by Harper, Carini, Bridges, and Hayek (2004) studied engagement outcomes and differences between genders and found "women no longer lag behind men in their academic and

social engagement experiences" (p. 277). "The overall engagement picture for women appears to be considerably less grim…women have overcome the engagement odds and social passivity of years past" (p. 279). The change is significant because the more engaged and involved students are on college campuses, the more likely they are to persist to graduation (Astin, 1984). Engaging African American males academically and socially plays a critical role in enhancing their success, an aspect of institutional characteristics that many Historically Black Colleges and Universities seem to be providing.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) were established to provide African Americans educational opportunities during a time when other higher-education facilities restricted access for people of color. HBCUs have produced some of the most prominent leaders ranging from Martin Luther King, Jr. to W.E.B. Du Bois, who were activist role models and are historically recognized for influencing societal change. There are 105 HBCUs representing three percent of higher-education institutions and enrolling nearly 16% of African Americans at the undergraduate level (Provasnik, Shafer, & Snyder, 2004). HBCUs are noted as awarding one-fifth of bachelor's degrees and 20% of all first professional degrees (Hoffman, Liagas, & Synder, 2003). Gasman and Palmer (2008) conducted a study examining the role of social capital as it relates to academic success for African American males on HBCU campuses. The participants in their study indicated that faculty and administrators were easily accessible and created a supportive

environment, which encouraged student persistence and success at the university. African American male students at many Historically Black Colleges and Universities are more engaged because of the institutional support from administration, faculty, and peers.

Institutional Characteristics

According to Bush and Bush (2010), institutional characteristics are important factors impacting African American males' educational achievement. Several researchers found African American males demonstrate high success rates academically and socially at HBCUs (Allen, 1987; Allen & Jewell, 2002; Davis, 1994). One study in particular discovered African American males attending Black colleges felt more connected and supported by the institution based on their interactions and encounters with faculty, campus climate, student involvement, and positive interaction with peers (Davis, 1994). Furthermore, African American male students at predominately White institutions had distinct perceptions of the institutional environment; the students had more hostile feelings and attitudes generated from unfair treatment, devaluation of academic capabilities, and racist or discriminatory behaviors and practices. Such perceptions of institutional characteristics have influenced academic outcomes and persistence rates of African American males at HBCUs and predominately White institutions (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Mallinckrodt, 1988). Like HBCUs, it is necessary for higher-education institutions to create an environment in which African American males feel more connected to the campus through academic and social experiences to encourage utilization of services and programs at a college or university.

Support Services and Programs for African American Males

At many higher-education institutions, there are several support programs and services aiding students from various backgrounds to succeed in their educational endeavors (Tinto, 1993). Such programs offer services such as counseling, advising, mentoring, workshops, professional development activities, summer transitional programs, and learning communities that foster growth and create an encouraging and supportive campus community for students. Each program offers specific services and accommodations to meet the unique needs of the population of students on campus, helping them enrich their college experience while simultaneously motivating scholars to reach their educational goals. Campuses create these types of services to increase retention rates and encourage persistence among their student body (Kuh et al., 2006). Many African American male students entering a college institution are unaware of the programs and resources available specifically to assist them in their educational experiences (Harper, 2006). In an effort to improve persistence rates of African American males, several college campuses have created targeted programs to assist with retaining and graduating these students. This section breaks down the different components in support programs to examine the types of services that most benefit and influence African American males to persist to degree completion.

Intrusive Advising

Advising provides students with guidance and support and assists with navigating through college successfully. General education and major advising play a critical role in

the success of students matriculating to a higher-education institution. Academic and major advising may be mandatory for first- and second-year students at many institutions to assist with successfully transitioning to college. In higher-education institutions, students who do not meet the campus' academic requirements may be removed from the institution. The advisors are at times the first contact students have at institutions and are in the best position to build supportive relationships while helping students understand academic curriculum (McGillin, 2003). They are also seen as role models promoting academic excellence and assisting students with determining the courses that match their skill level. Frequent contact with advisors enhances students' sense of belonging and provides an opportunity for advisors to lend decision-making support (Crockett & Levitz, 1984). There are several methods of advising campuses can incorporate to encourage academic persistence among African American male college students. Applying an advising model specifically tailored to meet the needs of African American males can directly affect their educational experiences while simultaneously impacting their academics and institutional commitment.

Intrusive advising is a model requiring advisees to take a proactive approach instead of a reactive approach to advising (Hasseler & Parette, 2002). Intrusive advising is an effective strategy, especially for students experiencing academic difficulties, because it involves reaching out to students to help them identify difficult situations to determine solutions (Higgins, 2003). Ultimately, intrusive advising develops relationships that involve shared responsibility, promote proactive interactions to meet

the goals of students, and support students matriculating to college through graduation. Campuses utilizing this advising model can aid students with overcoming challenges and obstacles before they arise. In addition, it fosters the relationship between students and institutions because students learn how the institutional support they receive can positively affect their academic progress. For example, students who participate in intercollegiate sports programs, at certain institutions, are required to provide athletic advisors with academic progress reports from faculty every two weeks; this allows advisors to communicate with students to provide assistance before they fall behind in their coursework. Much like intrusive advising, it is an accountability system for students, which takes a proactive approach to ensure the success of this population of students. African American male college students may not seek assistance when they experience challenges or obstacles related to academic and social barriers they encounter at a university. However, higher-education institutions can employ an intrusive-advising model through formal programs or informal processes, which can enhance academic skills, encourage student integration, and could provide strategies to help African American males face challenges to achieve academic success.

Intrusive advising is extremely useful to African American males because this system identifies at-risk students and alerts an institution before students dropout. Anticipatory advising is another term used to describe intrusive advising. Hughes (2010) examined a retention program providing services to African American males at a predominately White institution with an anticipatory advising system in place. The

advisors consist of Black faculty, staff, and community members who focus on forming a strong bond with African American males so students feel comfortable coming to them for support, encouragement, and motivation to succeed in and out of the classroom. The unique aspect of this retention program is the implementation of an early warning system in which the Black faculty, staff, and directors are notified when students' grades fall below a certain GPA. The method used at this institution has helped retain and increase graduation rates of the African American males attending the university.

Mentoring

Research found a correlation between positive role models or mentorship and graduation success rates of college students. Academic and social support in the form of mentoring and counseling is essential for helping students adjust to the college learning environment and persist at an institution (Tinto, 2002). A mentor offers his or her expertise to students to grow and develop specific competencies and provides technical information on how to do something or models what should be done in certain situations (Hood, 1990). More specifically, mentors provide emotional and psychological support to students related to personal development. Like advising, mentorship may occur in formal programs or take place through an informal process. Formal mentoring programs provide structure through a system of monitoring, program activities, organizational support, assigning mentors to students, and through recognition and awards (Lahman, 1999). Informal mentoring develops spontaneously and is initiated by mentor or student through an "informal conversation over a meal, telephone calls, letters, emails, office

visits" (Jones, 2002, p. 11). Formal mentoring programs for African American male students exist at several colleges and universities; these programs differ in structure and arrangement, but are geared toward a similar mission of increasing retention and promoting academic success among African American male students on campus. Since engagement and involvement have a huge impact on student attrition, universities developing formal mentoring programs to assist students matriculating to the campus could increase academic persistence of African American males. Research has found African American male students involved in mentoring relationships were more satisfied with their college experiences. Exploring the type of mentoring models that benefit African American male college students is important for institutions to offer the most effective approach.

Nationally recognized mentoring programs that have been used as models for colleges and universities are described by LaVant, Anderson, and Tiggs (1997); these programs had successful outcomes for African American student participants. For example, The Bridge is a program designed to provide freshmen level African American students one-on-one mentoring from faculty and staff at Georgia State University. One example of a mentorship program, specifically for African American males, at a predominately White university was modeled after Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB), which focused on these areas for successful personal development: service, financial, academic, spiritual/social, and public relations (SAAB National Headquarters, 2009). African American male college students were invited, during the

summer, to take classes at the institution and participate in a series of workshops, lectures, and events. The students were introduced to senior level administration and faculty on campus and were provided with a peer mentor. Each student in the program was matched with a professional mentor to connect with African American male faculty and staff located on and off campus during the first week of the program. The mentors, who participated in the summer program, also coordinated a panel discussion that addressed overcoming crisis, and they also shared their educational success stories (Hughes, 2010). African American males who participated in this program were able to successfully transition to the university and the numbers showed an increase in graduation rates among participants. Colleges and Universities designing a formal mentorship program, similar to the program mentioned above, would provide students with the resources, skills, and support needed to be successful on a college campus.

According to Wilson (2000), many educators consider formally assigning mentors who are similar in race and gender to be an immediate solution to the attrition crisis of African American men. Most universities have low representation of faculty and staff of color, especially African American male faculty and staff, which can create potential barriers for students. Ortiz-Walters and Gilson (2005) studied whether matching protégés of color with mentors of color or with mentors who share similar values is positively associated with satisfaction and support. They hypothesized "protégés of color may benefit from having a relationship with a mentor who is also of color because of the comfort and interpersonal attraction that exists when individuals share similar racial/ethnic

backgrounds" (p. 461). However, training and educating non-Black faculty and staff

mentors in relationship building, cultural sensitivity, and cross-cultural communication

could benefit institutions that lack significant numbers of faculty of color, enabling them

to meet the needs of students of color. The training would be designed to provide

strategies and resources to help mentors understand African American males' experiences

and needs to effectively assist students in their personal development.

At many institutions, there are structured peer-mentoring programs in which

current students provide advising and support services to new students transitioning to an

institution. Peer-mentoring relationships consist of shared perceptions; values; and

beliefs related to academics, social interest, and professional development. In addition,

the peer mentors offer emotional support, share experiences, and provide strategies of

personal success to students. For example, the University of Virginia designed a peer-

mentoring program to assist African American first year and transfer students with

college transition by providing personalized advising, counseling, and activities to

participants. Peer mentors take a proactive approach to provide services and resources to

students throughout the academic year. For example, an African American retention

program at a California State University requires students in the program meet with an

assigned mentor once a month to create goals and receive status updates on academic and

social progress to encourage and support students.

Campus Clubs and Organizations

Campus clubs and organizations are support services students can utilize to enhance their educational experiences on a college campus. Students involved in clubs and organizations have the potential to strengthen learning, motivation, and personal development and to develop leadership skills. Astin (1984) found students participating in sororities and fraternities, or almost any type of extracurricular activity, were less likely to drop out of college. Other research studies showed experiences outside the classroom have a positive influence on student persistence. Engaging African American males in campus clubs and organizations may promote academic involvement by providing students with opportunities to informally develop support and networking groups, build relationships with peers to feel comfortable seeking advice, and create study cohorts. For example, Cooper, Healy, and Simpson's (1994) research study found students who were members of student organizations scored higher on educational involvement and academic independence than students not involved.

Kuh (1995) explained colleges and universities cannot force students to participate in leadership roles or organized campus activities; however, educators and administrators should be intentional about creating opportunities promoting involvement. Colleges and universities supporting clubs and organizations help meet students' learning and developmental needs. Promoting involvement in clubs and organizations is an effective intervention strategy for increasing involvement of African American male students. Furthermore, integrating participation in clubs and organizations as part of

academic curriculum could be an effective outreach strategy to introduce and encourage involvement and can also strengthen student learning. Chickering (2006) suggested clubs and organizations, accompanied with student development activities, bring added meaning and understanding to academic curriculum. Simultaneously, involvement in clubs and organizations can also improve developmental factors of academic curriculum. It is imperative for higher-education institutions to continue creating strategies and implementing programs and services positively affecting persistence rates of African American male students. Developing effective mentorship programs, designing an intrusive-advising model, and integrating participation in clubs and organizations with academic curriculum would influence institutional commitment.

Rationale for the Study

It is essential for higher-education institutions to develop strategies or programs impacting persistence of African American males because it could impact graduation rates. Higher student retention could also contribute to the revenue colleges and universities receive. Higher-education institutions effectively examining the needs of African American males to increase degree attainment could, subsequently, increase the profits associated with student retention rates.

If students leave prematurely from an institution, there are cost and consequences related to student attrition. The obvious cost is loss of student revenue to an institution. For many post-secondary institutions, it is more cost effective to retain students from

freshmen year to graduation. For example, a study conducted at the University of St. Louis found the institution gained $500,000 additional revenue from the 1% increase of first-year retention rates each year (Nicholl & Sutton, 2001). Colleges and universities would financially benefit from retaining students while simultaneously affecting the institutional commitment of African American males matriculating to various campuses. According to Bean and Hossler (1990), students who commit all four years to an institution generate the same income as four new students who leave after graduation. Institutional commitment is a strong predictor of college students' intent to persist (Tinto, 1998). Institutional commitment includes students' overall satisfaction, perception of quality, and social and academic experiences on a campus. Identifying and understanding the factors affecting African American males' institutional commitment could aid in developing intervention programs aiming to increase the degrees awarded to this student population. Consequently, interventions increasing retention would impact the student revenue gains that universities and college would accrue.

Today, the consequences for students not persisting to degree completion are not limited to lack of career opportunity or advancement but are also associated with potential future earnings. Day and Newburger (2002) discussed the significance of student persistence in relation to earnings. They found those who acquired a high school diploma earned around $1.2 million over their lifetime in contrast to those who held a bachelor's degree and earned $2.1 million. Johnson and Neal (1998) found in their research that college graduation was the equalizing factor of annual wages earned

between Whites and African Americans. Furthermore, there could be possible ramifications if the educational divide continues, which could ultimately have an effect on the economic and future potential earnings in the United States. According to the National Urban League (2007), low high school and college graduation rates due to lack of educational achievement among African American students could threaten communities', states', and the nation's economic earnings in the future.

The literature points out the role an institution can play to support African American males' educational success. Understanding the challenges and obstacles students face, implementing programs and services encouraging student involvement, and taking an aggressive approach to outreach and promote these services are important strategies for higher-education institutions to assist African American male college students.

Summary

Over the past few decades, higher-education policymakers, educators, and administrators have studied African American males' educational attainment in higher education. College-access programs have been designed to impact persistence and graduation rates of low-income students, first-generation students, and students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. However, the numbers showed little to no improvement with graduation completion rates of this student population. The disparity of graduation completion and persistence rates between African American females and

males continues to grow; it is important for institutions to assess what factors contributed to the African American female educational attainment. Analyzing effective strategies, services, or programs used to engage African American male students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities is equally important. Barriers and challenges students encounter need to be addressed for colleges and universities to provide adequate services to students. Financial aid, advising, lack of parental involvement, and underpreparedness are just a few barriers research studies have found affecting persistence rates of African American male college students. Once higher-education institutions understand the needs and challenges of African American male students on their campuses, they will be able to implement and tailor programs and services to provide students with specific resources and strategies for success.

The lack of support and encouragement African American males receive from an institution can not only determine their commitment to an institution but can also determine how engaged students are in and out of the classroom environment. Social and academic integration of students can impact persistence of African American males because students who are more engaged and involved are more satisfied with their educational experiences, directly affecting persistence. Higher-education institutions should establish and create a positive, interactive environment while encouraging faculty and peer interaction to help build confidence and motivation for African American males to persist to graduation. Building relationships between students, faculty, administration, and peers can influence persistence. It has become even more imperative for institutions

to provide services and programs increasing engagement and involvement of African American males on a college campus. Mentorship, advising, and involvement in clubs and organizations are important components for the success of African American male students. Higher-education institutions developing formal mentorship programs, intrusive advising models, and promoting involvement in clubs and organization to African American males who matriculate to a college campus can build future leaders and have a positive impact on educational outcomes.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This quantitative research study aimed to understand what factors impact African American males' persistence rates – specifically at a public four-year university in California – by examining students' satisfaction with services and programs; engagement on campus; and student-faculty interaction, which are important components contributing to student success. Analyzing the role institutions play in directly affecting African American males' educational experiences can help educators and administers provide adequate resources to students.

There are several research studies supporting the theory that retention services and programs affect students' success. However, there is limited research on which specific components of the programs and services African American males utilize directly impact their persistence in college. An analysis of the collected data of 38 African American male students currently enrolled at or recently graduated from a public four-year university is presented for the quantitative study. This chapter discusses the population and sample of the study, the design of the study, data collection, instrumentation, and data analysis procedures.

Research Design

This quantitative research study aimed to understand the impact student services and programs have on African American males and to analyze factors influencing these students to persist to graduation, specifically for those who are currently enrolled at or recently graduated from a public four-year university in California. Survey respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with a variety of programs and services offered on campus, list the challenges and obstacles affecting their educational attainment, detail their perception of faculty, explain their level of college knowledge/awareness of college resources upon first matriculating to college, and assess their level of involvement in campus activities.

Setting of Study

The quantitative study was conducted at one of the largest and most diverse public four-year institutions located in a metropolitan city. The Dynamic University (hereinafter referred to as DU) has a student population of 28,000 undergraduate and graduate students and offers over 100 degrees from biological sciences, arts and humanities, to engineering. This institution is one of 23 campuses and is one of the largest institutions in the Dynamic University system.

For the 2011-2012 academic year, DU awarded approximately 4,685 bachelor's degrees. Additionally, 61% of the degrees were awarded to women in comparison to 39.9% awarded to males. The ethnic demographics of students enrolled at DU during fall 2012 are as follows: 40% White/Caucasian, 21% Asian/Pacific Islander, 19% Latino, 6%

African American, and 11% Other. With more than 700 full-time instructors, DU has a faculty-to-student ratio of 26 in the classrooms. The faculty consists of 54% male and 46% female with 30% identifying as a person of color and 84% of the instructional staff holding the highest degrees in their fields (California State University, 2013).

Population and Sample

The population of this study was African American males currently enrolled at or recently graduated from Dynamic University. Currently, 51% of the student population are from low-income backgrounds and the retention rates of students attaining their degree from 2011-2012 was 42%. African American males' overall college GPA from fall 2007 to spring 2012 ranges from 2.35 to 2.48, which is the lowest rate of all ethnic groups at Dynamic University. Of the African American student population enrolled at DU for fall 2012, 36% were males and 62% were females.

The sample size for this study was African American males currently enrolled and recently graduated who were involved in African American retention programs, services, and clubs and organizations. In this research study, data were collected from 16 students currently enrolled at Dynamic University and 22 recent graduates. Students selected for this study participated (at the time of the study or previously) in retention programs and services offered by the campus. Certain programs and services were designed specifically to retain and support underrepresented African American students in California. The Educational Opportunity Program and Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program serve African American students from historically underrepresented

backgrounds. Mentorship, advising, financial support, and encouraging involvement in extracurricular activities are a few services these programs offer. In addition, many of the students were also involved in clubs and organizations or fraternities on campus. The participants selected for the sample size provided a unique perspective on the effectiveness and impact of the services and programs at Dynamic University.

The sample provided quantitative data collected from an electronic survey distributed through social media (Facebook) and presented in person to various classrooms. Gathering the data directly from students enriched the study and provided a strong foundation to uncover students' perceptions and experiences on a college campus in an insightful fashion. The respondents to the survey were a small sample and do not represent all African American male college students.

Design of the Study

The quantitative study focused on evaluating the factors affecting African American males' challenges and satisfaction and evaluated the impact of programs, services, and involvement in and outside the classroom. The study sought to understand to what degree institutional environment and services affect or influence students to persist to attain their bachelor's degree. The study was completed voluntarily and anonymously by African American males currently enrolled at or previously graduated from Dynamic University (DU). The targeted population of students were currently or previously enrolled in the Educational Opportunity Program or participated in Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Programs, cultural organizations, and fraternities. The survey

included a majority of multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Two of the questions

required written responses. There were several demographic questions regarding age,

academic major, units of completion, and degree attainment. Since the sample was open

to current students and alumni, it was fairly representative of African American males

attending a public four-year university in California. However, the study may not

represent the entire population of African American male college students.

Data Collections and Procedures

   The researcher completed the necessary documents, submitted forms, and was

approved to begin the study, which was aligned with Dynamic University's Institutional

Review process. Upon approval, a meeting was coordinated with the Director of the

Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program to discuss the nature of the research and

facilitate a time to present the survey to students currently involved in the program. A

presentation was coordinated with currently enrolled Cooper-Woodson scholars. During

the presentation, an explanation of the research was provided and students were provided

a link to SurveyMonkey to complete the survey (see Appendix A). Over 55 students

were participating in this program.

   An email was also sent to the director of the Educational Opportunity Program to

coordinate sending the survey to students via email. An email was sent to 84 students

identifying themselves as African American males by DU's Information Resources &

Technology department through the university's message system. The email provided an

introduction to the research and also explained the purpose of the study. It also included

an explanation of the consent form, a statement protecting participants' confidentiality, and contained the researcher's contact information. The email concluded with a link to access the survey through SurveyMonkey (see Appendix B). The same email was sent to 50 Dynamic University alumni students through Facebook who utilized or participated in the same programs, services, and resources as the researcher who was also an alumnus of Dynamic University.

Within the first three weeks, 25 graduates and currently enrolled African American male students completed the survey. The researcher sent an additional email to graduates on Facebook and forwarded the email to the Director of Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program to be distributed through the program's email list (see Appendix B). Through these methods, the researcher received an additional 13 completed surveys. The final email was sent to the Educational Opportunity Program, Facebook alumni, and Cooper-Woodson scholars a week and a half before the close of the survey on April 1, 2013, with no additional responses received.

Instrumentation

In the spring of 2013, surveys were sent electronically to 84 African American males enrolled in the Educational Opportunity Program. The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) is geared towards first-generation, low-income freshmen and transfer students demonstrating a need for admission assistance or academic support services to aid in their academic success at a university. EOP students have the potential to succeed but have not realized their full potential due to his/her economic or social background.

Students participating in EOP are provided with the following services: academic and personal counseling, mentorship, tutoring, admissions and financial advising, and learning communities. To be qualified and considered for this program, applicants must meet certain income guidelines for the program to identify students with the most financial need.

Next, a classroom presentation was facilitated in which a 10-minute presentation was conducted explaining the online survey to over 20 African American males participating in the Cooper Woodson Enhancement Program (CWC). The Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program is an African American retention program providing students with scholarships, academic resources, and mentoring, and the program promotes African American culture through educational events, seminars, and community involvement. Part of CWC's mission is to develop university and community networks to improve persistence and graduation rates of students while developing cultural awareness, leadership, and intellectual knowledge to support and influence their educational experiences. The program does not base admission on income background but requires students to submit an application, be a full-time student, and maintain above a 2.0 GPA. Once admitted, students are provided with a $300 book scholarship and are required to attend meetings, educational lectures, complete 15 hours of community service, and are automatically enrolled in an ethnic studies course. Finally, surveys were emailed electronically through Facebook to over 40 alumni who were actively involved

in campus programs such as EOP, the Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program, clubs

and organizations, or Greek life.

The survey was administered solely through the Internet. African American male

students were asked to complete the survey on SurveyMonkey at

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QMZFMH9, with the link and consent form attached

to the email invitation. The consent form stated that participants would not receive

awards or compensation for participation in the research study. The research design also

clearly stated those who participated might not benefit directly from the research;

however, it would help benefit currently enrolled or prospective African American male

students. The questions were developed to provide the researcher with an understanding

about the challenges and barriers African Americans encounter on a college campus and

their satisfaction with services and programs offered. The questions helped the

researcher analyze engagement on campus to assess what institutional support can be

implemented to increase students' persistence. The research study aimed to help answer

questions pertaining to high attrition rates of African American male college students and

increase understanding of what influences their persistence to degree attainment. There

were a total of 25 questions on the survey, which took less than 30 minutes to complete.

The research design presented in person to CWC scholars allowed for personal

interaction in answering or addressing questions about the research study. However,

emails sent to EOP students and alumni allowed for no personal interaction with the

students. The researcher's contact information was provided if students needed

assistance with answering questions on the survey or had general questions about the research study. The survey was intended to utilize comprehensive language relevant to the field to help African American males easily understand the content.

The survey questions were focused on the following areas:

1. Awareness of programs and services during the first semester of college

2. Challenges and obstacles faced at the university

3. Perception of faculty and interactions

4. Factors impacting persistence

5. Students' levels of satisfaction with programs and services

The first portion of the survey asked respondents demographic questions ranging from age to their level of degree completion. Questions 6 through 21 asked respondents to choose one of a five-point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) regarding their awareness of programs and services, challenges and barriers, faculty engagement, and factors impacting persistence. Questions 6 through 10 of the survey were designed to measure African American males' awareness of and involvement in programs, services, resources, and clubs and organizations during their first semester on the college campus in addition to their level of preparation upon entry. Students were asked about preparation upon enrolling, participation in specific programs, and resource availability because early introduction to services can impact social and academic integration. Questions 11 through 13 were geared toward challenges, obstacles, and barriers African American males encountered at the university. Students were asked

if financial assistance, advising, or personal situations influenced academic performance. Questions 14 and 16 asked survey respondents about their perception of faculty members. Engagement of faculty members can play a critical role in student success and can impact the educational outcomes of African American males. Question 17 asked about involvement with Greek organizations on campus. Questions 18 through 21 asked about factors impacting persistence for students who utilized programs, clubs, and organizations. Questions 22 and 23 required written responses and asked participants to identify what most influenced them to be involved and persist to degree attainment; these two questions allowed students to self-reflect on their experiences to assess what motivated them to get involved with campus support programs and identify their main encouragement in attaining their degree. The last two questions asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with services and programs offered at the institution.

Data Analysis and Procedures

The study was designed to analyze and examine themes regarding African American males' experiences and engagement on a college campus. The researcher listed similar themes together, categorizing them based upon their relation to awareness of programs and services, challenges and barriers encountered, perception of faculty, involvement on campus, and level of satisfaction with programs and services at their university.

The data for the study were collected through the data collection system of SurveyMonkey; this system allowed the researcher to administer questions to students,

collect responses, and analyze the data collected. SurveyMonkey recorded, collected, and summarized results online. It also has a tracking system that allowed the researcher to view respondents and results during the survey period. When respondents completed the survey, the results were saved in the researcher's personal account on SurveryMonkey's home page. Toward the end of the response period, the researcher was able to collect results with responses for each individual participant and compile percentages of respondents answering each question for the different Likert-type scale score. The results of the study are shown in Chapter 4, illustrated through charts and tables.

Limitation of Study

The research study focused on African American male college students currently enrolled and/or graduated from Dynamic University. The sample was based on students who currently or previously participated in Educational Opportunity Program, Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program, clubs and organizations, and fraternities; a high number of African American males are involved in or utilize these support programs or services. The results of this study may not be reflective of all African American male undergraduate students or those enrolled at other universities.

The research had some limitations. First, the researcher encountered challenges in accessing African American male alumni's information through Facebook. Through Facebook, there was no way to conduct a search that identified and filtered African American males who attended Dynamic University. The researcher had to rely on

personal interaction and previous contact with alumni to pre-screen students for the survey. Accessing the alumni center's database could have generated a list allowing the researcher to distribute the survey to a larger graduate population, which would have created a strong pool of respondents.

Next, the Information Research & Technology department generated a list of EOP students who self-identified as African American males. It is important to mention not all students at the university may choose to disclose their ethnic backgrounds or gender. Some students may identify with one or more ethnic or gender categories, which could have affected the pool of students the researcher was able to access. Additionally, the researcher anticipated a high participation rate from African American males currently enrolled in the Educational Opportunity Program; however, fewer than half the respondents were from this program. Although another email was sent to EOP students in hopes of increasing response rates, the researcher received more participation from students participating in the Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program because of the in-person presentation of the research study.

Results of the survey are specific to African American males currently or previously involved in the Educational Opportunity Program, Cooper-Woodson Enhancement, fraternities, and those who participated in clubs and organizations at Dynamic University. While some African American male college students may have similar experiences related to how higher-education institutions' supportive programs and

services impacted their persistence to continue to degree completion, the results of this survey may not be applicable to all students.

Summary

This chapter provided information about the methodology of the study administered. The setting of the study was a metropolitan public four-year university in Northern California with over 29,000 students. African American males involved in the Educational Opportunity Program, Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program, clubs and organizations, and fraternities were surveyed on their engagement and satisfaction with programs and services utilized on campus. It discussed the data collection tool used by the researcher, SurveyMonkey, and methods used to administer the survey to participants.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the impact (if any) support programs, services, clubs, organizations, and fraternities have on African American males' persistence at a four-year public university. It also aimed to determine the challenges and barriers these students encounter affecting their educational attainment. Finally, the study explored to what extent African American males engage or utilize the services and programs offered at a university. The research focused on the following key areas:

1. Awareness of programs and services during the first semester of college

2. Challenges and obstacles faced at the university

3. Perception of faculty and student interactions

4. Factors impacting persistence

5. Students' levels of satisfaction with programs and services

Questions 6 through 10 of the survey were designed to measure African American males' awareness and involvement in programs, services, resources, and clubs and organizations during the first semester on the college campus in addition to their level of preparation upon entry. Questions 11 through 13 were geared toward challenges, obstacles, and barriers African American males encountered at the university. Questions 14 and 16 asked survey respondents about their perceptions of faculty and engagement.

Question 17 asked about involvement with Greek organizations on campus. Questions 18 through 21 focused on which factors of the services and programs impacted persistence. Questions 22 and 23 required written responses and asked participants to identify what most influenced them to get involved and persist to degree attainment. The last two questions asked respondents to rate their levels of satisfaction with services and programs offered at the institution.

The key areas aimed to provide understanding and insight into the high attrition and low persistence rates of African American males matriculating to higher-education institutions in this country. More specifically, for the African American males who matriculate to a university, these key areas sought to answer these research questions:

1. To what extent do student services and programs impact African American males' educational experiences in higher education?

2. What challenges do African American males face in higher education regarding graduation persistence?

3. What services and activities do African American males utilize in and outside the classroom while matriculating at the university?

This chapter examines the results from the online survey, categorized by key areas, followed by interpretation of the findings. The results begin with a summary of the demographics of student participants. The findings are presented in the order of the key areas above mentioned. The survey data are highlighted in the findings section displayed

in a chart format. The chapter concludes with the interpretation of the findings and a summary.

Demographics

The sample for the study was taken from the population of approximately 24,000 undergraduate students enrolled at Dynamic University (DU) during the 2012/2013 academic school year and from alumni of DU. Participants in this study were African American males involved, at the time of the study or previously, in retention programs, clubs, organizations, and fraternities at the university. The survey was provided to students who were currently enrolled at or recently graduated from a public four-year university, Dynamic University. African American male students previously or currently involved in the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), the Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program (CWC), clubs and organizations, and fraternities – or who utilized other support services and programs on campus – were surveyed. The sample size was 84 EOP students, 55 CWC students, and 50 alumni who graduated from Dynamic University. A majority of the respondents (47%) indicated receiving their bachelor's degree from Dynamic University. The sampling was not a true random sample as the students who participated did so voluntarily by completing the electronic survey and submitting it online.

Survey Findings

Respondent Demographics

Questions 1 through 4 were the only demographic questions on the survey. African American male participants were asked to identify their highest level of post-secondary education completed, age, units completed, and major in college (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Information

Categories	Findings	Percentage	Actual Number
Level of education	Bachelor's Degree	47.3	18
Age	21-30	68.3	26
Unit completion (currently enrolled)	60+ units	70.2	11
College majors	Business, Engineering, Social Sciences, and Communications		

The first question in the demographics section asked respondents to choose their highest level of education completed. Eighteen of the respondents (47.3%) received a bachelor's degree and 16 (37%) students completed some college or were awarded an associate's degree at a two-year institution. Only four (10.5%) respondents indicated having a graduate level degree. Question two asked participants to select an age category and the majority of African American males, 26 (68.3%), in the study indicated being between the ages of 21 to 31. The rest of the respondents, 10 (26.3%), were 31 or older and two (5.2%) respondents were between the ages of 18 to 21. Question 3 asked African American males currently enrolled in a degree-seeking program to select their

amount of units completed. There were 11 (70.2%) African American males currently enrolled at the university with 60 or more units completed towards degree completion. For this category, the remaining respondents selected "not applicable" on the survey. The last question asked respondents to write out their currently or previously selected major at the selected institution, and the four main categories students' indicated as major concentrations were business, engineering, social sciences, and communication studies.

Awareness of Programs and Services

Questions 6 through 10 asked African American male respondents to rate, on a Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree), whether they were aware of and involved in programs, services, resources, and clubs and organizations during their first semester on the college campus. The researcher combined the percentages of those who agreed and strongly agreed and did the same for those who disagreed and strongly disagreed (this remains the same throughout each section using a Likert-type scale) (see Table 2).

Table 2

Awareness of Resources Upon Entry

Categories	Findings	Percentage	Actual Number
College preparation	Felt adequately prepared	68.8	26
Family influence	Strongly influenced college prep	65.8	25
Involvement in retention programs	Less involved	70.2	21
Involvement in clubs & organizations	Less involved	48.7	18
Campus resources	Unaware of resources	60	23

Question 6 asked respondents to indicate whether they felt adequately prepared before being admitted to the selected university. Nearly 26 (68.8%) respondents felt adequately prepared before enrolling at the college and nine (23.7%) felt less prepared prior to matriculating to the university. There were four (10.9%) respondents who felt neutral on this question. On question 7, participants were asked if family played a major role in their preparation for college, and 25 (65.8%) respondents Strongly Agreed/Agreed family played a critical role in their college preparation. There were nine (23.6%) respondents who selected neutral and four (10.3%) who identified family as not impacting their college preparation.

The results of Question 8 indicated 55.6% of respondents surveyed were less involved or engaged in student retention programs their first semester of college. Thirty-nine percent of African American males surveyed indicated being active in retention programs upon matriculation and three (7.8%) were neutral. The results of Question 9

indicated close to half of respondents, 18 (48.7%), indicated being less engaged or involved in student clubs and organizations upon entering the institution. Forty percent of respondents indicated being more involved or engaged in clubs and organizations during their first semester, and 10% of students selected neutral. Question 10 asked respondents whether they were aware of resources available at the institution during their first semester; more than half, 23 (60.5%), indicated being unaware of resources available. Eleven (28.9%) African American male respondents indicated being aware of campus resources upon matriculation and four (10.9%) selected neutral.

Challenges, Obstacles, and Barriers Encountered

Questions 11 through 13 asked African American male respondents to rate on a Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree) whether they encountered challenges with financial assistance, poor advising, and personal challenges affecting academic performance. Table 3 discusses the findings.

Table 3

Challenges and Barriers on College Campus

Categories	Findings	Percentage	Actual Number
Obstacles in personal life	Affected academic perform	71	27
Financial assistance/support	Encounter challenges	62.1	23
Poor Advising	Poor advising not a barrier	42.5	16

Question 11 asked respondents to identify whether obstacles in their personal life impacted academic performance in college, and 27 (71%) African American male

respondents indicated they strongly agreed/agreed that personal obstacles influenced academic performance. Nine (24.3%) respondents indicated obstacles in personal life did not affect their academic performance and six (15.7%) selected neutral. Question 12 on the survey asked respondents if they encountered challenges with financial assistance or support at the university and more than half, 23 (62%), of African American male respondents indicated they faced challenges with financial assistance and support. Twenty-four percent of respondents did not face barriers concerning financial assistance and 5% were neutral. The results of Question 13, which asked if respondents encountered challenges due to poor advising, uncovered 16 (42.5%) African American males did not encounter challenges due to poor advising offered by the college. Thirty-two percent of respondents faced challenges with advising and 23% indicated being neutral.

Perception of Faculty and Interactions

Questions 14 through 16 asked African American male respondents to rate, on a Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree), whether there were African American faculty and staff representation on campus, if faculty were engaging, and the comfort level of students asking for assistance. Table 4 discusses the findings.

Table 4

Faculty Perceptions and Interactions

Categories	Findings	Percentage	Actual Number
Comfort level	Feel comfort to ask for assistance	59	23
Faculty representation	Lack of African American rep	76	29
Faculty engagement/support	Feel engaged and supported	45	20

Question 14 asked African American male respondents how comfortable they felt requesting assistance from faculty in their academics. Sixty percent of African American respondents indicated they were comfortable asking faculty for assistance. Nine (20.9%) respondents did not feel comfortable asking for assistance and seven (18%) were neutral. Question 15 asked respondents to indicate if they felt there was a high representation of African American faculty and staff on the college campus. There were 29 (76.2%) respondents who indicated they strongly disagreed/disagreed there was a high representation of African American faculty and staff at the university and four (10%) respondents strongly agreed/agreed there was a high faculty representation. There were only five (10%) respondents who selected the neutral response. Question 16 asked African American male respondents if they felt engaged and supported by faculty on their college campus. The results for Question 16 indicated that 20 (45%) African American males surveyed felt engaged and supported by faculty on their campus. Four (11%) respondents strongly disagreed/disagreed with feeling engaged and supported on campus and 11 (31%) felt neutral toward this question.

Factors Impacting Persistence

Questions 17 through 21 asked African American male respondents to rate, on a Likert-type scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree), whether involvement in support programs, services, and clubs and organizations had motivated or influenced African American male respondents to persist at the university. Questions 22 and 23 asked African American respondents for written responses about what most influenced them to get involved in supportive programs and services and what most influenced them to persist. Table 5 discusses the findings.

Table 5

Factors that Impact Persistence

Categories	Findings	Percentage	Actual Number
Greek life	Less involvement	57	22
Retention programs/services	Helped persistence	73	27
Clubs and organizations	Influenced academics	71	26
Involvement in clubs and orgs.	Motivated persistence	71	26
Supportive campus climate	Felt supported on campus	53	20

Question 17 asked African American male respondents if they participated in on-campus Greek organizations. A little more than half of respondents, 22 (52%), were not involved in Greek life and 14 (37%) respondents indicated being involved in on-campus Greek life. Two (5%) students selected neutral. Question 18 asked respondents to indicate whether retention programs and services helped them persist to graduation. The

majority of respondents, 27 (72%), indicated the programs and services assisted with their persistence to attain their degree and only five (13%) did not believe programs and services contributed to persistence to graduate. There were six (16%) who selected a neutral response.

On Question 19, respondents were asked to indicate whether involvement in clubs and organizations motivated students to excel in their academics. A majority of respondents, 26 (70%), strongly agreed/agreed that involvement in clubs and organizations motivated them to excel in their academics and four (11%) did not feel involvement motivated them inside the classroom. There were seven (19%) respondents who were neutral. Question 20 asked respondents if involvement in clubs and organizations helped them persist to graduation. Over half of the respondents, 26 (70%), indicated involvement in clubs and organizations assisted with persistence to degree attainment and five (13%) strongly disagreed/disagreed that involvement in clubs and organizations helped them persist to graduation. There were seven (14%) respondents who remained neutral. Question 20 asked African American male respondents to indicate whether the university had created a supportive environment to help them graduate. A little over half of the respondents, 20 (53%), felt the university created a supportive environment for them and only four (11%) did not feel supported. There were 14 (37%) respondents who felt neutral.

Questions 22 and 23 were the only open-ended questions on the survey and required a written response. Question 22 asked participants what most influenced them

to get involved with campus activities, services, or programs; the majority of the students

indicated networking and personal development were important factors for engagement.

Other respondents mentioned classroom requirements, peers, mentorship, community

service, and building the African American community at the university as other

important factors influencing involvement. Question 23 asked respondents what most

influenced them to persist to graduation. The common themes most impacting

persistence of African American male respondents were family, career goals, and

mentorship. Some respondents mentioned personal goals, increasing tuition cost,

negative environment, and striving for a better life style as other influential factors.

Student's Level of Satisfaction with On-campus Resources

Questions 24 through 25 asked African American male respondents to rate, on a

Likert-type scale (Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, or Very Dissatisfied),

their satisfaction with programs, services, faculty, staff, and administration at the

university (see Table 6).

Table 6

Level of Satisfaction (Question 24)

Categories	Findings	Percentage	Actual Number
Quality of teaching	Very Satisfied/Satisfied	79	30
Faculty, staff, administration interaction	Very Satisfied/Satisfied	75	28
Access to teaching faculty	Very Satisfied/Satisfied	77	29
Mentorship from faculty, staff, administration	Very Satisfied/Satisfied	55	21

Table 7

Level of Satisfaction (Question 25)

Categories	Findings	Percentage	Actual Number
Academic advising	Very Satisfied/Satisfied	47	18
Major advising	Very Satisfied/Satisfied	57	22
Financial assistance/support	Very Satisfied/Satisfied	47	18
The Educational Opportunity Program	Very Satisfied/Satisfied	38	14
Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program	Very Satisfied/Satisfied	47	18

Question 24 asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with the quality of teaching; the majority of respondents, 30 (79%), indicated being very satisfied/satisfied with the quality of teaching at the university. Three (8%) respondents indicated being dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with the quality of teaching and five (13%) were neither

satisfied nor dissatisfied. Next, respondents were asked to rate faculty, staff, and administration interaction and engagement on campus. More than half, 28 (75%), were very satisfied/satisfied with the interactions and engagement with faculty, staff, and administration, and five (14%) respondents were very dissatisfied/dissatisfied with their interactions and/or engagement experiences. Four (11%) respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their experiences. Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with faculty accessibility, and 29 (77%) respondents indicated being very satisfied/satisfied with faculty accessibility. Two (6%) respondents indicated being very dissatisfied/dissatisfied with faculty accessibility and seven (18%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The last question in this section asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with mentorship from faculty, staff, and administration. A little over half the respondents, 21 (55%), indicated being very satisfied/satisfied with mentorship efforts from faculty, staff, and administration at the university while six (15%) were very dissatisfied/dissatisfied with mentorship efforts and 11 (29%) respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Question 25 asked respondents about their satisfaction with supportive services and programs offered at the institution. Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with academic advising services and 18 (47%) respondents were very satisfied/satisfied while 14 (37%) respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 6 (15%) were very dissatisfied/dissatisfied. The next question asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with major advising services and 22 (57%) respondents indicated being

very satisfied/satisfied with major advising while eight (20%) respondents were very dissatisfied/dissatisfied with this particular service. Eight (20%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with major advising. Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with financial assistance or support from the university and a little less than half indicated being very satisfied/satisfied with financial assistance or support in comparison to nine (23%) respondents who indicated being very dissatisfied/dissatisfied with financial assistance or support offered on campus. Nine (23%) respondents indicated being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with this service offered at the university.

The last two areas asked African American male respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with the Education Opportunity Program (EOP) and the Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program (CWC) at the university. Of the students who participated in the Education Opportunity program, 14 (38%) indicated being very satisfied/satisfied with this program while three (8%) respondents were very dissatisfied/dissatisfied with the program. Over half the respondents, 27 (54%), selected "not applicable" because this question did not apply to them. The last question asked African American male students to rate their level of satisfaction with the Cooper-Woodson Enhancement (CWC) Program offered at the university. A little less than half, 18 (47%), of respondents indicated being very satisfied/satisfied with the CWC program and only one (3%) respondent indicated being very dissatisfied with the program. The other half of the respondents selected neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, eight (21%), and the rest indicated "not applicable" because the question did not apply to them.

Interpretations

The researcher was encouraged by the data showing more than half (68%) of African American males surveyed felt adequately prepared before entering the university and that 65% of these respondents indicated family playing a role in their college preparation. The researcher believes, based on other research, African American males have a greater opportunity to persist and attain their degrees at universities if they enter college academically prepared and if parents are actively involved in the college preparation process. Since the majority of the African American males surveyed attained a bachelor's degree (47%), this may be an indication that college preparation may have been a factor influencing them in persisting to degree completion.

The researcher was not surprised by the data showing 55% of African American males were less involved or engaged in retention programs and services and 48% were less involved in clubs and organizations during their first semester on campus. Similarly, 59% of African American male respondents were unaware of the resources available upon enrolling at the college campus. When African American males matriculate to a university, it can be a difficult transition during the first semester. Upon entry, it is important for these students to be aware of the resources that can assist with transition and help to support and motivate them to persist to graduation from a university. The researcher believes the institution should create or develop more effective outreach strategies to promote involvement and awareness – upon enrollment – of programs, services, organizations, and clubs to impact academic and social integration on the

college campus. As discovered in the review of literature, early intervention strategies are necessary to impact African American males' educational outcomes and success rates.

The researcher found that approximately 71% of African American male respondents encountered obstacles or challenges in their personal life, which affected their academic performance. More than half (62%) encountered challenges or barriers with financial assistance and support. These findings are consistent with several national research results that demonstrated personal struggles and financial assistance influence educational performance and are also contributing factors to high attrition rates of African American males at various higher-education institutions. The researcher believes institutions implementing an intrusive-advising model could help African American males face personal challenges and increase awareness of resources available on campus, which could aid in financial support and assistance. The researcher also feels additional open-ended survey questions could have been asked, requiring African American male respondents to identify challenges faced at the university, to receive more comprehensive responses.

With regard to faculty engagement and student perception of faculty members on campus, the numbers seemed to be fairly high. A little more than half (59%) of African American males felt comfortable asking faculty for assistance in their academics and 45% of students felt faculty were engaging and supportive. The researcher was surprised by these findings because 71% of African American males indicated there was a low

number of African American faculty and staff on the college campus. Although studies found African American males seem to be more engaged at campuses with a higher representation of African American faculty, administration, and staff, the researcher feels the faculty interactions with this population of students surveyed at DU may have contributed to their willingness to be engaged in the classroom setting. The finding is significant because if African American males are engaged and feel supported in their academics, it will ultimately affect educational performance and simultaneously motivate them to engage outside the classroom.

The majority of African American male respondents, 73%, believed involvement in retention programs and services offered by the institution helped them persist to degree attainment, and 71% of respondents believed involvement in clubs and organization influenced them to excel in their academics and persist to degree attainment. As mentioned earlier, engaging African American male students inside and outside the classroom can have a significant impact on whether students decide to persist at an institution. The services, programs, clubs, and organizations offered at the university are important factors impacting the persistence of African American male respondents and their overall educational attainment. The data confirmed what the researcher discovered in the literature, which emphasized the importance of institutions implementing or designing programs and services outside the classroom setting for African American males to utilize, influencing persistence. The researcher targeted African American males involved in programs, services, clubs, fraternities, and organizations on campus;

however, it would have been interesting to identify African American male students not involved in campus activities outside the classroom to gauge the impact on their success outcomes.

Two open-ended questions on the survey asked respondents to write what most influenced them to get involved on campus and to persist to graduation; most indicted networking and personal development as key factors in campus involvement, and the common themes influencing persistence were family, career goals, and mentors. The researcher believed these responses were valuable to the study because they help increase understanding of what motivated the African American respondents to become involved in campus activities, services, and programs. Since networking and personal development were important components, designing support services or programs enhancing students' personal development and allowing for opportunities to network could impact academic and social integration. The researcher was not surprised that African American male respondents indicated career goals and family played a vital role in their persistence at the university. However, what did surprise the researcher was how many students indicated mentors aided them to persist at the university. For African American male college students, mentoring from staff, faculty, and administration can be important components encouraging and supporting them to succeed at the university. However, there are only a few programs offering a mentorship component to African American male students on campus. The researcher believes it would be beneficial for the university to explore options to provide more mentorship opportunities to students

upon matriculation. Taking a proactive approach to link African American male students with mentors upon matriculation could encourage involvement and create a supportive environment for educational advancement.

The last two questions of the research asked students to rate their level of satisfaction with the services and programs at the university. Often, how satisfied students are with programs or services determines whether they participate in or utilize those resources on a college campus. The researcher found that African American male respondents were overall "very satisfied or satisfied" with the quality of teaching (79%); faculty, staff, and administration interaction and support (75%); faculty accessibility (77%); and receiving mentorship from the faculty, staff, and administration (55%). Many researchers discovered African American males were not engaged due to lack of involvement in the classroom and lack of faculty interactions. The data were encouraging to the researcher because the majority of the respondents were satisfied with the faculty at the institution, which aided in their academic performance and success.

The researcher feels the institutional characteristics of the university regarding quality of curriculum and faculty accessibility and the overall perception African American male respondents had toward the faculty, staff, and administration on campus all seemed to be positive. For African American males, interactive experiences through programs, services, and in the classroom setting could build confidence and create a supportive campus climate, which would affect retention and persistence rates at an institution. In addition, over half the students indicated being mentored by faculty; staff;

or administration; which, as stated previously, is an effective strategy to influence educational outcomes.

Many of the African American male respondents indicated being "very satisfied" with academic advising (47%), major advising (57%), financial assistance or support (47%), The Educational Opportunity Program (38%), and the Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program (47%) available on the college campus. When comparing academic advising to major advising, students seemed to be more satisfied with the major advising sessions; this may be due to students building strong connections with faculty members in their major and the positive perception African American male respondents had toward faculty members on campus.

The researcher believes if African American males developed a mentoring relationship with academic advisors, it could impact their level of satisfaction with this service offered at the university. The researcher assumed that African American male respondents who were satisfied with financial assistance or support could be identified as students who may have received financial assistance in the form of grants, loans, or work study. However, the respondents who were not satisfied may have been offered some financial assistance and had to cover other expenses, and some respondents may not have received any financial assistance or support at all from the university. The researcher believes additional survey questions regarding family income and whether the students were first in their family to attend college could help examine how many African American male respondents may have received financial support, which could have

influenced their persistence at the college campus. Two questions asked African American male respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and the Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program. The EOP admits students from low-income and first-generation backgrounds to the program and base admission criteria on family income and size. In the study, a majority of African American male respondents did not participate in the EOP program; however, those who did were overall satisfied with the program. African American male respondents involved in the Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program (CWC), which is a retention program geared toward African American students, were overall satisfied with the program. Students do not have to meet an income requirement to be admitted to the CWC program, which is why there was a higher response rate of students who seemed satisfied with the program. The researcher believes it would have been beneficial to break down the resources in the EOP and CWC program, which students found to be most helpful in assisting them to graduate.

Summary

Various components of support programs and services have a huge impact on African American males' educational experiences in higher education. For many students, being engaged or involved in and outside the classroom environment influenced educational attainment at the university. The data from African American male participants involved in supportive programs, services, fraternities, clubs, or

organizations showed engagement had a major impact on students' motivation to persistent to degree completion. Family, career goals, and mentoring also seemed to be important factors encouraging these African American males' persistence. Although the respondents were unaware of resources, services, and programs available upon first matriculating to the institution, a majority of African American male respondents became involved because of personal development and networking opportunities, which are components of certain programs and services on campus. A significant amount of respondents indicated encountering challenges with financial aid assistance and personal obstacles affecting their academic performance at the institution. The African American males surveyed seemed to be overall satisfied with services, programs, and resources provided by the institution. Furthermore, the African American male respondents' level of satisfaction in their interactions with faculty members seemed to play a critical role in their academic performance and educational experience at the university. Student respondents previously or currently enrolled in the Educational Opportunity Program and the Cooper-Woodson Enhancement program who responded to the survey were satisfied overall with these retention programs, which have a high population of African American male students, and the services and resources in each program.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the findings of the study, examining African American males' educational experiences inside and outside the classroom environment who participated in support programs and services at a public four-year university. The findings of the study were reached by analyzing the survey results of 38 African American male undergraduates previously or currently enrolled or involved in EOP, CWC, clubs, organizations, or fraternities at Dynamic University.

The study was designed to provide insight on the extent support programs and services can impact persistence of African American males at higher-education institutions. Examining whether African American males were engaged or involved in programs, services, or other resources provided by the university can determine the components directly affecting students to persist to degree completion.

The five key areas used in this study were:

1. Awareness of programs and services during the first semester of college

2. Challenges and obstacles faced at the university

3. Perception of faculty and interactions

4. Factors impacting persistence

5. Students' levels of satisfaction with programs and services

Understanding these aspects helped guide the structure of the research. Each component helped increase the understanding of African American males' educational experiences upon matriculating to a university. African American males were asked to self-reflect on their level of engagement and awareness of support programs and services on campus that influenced persistence.

In addition to these areas, the research study wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the following research questions:

1. To what extent do student services and programs impact African American males' educational experiences in higher education?

2. What challenges do African American males face in higher education regarding graduation persistence?

3. What services and activities do African American males utilize in and outside the classroom while matriculating at the university?

By surveying African American males currently enrolled at or recently graduated from the public four-year university, the researcher aimed to identify important factors influencing students' educational outcomes and motivation to persist to degree completion. The researcher also wanted to analyze African American males who participated in retention programs geared towards providing supportive resources to underrepresented students at the university.

An analysis of the data collected by the researcher from the survey participants for this study was presented in this chapter. Awareness of programs and services during

the first semester, challenges and obstacles faced at the university, perception of faculty and interactions, factors impacting persistence, and levels of satisfaction with programs and services were all examined in the research. All data were collected for this study through surveys given to students currently or previously involved with the EOP, CWC, clubs and organizations, and fraternities at Dynamic University in the 2013 spring semester. The targeted audience consisted of 84 EOP students, 55 CWC students, and 50 alumni from which the researcher was able to accurately gather responses from 38 students. Participants were invited to voluntarily respond to a survey administered through SurveyMonkey. All participants were given a month to access the online survey after which the web-based survey was set to close automatically.

Conclusions

As mentioned throughout the study, African American males' attrition rates at higher-education institutions are disproportionately high in comparison to other ethnic counterparts and other ethnic groups. Compared to 40 years ago, many resources are available to African American students to assist in attaining their baccalaureate degree; however, African American male students in particular do not seem to be utilizing or are unaware of supportive resources available to assist with their educational attainment. To address this issue, it is important for higher-education institutions to understand the factors impacting African American males' educational outcomes to enhance and affect their academic performance and educational experiences. If more institutions designed

supportive programs and services tailored to meet the needs of African American males to enhance their educational experiences in and outside the classroom, it could impact their engagement, which in turn could influence persistence and degree completion.

Higher-education institutions need to take a more proactive approach in providing outreach to African American male students to promote supportive programs and services upon matriculation, which could impact success rates. The more engaged and involved African American male students are inside and outside the classroom setting, the more likely they will succeed at both secondary and post-secondary educational levels. Retention programs and services often include advising, mentoring, financial assistance, or academic components encouraging engagement of student participants. African American males involved in such programs or provided with the service components from such programs could be impacted in their social and academic integration on a college campus.

In the research study, African American male participants felt adequately prepared before entering college (68% felt prepared in comparison to 23% unprepared), but over half of African American males were unaware of resources, services, and programs upon matriculating to the university (60% were unaware of resources in comparison to 28% who were aware). Participants indicated challenges and barriers with financial support (64% encountered challenges in comparison to 24% who did not), which tends to be a major barrier for many underrepresented students in higher education. One of the most significant findings was African American males' attitudes and

perceptions toward faculty engagement, support, and interactions. African American males overall felt "very satisfied or satisfied" with the quality of teaching (79%); faculty, staff, and administration interaction and support (75%); faculty accessibility (77%); and receiving mentorship from the faculty, staff, and administration (55%). Research has shown staff, faculty, and administration can be important role models encouraging and supporting African American males to succeed at the university. A majority of African American male respondents, 73%, believed involvement in retention programs and services offered by the institution helped them persist to degree attainment, and 71% of respondents believed involvement in clubs and organization influenced them to excel in their academics and persist to degree attainment. The findings reaffirmed the importance of institutions encouraging and promoting engagement of African American male students on a college campus to impact persistence to degree completion.

Various components of support programs and services have a huge impact on African American males' educational experiences in higher education. For many students, being engaged or involved in and outside the classroom environment has influenced educational attainment at the university. The data from African American male participants involved in supportive programs, services, fraternities, clubs, or organizations showed engagement had a major impact on students' motivation to persist to degree completion. In addition, family, career goals, and mentoring seemed to also be important factors that encouraged African American males surveyed to persist. Although the respondents were unaware of resources, services, and programs available upon first

matriculating to the institution, a majority of African American male respondents became involved because of personal development and networking opportunities, which are components of certain programs and services on campus. A significant amount of respondents indicated encountering challenges with financial aid assistance and personal obstacles affecting their academic performance at the institution. African American males surveyed seemed to be overall satisfied with services, programs, and resources provided by the institution. Furthermore, African American male respondents' levels of satisfaction in their interactions with faculty members seemed to play a critical role in their academic performance and educational experience at the university. Student respondents currently or previously enrolled in the Educational Opportunity Program and the Cooper-Woodson Enhancement program who responded to the survey were overall satisfied with these retention programs, which have a high population of African American male students, and the services and resources in each program.

<div align="center">Recommendations</div>

Further research for this study would include a qualitative study that offered group or individual interviews. The two opened-ended questions in this study produced interesting responses which implied engaging African American male college students on a more personal level could create more in-depth responses to contribute to the data. Coordinating several interviews with current and recent graduate students would allowed more dialogue to discuss their experiences in college to acquire detailed responses. The

intentional interaction could generate higher response rates from students, although it would not be representative of the entire African American male student population, it may have provided more insight into how the challenges and barriers, faculty interactions, and engagement in programs and services impact their degree attainment. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher wondered if African Americans not engaged in programs had the same success rates as those actively engaged on campus. Further research can explore the long-term effects programs and services offered at the institution have on the success and educational advancement of African American males in higher education.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Survey

1. After reading the consent form, do you agree to participate?
2. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
3. If you are currently enrolled in a degree based program, how many units have you completed?
4. Which category below includes your age?
5. If you are currently or previously enrolled in a degree based program, what is your major?

Scale: 1-Strongly Agree 2.Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

6. Before being admitted to the university, I felt adequately prepared for college.
7. My family has played a huge role in preparing me for college.
8. During my first semester at the university, I was active programs such as the Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program and/or The Educational Opportunity Program.
9. During my first semester at the university, I was involved in clubs and organizations.
10. During my first semester at the university, I was not aware of the resources on campus.
11. Obstacles in my personal life have affected my academic performance.
12. I have encountered challenges at the university with aspects of financial assistance or support.
13. I have encounter challenges due to poor advising (academic advising, major advising)
14. I feel comfortable to ask faculty for assistance with my academics.
15. There are a lot of faculty and staff that look like me on campus.
16. I feel the faculty on my college campus are engaging and care about me as a student.
17. I am or was involved in Greek Life on my campus.
18. The programs and services I utilized on campus have helped me persist to graduation.
19. Being involved with clubs and organizations has motivated me to excel in my academics.
20. Being involved with clubs and organizations has helped me to persist to graduate.

21. I feel the university creates a supportive environment that has or will help me graduate.

Written Responses:

22. What has influenced you the most to be involved with campus activities, programs or services?
23. What has influenced you the most to persist to graduate. Please explain in the box below.

Scale: 1-Strongly Satisfied 2.Satisfied 3. Neutral 4. Dissatisfied 5. Strongly Dissatisfied

	Strongly Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Strongly Dissatisfied
Quality of Teaching				
Faculty, staff, administration interaction and engagement				
Access to teaching faculty				
Mentoring from faculty, staff and administration				

Scale: 1-Strongly Satisfied 2.Satisfied 3. Neutral 4. Dissatisfied 5. Strongly Dissatisfied

	Strongly Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Strongly Dissatisfied
Academic Advising				
Major Advising				
Financial Support/Assistance				
The Educational Opportunity Program(EOP)				
The Cooper-Woodson Enhancement Program (CWC)				

APPENDIX B

Email

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in a study entitled, "Examination of African American males' educational attainment in Higher Education" conducted by Shayla Walker, a graduate student at California State University, Sacramento under the supervision of Dr. Geni Cowan, a faculty member in the Department of Educational Leadership. The purpose of this study is to examine African American males' educational attainment by evaluating the impact of programs and services and analyzing factors that influence students to persist to graduation. You will be asked to complete a questionnaire about your demographic information, your challenges, your experience, and your satisfaction with services and programs at California State University, Sacramento. Your participation consists of completing a brief questionnaire that should take about 5 to 10 minutes. Some of the items in the questionnaire may seem personal, but you don't have to answer any question if you don't want to. You may participate as much or as little in the discussion as you wish.

A potential benefit of your participation is that you may learn about resources are available specifically to African American males or you may not personally benefit from participating in this research. It is hoped that the results of the study will be beneficial to current and prospective African American male students.

Your responses on the questionnaire will be anonymous. You will never be asked to identify yourself by name. You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Your participation indicates that you have read this page and agree to participate in the research. If you do not wish to participate, I appreciate your taking the time to consider it.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me at (⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛ or by e-mail at ⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛. My thesis advisor, Dr. Geni Cowan, can be reached at (916) 278-5388 or by email at gcowan@csus.edu.

You may follow this link to the survey:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/educationalattainment

Thank you.
Shayla Walker

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