INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIVENESS TO AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE COLLEGE STUDENTS: A

PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Tina Louise Hummons

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Ferris State University

May, 2018

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIVENESS TO AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE COLLEGE STUDENTS: A

PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Tina Louise Hummons

Has been approved

May 2018

APPROVED:

Lea Ann Lucas, Psy.D
Committee Chair

Monica Perry-Hummons, EdD
Committee Member

Monica P. Smith, EdD
Committee Member

Joy Tanji, PhD
Committee Member

Dissertation Committee

ACCEPTED:

Roberta C. Teahen, PhD, Director
Community College Leadership Program

ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted in the Midwestern U.S. It explored the experiences and perceptions of 14 African American male college students (AAMCS) regarding their journey towards earning a post-secondary credential. Of particular interest were the meanings participants constructed related to the institutional responsiveness to their unique needs as an underrepresented and marginalized group. Participants responded to a number of questions posed by the researcher in an effort to provide an opportunity and confidential space for students to share both positive and negative perceptions of the institutional responsiveness to their needs. The findings included seven themes that emerged as a result of a focus group discussion. These themes included (a) people who influenced them the most, (b) perceptions of positive cultural change at the research institution, (c) positive perceptions of the impact of the African American Male Initiative (AAMI) at the university on the AAMCS, (d) obstacles to AAMCS success, (e) reasons participants persisted, (f) advice for new AAMCS from participants, and (g) recommendations for institution in support of AAMCS offered by participants. Results indicated that most students initially felt isolated and frequently misunderstood by both faculty and peers. The participants attributed their academic success to the support of members of their family, previous teachers and administrators, and their AAMCS brothers and counselors. The AAMCS reported that they had seen changes for the positive in terms of the campus cultural diversity and efforts to provide support. Participants

provided a number of recommendations for both entering AAMCS and increased institutional

responsiveness in the future.

KEY WORDS: instructional responsiveness, African American male college students, persistence in college, marginalized groups in college

DEDICATION

The journey toward the completion of my degree, including this dissertation, has been a very challenging one. As a minority and a first generation college student, I would have never imagined that I would be at this point in my academic career. My parents have been such an important part of this goal. Although they may not have always understood what I was doing or what I was going through, their love, support, and belief in me helped me to know and to believe that I could accomplish not only this but whatever I chose to do in my life. The two of you have taught me from a very young age valuable lessons that I will continue to use to enrich my life.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Parris Hummons who passed away April 16, 2016. Although she did not survive to see me complete my journey, I know she is watching over me and smiling for a job well done.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this dissertation and doctoral degree could not have been achieved without the help and support of many people who have traveled with me on this journey. First of all, my family, friends, colleagues, and Cohort 6 of the Doctorate Community College Leadership Program. I want to thank them for their constant support, encouragement, and patience as I pursued my dream of getting an education and writing this dissertation.

I want to thank those who set an example to pursue a career in Higher Education. Without their inspiration, I would not have discovered my passion for serving students. I want to give a special thanks to my brother Raymond Hummons Jr., for believing in me and motivating me to attend graduate school; you have guided and supported me during my educational journey. I am blessed and honored to be your youngest sister.

Also, I want to thank the Doctorate Community College Leadership Program for giving me the chance to be part of the university and the having the opportunity to be part of a wonderful cohort. I express my sincere appreciation to the members of my committee who worked tirelessly and patiently to support me throughout every phase of this study.

I want to thank my dissertation chair Dr. Lea Ann Lucas for all of your guidance and expertise through this process. You assisted me through patience and unwavering dedication, and I appreciate it. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Joy Tanji, Dr. Monica Smith, and Dr. Monica Perry-Hummons. I am honored and proud to have my sister-in-law serve on my committee.

Thanks to the participants without your willingness to talk to me the research on this topic could have not happened. The knowledge you shared with me was an amazing and educational experience. We are saving lives and salvaging dreams.

Thanks to my granny. Although she did not physically see me through this process, I often felt that she was watching over me and I know she would have been very proud of her grand-daughter. I would not be the person that I am today without you. Your love has truly been my motivation for continuing my education.

Finally, but certainly not least, I thank God for granting me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

INTRODUCTION

African American male college students' (AAMCS) success rates in post-secondary

education have become an increasingly prominent discussion in educational circles. Despite

increased numbers of AAMCS in higher education, their low academic achievement levels

continue to occur in disproportionate numbers compared to other ethnic groups and genders

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Graduation rates have shown a steady decline across all ethnicities

at most colleges and universities. During the past decade, there has been a concerted effort to

improve academic success for AAMCS, but the progression has been insignificant (Harper,

2014). According to Harper (2014), higher educational institutions have made strides to

improve completion rates for marginalized groups; however, their strategic plans have been

archaic, dysfunctional, and meaningless. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2015, 35% of

African American men between the ages of 18 and 24 enrolled in higher education. This figure

is nearly 10% lower when compared to almost 42% of White male counterparts (NCES, 2017).

The United States of America 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 all of the efforts for educational reform

over the past few decades, the gap in academic success is still enormous, especially among

African American males (Shuford, 2009). During the early 2000s, there was a considerable

increase in AAMCS attending higher-education institutions, but African American males continued to fall behind White and female counterparts in relation to college engagement, retention, persistence, and degree completion (Noguera, 2003). Researchers found that in contrast to other major demographic groups, African American males have the lowest post-secondary educational results in the United States (Palmer, Davis, Moore, & Hilton, 2010). Specifically, African American males have the highest attrition rates and lowest degree completion rates among marginalized populations and genders. Perhaps more alarming is that African Americans' educational outcomes continue to decrease with no resolution in the foreseeable future. Some researchers have predicted that if the current trend of low completion rates and a decline in enrollment continues, African American males may not be involved in post-secondary education by the year 2070 (Cross & Slater, 2000).

A daunting reality for many AAMCS is financing a post-secondary education. The struggle to afford a college education has worsened for many students, particularly as higher education institutions increase tuition without increasing student need-based aid. Consequently, many students, particularly low-income and underrepresented marginalized

African American students do not succeed at institutions of higher learning due to a lack of (a) minority professors, staff, and administrators, (b) lack funding to pay for college, and (c) adequate programs for marginalized populations (Walsh, Larsen, & Parry, 2009). At times in higher education, the assumption has been made that students know how to obtain the resources they need to be successful, how to prioritize, and how to plan their educational programs. Across all sectors of higher education, more needs to be done to increase persistence in AAMCS (Walsh, Larsen, & Parry, 2009).

groups, are less likely to attain a degree (Hunt, Carruthers, Callan, & Ewell, 2006; Haycock, 2006; Tinto, 2008). AAMCS afforded the opportunity of enrolling in higher education institutions are oftentimes placed into remediation programs, which are not part of the general education requirements and do not count towards program completion, adding another barrier for students to overcome. Also, the lack of parental involvement, and Afrocentric curriculum, or racial micro-aggressions can impact AAMCS desire to persist and complete at a post-secondary institution.

Student engagement is an imperative factor proven to impact persistence and completion rates of college students. Important indicators of student engagement include (a) hiring practices of faculty and instructors at institutes of higher education, (b) curriculum, and (c) student support services to encourage students to engage in activities within and outside of the classroom all have an impact on their educational experiences (Harper & Quaye, 2009). Engagement in and out of the classroom can have a direct impact on institutional responsiveness and could lead to an increase in numbers of AAMCS who will earn a post-secondary credential. Tinto's (1993) research revealed a number of reasons undergraduate students are not retained including the fact that students feel no connection with faculty, fellow students, and staff. Astin (1982) reported that the environment at post-secondary institutions should promote healthy and supportive relationships with faculty, fellow students, and staff, while at the same time strengthening the integration of social and academic engagement. Student support services and programs can impact AAMCS' social and academic achievement at an institution. Although there are equity and retention programs assisting students with specialized needs, it is important to assess and understand if the institutional

3

responsiveness of current programs and services offered are meeting the needs of AAMCS at higher educational institutions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to explore success factors AAMCS considered to have an effect on their academic success in higher education. Rather than examine all the reasons for attrition, this researcher investigated the institutional responsiveness of their collegiate experiences and what can be learned from African American males who are aspiring to persist to a credential. This study had a particular focus on the students' perceptions of programs or services missing at the institution that would have supported them to fulfill their educational journey. The study explored the challenges and barriers perceived by AAMCS which had a direct impact on their educational journey. An additional purpose of this investigation was to identify not only student needs, but also to highlight the need to develop a theoretical framework by which to examine institutional responsiveness for colleges and universities to ensure AAMCS leaders are employed by the college, evidence-based programs are established, and organizations exist for AAMCS.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

African American Male College Student (AAMCS**):** An individual college student who identifies himself as an African American or Black (Merriam-Webster n.d).

Afrocentric Curriculum: Structured curriculum that encompasses African's philosophical worldview as the paradigm to view culture, behaviors, and African heritage (Akoto, 1992).

Institutional Responsiveness: A measure of the degree to which colleges and universities are internally focused and responding to the needs of the student body, and the community they serve (Kerr, 2001).

Persistence: Successful completion of academic program (Hagedorn, 2005).

Psychohistory: The study of historical events using psychological and psychoanalytic methods (Merriam-Webster n.d).

Micro-Aggressions: A subtle exchange as well as "verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color" (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, p. 271).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research study was designed to examine and construct a fuller understanding of the institutional responsiveness to African American males and to understand the perceptions of factors that influenced their academic achievement while enrolled in an institution of higher education.

The knowledge gained from this research bestowed a better understanding of the perceptions, and experiences of AAMCS. The understandings built are currently being utilized to determine programmatically what needs to be implemented to increase AAMCS engagement and persistent rates on the researcher's campus.

- RQ 1: What student support services are available to African American male college students in and outside the classroom?

- RQ 2: What obstacles do African American male college students encounter while attending a post-secondary institution?

- RQ 3: Who provided support for your college aspirations and in what way?

- RQ 4: How has the institution responded to the support and services needed to help all students succeed?

- RQ 5: What evidence-based programs have been designed specifically for AAMCS?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Miles and Huberman (1994) defined a conceptual framework "as a visual or written product, one that explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied—the key factors, concepts, or variables—and the presumed relationships among them" (p. 18). The conceptual framework for this study was based on Tinto (1993), who published 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" (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003, p. 7). Tinto's model emphasized the need to understand the relationship between student involvement and its impact on persistence. Academic integration includes 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 that:

> 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. (Tinto, 1987, 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 critical factors in achieving college success outcomes. Grayson and Grayson (2003) provided the

6

following comparison as an example of a student who may not persist: a student from a disadvantaged background with low educational goals and socioeconomic 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 completion between White and African American students at post-secondary institutions. Their results revealed that 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 researchers explained that non-cognitive factors can be examined and reflected in the encouragement and support AAMCS receive within a campus climate. Additionally, Tracey and Sedlacek reported that for AAMCS, interactive experiences with faculty and the support received from faculty help increase self-esteem.

ASSUMPTIONS, SCOPE, AND LIMITATIONS

There were two assumptions made when considering potential confounding factors including that potential bias was minimized through research design that included triangulation of perceptions and themes that emerged. In addition, the researcher assumed that the focus group participants responded honestly to the guiding questions.

The scope of the study is limited to all full- and part-time, degree-seeking undergraduate students regardless of age at a public two-year Midwestern, urban institution of higher education. The results cannot be generalized beyond the scope of this study.

As with all research, the present study will have limitations. There were a limited number of AAMCS who were enrolled at the research institution. The researcher only conducts focus groups of AAMCS who had persisted and did not have an opportunity to gather the perspectives of AAMCS who did not persist. The information provided by participants who did not persist may have provided important insights that differ from those provided by students who persisted. A second limitation was that the study included male participants from only one institution.

METHODOLOGICAL BIASES

The research study focused on AAMCS currently enrolled at a Midwestern community college. The results of this study may not be reflective of all African American male undergraduate students or those enrolled at other post-secondary institutions. The researcher conducted a focus group session with students who participate in the African American Male Initiative (AAMI) already in place at the research institution, not all AAMCS participate with the initiative. 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.

PROFESSIONAL AND THEORETICAL BIASES

The research will likely be predisposed by the researcher's ontological stance, or values about the essence of the phenomenon, as well as the epistemological stance, or beliefs about how knowledge is constructed. Epistemological stance relates to how knowledgeable the researcher is about the subject matter (Schwandt, 2000). The researcher believes there are multiple realities possible and not simply one truth that can be defined fully through experimental research designs. The researcher is a constructivist and believes it is possible to construct new knowledge by describing and interpreting the lived experiences of others. The researcher believes that knowledge is created and that humans can generate new knowledge and meanings from their own experiences. The qualitative methods the researcher utilized in the study served as evidence of this belief.

PERSONAL BIASES

A personal bias was my gender—I am an African American female. It is possible that participants in the study might have more easily related to someone of the same gender. The researcher might not have been able to make the participants feel comfortable discussing private or negative perceptions related to their educational experiences. If more time were available, the level of trust built between participants and the researcher may have led to fuller and more truthful responses during focus group discussions. Due to this possible limiting factor, the researcher's data might contain more superficial participant perceptions; participants' hesitation may have influenced the themes that emerged during the study.

As an African American female, the researcher realizes the potential for biases and opinions on the subject matter. It will be very important for the researcher to not allow personal experiences and opinions to impact the direction of the study and the data collected, or data being analyzed. The researcher will challenge biases by minimizing "to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things," to explain how in phenomenological research a researcher must put aside his or her own understanding, to become free from suppositions (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). It is important to note the researcher's possible biases to the interpretive process. There are at least three: (a) the researcher is an African American woman, and as a result of being in a marginalized group is likely to view the world through the lens of social justice; (b) The researcher is an alumni of an urban Midwestern university. Therefore, the researcher holds previously developed assumptions that had to set aside in order to provide interpretations that were as objective as possible, and (c) The researcher is a professional in higher education and as a result has previously constructed knowledge and opinions regarding institutional responsiveness to helping AAMCS to degree completion.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There is a paucity of higher education research that explores numbers of AAMCS who earn a post-secondary credential. This study seeks to deepen the understanding of the lived experiences of AAMCS and how the institution responded to their needs. Concerns around retention and persistence among AAMCS have been minimized for decades, with no sense of urgency from colleges and universities. There has been limited attention on establishing

programs for this marginalized population. There were also a number of programs that were established that sought to expand college enrollment for at-risk and underrepresented populations. Programs such as Young Scholars, Upward Bound, and Brother to Brother have supported thousands of students but, due to their programmatic thrust, cannot recruit a specific race. According to the research, there are mixed thoughts regarding the effectiveness of programs for specific marginalized populations of students, and if the programs actually lead to increased course and degree completion. Student support service programs targeting a specific population were most effective Gandara (2001). Therefore, a formal program dedicated to helping AAMCS complete a post-secondary credential could be instrumental for all colleges and universities.

SUMMARY

AAMCS are not retained and do not persist when compared to White students. AAMCS also display a lower retention and persistence rate compared to African American females. Chapter One provided an introduction to the study through discussion of the following topics: (a) research problem, (b) definition of terms, (c) research questions, (d) assumptions, scope, and limitations, (e) researcher positioning, biases, ethics, and (f) the significance of the study. Chapter Two includes a review of the professional literature discussing studies related to the research questions. These topics include the investigation's theoretical framework, opportunities and barriers, and student support services that have an impact on the educational experiences and outcomes of AAMCS.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was threefold: first to explore

challenges and barriers perceived by African American male college students (AAMCS) which

have a direct impact on their educational journey; second to understand the institutional

responsiveness to the needs of this marginalized population of students; and third, giving them

a voice in the reform process. Analyzing the role post-secondary institutions play in directly

affecting AAMCS' educational experiences may aid educators and administers in providing

adequate resources to all students. Statistics show AAMCS have a disproportionately high

chance of failing to obtain a post-secondary credential when compared to other student

populations. With raising attrition and declining degree completion rates, the role of

institutions of higher education in resolving this problem has become even more critical to the

success of AAMCS.

This chapter is divided into two distinct sections. The first section details the

demographic trends of African American males in higher education. Following this section, the

scholarly research regarding AAMCS is reviewed and discussed. Within this discussion, the

research on programs and services utilized by AAMCS and the current research on what factors

lead to AAMCS' failure to persist in higher education are reviewed. Although retention

programs and services are available at most college campuses, AAMCS who enroll at

institutions of higher education may not be receiving sufficient support from those institutions

to encourage and maintain persistence. It is necessary to examine practices and initiatives designed to enhance their academic performance and educational experiences that impact educational outcomes of AAMCS. Higher-education institutions must first assess barriers AAMCS encounter that influence their experience on a college campus. Financial barriers, tutoring, advising, mentoring, racial micro-aggressions, and lack of afro-centric curricula are a few challenges these students face, generally without institutional support and responsiveness.

There are a number of programs that have been established that seek to expand college enrollment for at-risk and underrepresented populations. In order to examine programs and student support services impacting AAMCS' educational journeys, post-secondary institutions must first assess barriers from the lens of AAMCS, and what they experience daily that may impact a successful experience at college. Lack of educational preparedness, life skills, social and emotional coping skills and lack of Afrocentric curricula are a few challenges the members of this marginalized group encounter, and frequently without institutional support and guidance. All the same, if post-secondary institutions establish student support service programs specifically for AAMCS, these programs will complement their educational journey in and outside the classroom, with the end result yielding increased retention, persistence, and credential completion (Hairston, 2013). It is necessary for practitioners and educators to identify challenges and barriers AAMCS face to provide adequate student support services and programs contributing to educational experience and success (Hairston, 2013).

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS RELATED TO AAMCS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The United States of America 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 reforms over the few past

decades, the gap in educational achievement is still massive, especially for AAMCS (Shuford,

2009). Data reported by the U.S. Census Bureau for the 2014-2015 academic year showed that

34% of African American men between the ages of 18 and 24 enrolled in higher education. This

figure is compared to almost 39% of White male counterparts (NCES, 2010). Furthermore, the

U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Data System, Completion Survey

(2007) reported that participation rates for African American men who attended community

colleges were only half the rate for African American females. During the 1980s and 1990s,

there was a considerable increase in AAMCS attending higher-education institutions; however,

they continue to fall behind White and female counterparts in relation to college participation,

retention, persistence, and degree completion (Noguera, 2003).

Data reported by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2015 showed that 35% of African American

men between the ages of 18 and 24 enrolled in higher education. This figure is compared to

almost 42% of White male counterparts (NCES, 2017). Furthermore, the U.S. Department of

Education, Integrated Postsecondary Data System, Completion Survey (2017) reported that

participation rates for African American men who attend community colleges were only half

that of African American females.

Researchers have found that in contrast to other major demographic groups, AAMCS

have the lowest educational outcomes in the U.S. (Palmer, Davis, Moore, & Hilton, 2010).

Specifically, AAMCS have the highest attrition rates and lowest completion rates among all

ethnic groups and genders. Perhaps more alarming is AAMCS 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, AAMCS may not be participating in

higher education at all by the year 2070 (Cross & Slater, 2000). Such conclusions may seem like

predetermined fate for AAMCS, but more recent research focusing on strategies that have led

to some successes of students are being conducted so that policymakers, educators, and

administrators are able to emulate and provide services aiding in AAMCS' educational

advancement (Palmer, Davis, Moore, & Hilton, 2010).

FINANCIAL BARRIERS

At post-secondary institutions, at-risk and underrepresented students have struggled

with financing a college education, especially as tuition and fees are continuously rising but the

funding for students' needs-based aid is not increasing. As reported by President Johnson's

remarks recorded in the minutes of the Higher Education Act of 1965, this law was created and

passed to open the halls of higher education to a diverse set of students that have historically

been underrepresented at postsecondary institutions. Marginalized populations rely on Pell

grants and federal financial aid to be able to participate in post-secondary education. AAMCS

who enroll at post-secondary institutions are typically first generation college students

(Kantrowitz, 2012). According to Kantrowitz (2012), AAMCS accept federal student loans to help

with school, but also with home responsibilities because the students come from low

socioeconomic environments. Federal financial aid cannot keep the same momentum with

rising cost of college tuition and all expenditures that are needed to be successful in college.

According to Pascarella &Terrenzini (2005), financial aid impacts the persistence of community college students, particularly among those with the lowest income.

Data reported by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2011-12 showed that 85% of African American males enrolled in higher education received grants, and 72% received federal loans. This figure is compared to almost 69% of White male counterparts enrolled in higher education received grants, and 56% received federal loans (NCES, 2017). Federal financial aid and student loans are heavily depended on by the AAMCS, but many are reluctant to apply for loans. Due to the lack of federal financial aid, AAMCS are more likely to withdraw from post-secondary institutions (Harper, 2012). Financial support consistently influences persistence among marginalized groups (Radovcic, 2010). Recent studies conducted on African American male community college students found that resilience to adversity and financial support led to persistence (Radovcic, 2010). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation supports efforts for increasing higher education enrollment by increasing available aid resources for minority students. The Foundation also facilitates college access for minority students. These students are susceptible to dropping out because of a lack of financial resources (Ashburn, 2010).

TUTORING

Tutoring is a practice that has been around for some time and is growing in use (Dvorak, 2004). Once a privilege afforded only to the children of the wealthy, tutoring programs are now widely available to students through their schools, churches, and community agencies, as well as through private tutorial services (Claxton, 1991). Today, students at all levels can receive

tutoring to assist them mastering basic skills such as reading and math, complex content such as chemistry or biology, to prepare for tests, and for further enrichment (Dvorak, 2004).

Tutoring services have been and continue to be an important part of academic support programs designed for students. Tutoring programs are designed for at-risk students who are more likely to drop out of college due to inadequate preparation (Rheinheimer, Odeleye, Francois, & Kusorgbor, 2010). Rheinheimer et al. reviewed studies on tutoring programs with specific linkage of tutoring to academic performance. These studies showed that tutoring programs might have had a positive effect on academic performance in specific courses and also may have had a positive impact on students' social environment. Although the results from these studies indicated that a variety of tutoring interventions were beneficial, Rheinheimer et al. (2010), pointed out that the extent of tutoring services that are necessary to produce positive outcomes remains unclear, along with how different tutoring methods yield positive outcomes.

Rheinheimer and McKenzie (2010) in their study, *The Impact of Tutoring on Student Success of Undeclared Students*, examined the impact of tutoring at the college level. These authors used descriptive statistics and t-test comparisons to analyze data from 117 female and 90 male college students who were afforded tutoring based on their final GPA, ACT and SAT scores. The findings showed that students who received tutoring had a lower expectation for withdrawal and a higher expectation for graduation. Nevertheless, tutoring did not necessarily increase GPA.

Other empirical studies have validated a tutoring approach to enhance learning, especially in college students identified as at high risk of failure (Wasik & Slavin, 1993). Adler

(1998), for example, found an increase in the number of parents of college students who were struggling academically turning to one-on-one tutoring services. With the implementation of tutoring in schools, teachers grappled with limited sessions that were insufficient in addressing student needs in tutoring. Teachers spent tutoring sessions clarifying information for students (Moody, Vaughn, & Schumm, 1997). However, one-on-one instruction by trained personnel during classroom hours was a way of ensuring that all students received the necessary reading instruction that they needed to be successful academically. Hence, federal and state lawmakers, as well as educational leaders and policymakers, favored the idea of offering one-on-one instruction to struggling readers. They provided financial support that increased personnel to boost student one-on-one tutoring services.

Research conducted earlier showed that tutoring could be an effective tool for student success (Veerkamp & Kamps, 2007). Tutoring services derive their power from two factors: their capacity to adapt to the learner's cognitive needs and the emotional benefits of the tutoring relationship (Gaustad, 1992). Through tutoring, the elements of instruction can be adapted to the student's pace and level of understanding. The tutor can adjust instruction and cues if the student reactions show a lack of understanding. Constant interaction influences higher levels of participation. Tutors can provide the amount of practice needed to master the task and then move to a more difficult material as the student is ready (Gaustad, 1992). Gaustad went on to explain that tutoring has several emotional benefits for students, especially at-risk students. Tutoring, particularly one-to-one, is free of competition and allows students to set individual goals without comparison to other students. Tutoring sessions allow the students to receive more praise and encouragement; in addition, the tutor has more time to respond to

each student, and thus, the student is more likely to demonstrate progress. Research has

shown that students who receive praise and encouragement tend to have better attitudes

toward learning and their capabilities. Educational researchers such as Graesser, Person, and

Magliano (1995) have advocated for settings that engage students in active learning or problem

solving. Tutoring is an active learning process with tutors acting as role models and facilitators

of the learning process. Popular strategies including tutoring can be provided by faculty, staff,

or student peers or through computer-assisted instruction with tutorial software packages and

supplemental instruction, a more structured tutoring model that is connected directly with a

particular course (Rheinheimer & McKenzie, 2010).

ADVISING

Traditional age college students who are submitting admission applications, especially

those traditionally underserved and academically unprepared, may not know where to look for

or how to access resources needed to thrive in college (Sweeker, Fifolt, & Searby, 2013).

Advising services can connect or direct students to various resources and opportunities

designed to assist students grow and develop. Traditionally, advising was the domain of faculty

who mentored and guided students; however, advising has become increasingly

professionalized in recent decades (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010). Donaldson, McKinney, Lee,

and Pino (2016) conducted an in-depth study at Texas State Community College. The

researchers interviewed first time enrolled students who participated in an intrusive advising

program. According to Donaldson, McKinney, Lee, and Pino (2016), intrusive advising is 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. The major themes that emerged during the study, included the following; (a) students

reported that they benefited from the advising session, (b) students appreciated the mandatory

advising session focused on long term career planning, (c) students perceived that having an

assigned advisor allowed them to build a personalized relationship, and (d) students indicated

that they were given the opportunity for individualized support.

Pascarella and Terrenzini (2005) found that academic advising plays a role in students'

decisions to persist and also affects their chances of credential completion. These researchers

explained that AAMCS who withdrawal from college often do so, due to poor academic advising

experiences as one of the main components affecting degree completion. Intensive advising,

which reduces advisers' caseloads, allowing them to meet more frequently with students and

provide more personalized attention, is another often recommended intervention, though it

can be expensive to implement on a large scale (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2010).

According to Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates (2010), the impact of advising is the most

important component of post-secondary institutions retention efforts. AAMCS' involvement

with academic advising can impact their desire to persist at an institution (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh,

Whitt, & Associates, 2010).

In a study conducted by Vianden and Barlow (2015), they randomly selected a sample of

7,500 undergraduates enrolled at three comprehensive public master's degree-granting

universities in the same Midwestern state. The sample consisted of 1,207 undergraduates who

fully completed the Student University Loyalty Instrument. The study results revealed that

students' perceptions of quality advising had a positive relationship with students' loyalty, an

indicator of retention. However, these researchers pointed out that while retention and satisfaction are important student outcomes, they cannot adequately measure students' learning and development. Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon, & Hawthorne (2013) examined how academic advising influenced student learning outcomes and also the relationship between academic advising and grade point average. However, they did not observe a statistically significant correlation. Erlich and Russ-Eft (2013) used a quasi-experimental design that could not address causality; however, the researchers were able to conclude that academic advising interventions were positively correlated with an increase in students' academic planning.

Smith and Allen (2014) conducted a study in which the participants were enrolled across nine institutions between Spring 2010 and 2011. Participants completed a web-based survey focused on academic advising. The researchers used ANCOVAs to control for other variables that might affect advising learning outcomes. They also examined the students' immediate learning outcomes from advising programs and found that students who contacted advisors often had a clearer educational plan and increased knowledge of support resources available. Unfortunately, these studies relied upon a small sample size and no randomization that resulted in little, to no generalizability to other institutional contexts.

During the late 1990s, many universities implemented advising centers that supported the increase in enrollment and influx of students needing guidance. There are various organizational models for advising (see Tables 1-3) and also different types of advising (see Table 4) across models that have waxed and waned in popularity during the past 30 years. During the early 1990s, the faculty-only advising model was the most widely used across campuses, but its popularity declined during the early 2000s (Tuttle, 2000). The split-model of

advising became more and more popular over time, and in 2017, it was the most widely

implemented organizational model (Bryant, Seaman, & Java, 2017). Habley and Morales (1998)

cautioned that just because the model is the most widely utilized does not mean that the

model is the most effective in achieving advising program goals set by specialized professional

associations, or how effective the program is in meeting the individualized needs of students

enrolled in different types of institutions with vastly divergent student populations and campus

environments. Today the most widely used organizational model of advising is the split model;

however, the split model is also the least likely to be perceived as effective at meeting needs.

Whereas, the self-contained advising model is the most likely to be perceived as being effective

by students (Bryant, Seaman, & Java, 2017).

Table 1: *Seven Advising Models defined in the 1998 NACADA National Survey of Academic Advising*

ADVISING MODEL NAME	ADVISING MODEL DEFINITION
Faculty only	All students are assigned to an instructional faculty member for advising. There is no advising office on the campus.
Supplementary	All students are assigned to an instructional faculty member for advising. There is an advising office that provides general academic information and referral for students, but all advising transactions must be approved by the student's faculty advisor.
Split	There is an advising office that advises a specific group(s) of students (e.g., those who are undecided about a major, underprepared, etc.). All other students are assigned to academic units or faculty for advising.
Dual	Each student has two advisors. A member of the instructional faculty advises the student on matters related to the major. advisor in an advising office advises the student on general requirements, procedures, and policies.

ADVISING MODEL NAME	ADVISING MODEL DEFINITION
Total Intake	Staff in an administrative unit are responsible for advising all students for a specified period of time or until specific requirements have been met. After meeting requirements, students are assigned to a member of the instructional faculty for advising.
Satellite	Each school, college, or division within the institution has established its own approach to advising.
Self-contained	Advising for all students from point of enrollment to point of departure is done by staff in a centralized advising unit.

(*adapted from Habley & Morales (1998) p.35)

Table 2: *Five Advising Models defined in the 2011 NACADA National Survey of Academic Advising*

ADVISING MODEL NAME	ADVISING MODEL DEFINITION
Self-contained	All advising occurs in a center staffed primarily by professional advisors or counselors; faculty may also advise in the center.
Faculty Only	All advising is done by a faculty member, usually in the student's academic discipline.
Shared Supplementary	Professional staff in a center support advisors (usually faculty) by providing resources/training. .
Shared Split	Faculty provide advising in academic discipline while staff are responsible for a subset of students (e.g., undecided, pre-majors).
Total Intake	All incoming students [are] advised in a center; students may be assigned elsewhere later. .

(*adapted from Carlstrom & Miller, 2012, Chapter 5, para. 2)

Table 3: *Four Organizational Models in the 2017 partial duplication of the NACADA 2011 National Survey of Academic Advising*

ADVISING MODEL NAME	ADVISING MODEL DEFINITION
Self-contained	All advising occurs in a center that is staffed primarily by primary-role advisors
Faculty Only	All students are assigned to a department advisor, usually a professor from the student's academic discipline
Supplementary	Students are assigned to a department advisor (usually faculty), but there is a central administrative unit with role advisors to support the department advisors by providing resources and training
Split	Advising is carried out by faculty in their departments, as well as primary-role advisors of an advising center responsible for a particular subset of students (e.g., those who are undecided on a major. Freshmen, those on probation)

(*adapted from Bryant, Seaman, & Java, 2017)

Table 4: *Four Advising Model Definitions in the 2017 partial duplication of the NACADA 2011 National Survey of Academic Advising*

ADVISING MODEL NAME	ADVISING MODEL DEFINITION
Prescriptive	Offer course and degree information and prescribe solutions to academic problems
Developmental	Focus on the whole student, facilitating students' non-cognitive skills
Teaching as Advising	Connect students with who they are, what they are learning, and who they want to become
Intrusive (Proactive)	Incorporate intervention strategies for students who otherwise might not seek advising

(adapted from Carlstrom & Miller, 2012, Chapter 5, para. 2)

MENTORING

AAMCS often have difficulty with a variety of identity, self-esteem, and even racial battle fatigue issues while attending college (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Smith, Allen, and Danley suggested that racial battle fatigue is often demonstrated through frustration, anger, exhaustion, physical avoidance, and emotional withdrawal amongst AAMCS at predominately White institutions. In an attempt to rectify this dilemma, there has been an increasing amount of research conducted on the impact of mentoring relationships on a person's identity and self-esteem (Bonner & Bailey, 2006).

Mentors are individuals who take the time to encourage and motivate students, while demonstrating to their students that, we are in this together (Nasim, Roberts, Harrell & Young, 2005). Sedlecek's (2003) study confirmed the impact of mentoring, showing that AAMCS who receive mentoring are retained on college campuses and show a marked improvement in self-esteem, and stand a better chance of navigating the waters of higher education.

Research reviewed (Sedlacek, Benjamin, Schlosser, L. Z., & Sheu, 2007) also presented several obstacles that repel students of color from receiving mentoring while in college. Some of the obstacles according to these authors were: (a) a lack of African American faculty role models, (b) cultural differences between mentor and students, (c) not understanding the importance of good mentoring to succeed in one's persistence in higher education, and (d) reluctance to enter a cross-race advising or mentoring relationship. Additional research suggested that mentoring directly impacts not only retention but also that there is a lack of faculty-related mentoring for African American students in higher education (Strayhorn &

Seddler, 2009).

Because mentoring has been consistently associated to increased retention, (Harper,

2012), it is further evidence that African American students, and males, in particular, could

benefit from having more African American instructors in the classrooms. However, research

also suggested that it is sometimes difficult for African American faculty members to support

African American students because minority faculty tends to experience some of the same

issues as AAMCS, such as insufficient mentoring and professional development (Sedlacek,

Benjamin, Schlosser, L. Z., & Sheu, 2007). Walsh, Larsen, and Parry (2009), theorized that

students failed to stay in school and to matriculate and graduate not due to lack of mentors or

professors who look like them, but rather a lack of student support services. According to

Walsh, Larsen, and Parry (2009), "Students reported that they preferred" (p. 405) support

mechanisms for academic issues like academic tutors, student mentors' peers in their courses,

pastoral care, career services, and student finances. Students in their first year of study are

more likely to consult their academic tutor either once or twice when compared with students

in their second year.

According to Walsh, Larsen, and Parry (2009) the one concept universities and colleges

must understand is the key element that will affect retention is their support of true student

success. Tinto (1993) argued that an "interactional model of students' retention proposed, the

central factor in students' success is integration with their institution". Tinto suggested that the

critical component involved in keeping students engaged is that students must get involved in

campus interactions outside of the classroom.

EXISTING STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS

One of the challenges facing colleges and universities is how to ensure quality education and assure equitable distribution of educational resources to all students. Therefore, various learning strategies and intervention programs that might potentially equip marginalized students, especially AAMCS, with the needed skills to be successful in school and society have been explored.

Successful programs addressing the needs of AAMCS while preparing them to be successful citizens in society are connected with colleges and universities. Role models and mentors not only have a positive effect on students' completion, but positively affect behavior, attendance, and self-esteem (Wyatt, 2009). There are numerous programs that were established to expand college enrollment for at-risk and underrepresented populations. Many campuses do not have the resources or funding to support programs that are exclusive to marginalized students; however, several such established programs are presented here.

Young Scholars pre-college program prepares first generation college students to be academically ready to pursue higher education. The marginalized population of students are those who are considered to be underrepresented groups of economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse students, and have gifted potential but lack advocates, access, and affirmation. Students are nurtured throughout the school year, with the following learning outcomes open-ended learning experiences, critical and creative thinking skills and global perspectives (Horn, 2015). The program has two goals: (a) to identify students who may not be considered college-bound students and (b) to nurture gifted potential at an early age so that

young scholars will be prepared to engage in challenging the subject matter in higher education (Horn, 2015).

Upward Bound is a federally-funded program for low income and first generation students. The Upward Bound program targets youth between 13 and 19 years of age (grades 9 through 12) who have low academic averages and poor academic performance in school. The purposes of Upward Bound are to (a) combat educational inequities that marginalized, low-income, and first-generation college students' encounter, (b) prepare students academically and socially for higher education, and (c) provide the resources necessary for success in higher education. The goal is to increase the rates at which the targeted students enroll and graduate from postsecondary institutions by providing fundamental support, such as assistance with the college admissions process and support in preparing for college entrance examinations (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). In 2015–16, there were 826 Upward Bound programs in the United States and its territories (United States Department of Education, 2015). Programs, such as Upward Bound, work under the supposition that students who participate in these pre-college programs are better prepared and more likely to complete their educational programs (Strayhorn, 2011).

The Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) program was founded in 1990 by Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe at Georgia Southwestern University. On some campuses, the initiative goes by another the name: Brother 2 Brother. Regardless, the objective is clear: to improve the success of AAMCS. It was established to provide student development intervention and to support AAMCS enrolled at the college. One of the primary goals of SAAB is to assist AAMCS in developing a more complete understanding of their responsibilities as U.S. citizens and

productive members of society. Another initiative of this organization is to provide leadership development and training for the AAMCS. The program offers educational and cultural activities to all student participants and also offers services such as tutoring, career choice planning and counseling, professional development opportunities, community service, and spiritual enrichment. All programs are designed to promote positive thinking and high self-esteem in AAMCS (Student African American Brotherhood, 2018).

The AAMI program exists in name at a number of institutions; however, the original AAMI was created at Texas Southern University in 1990. The AAMI was developed to encourage a culturally relevant, holistic intervention and support system aimed at improving the life and academic outcomes for AAMCS. The program's goals are to promote the value of education and provide workshops and other events that showcase successful role models for young AAMCS. This program incorporates community leaders and successful African American businessmen to inspire the students through their stories and successes, and also to help them understand their capabilities and talents (Brooms, 2016). The AAMI is individualized and tailored to the needs of each student.

RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Traditional forms of racism, microaggressions, have a large influence on the psyche and can cause physical, emotional, and spiritual distress. In many cases, this contributes to why persons of color have feelings of anger, hostility and/or distress when encountering a microaggression (Sue, 2010). Within African American communities, microaggressions started in the form of socially constructed categories of race and superiority versus inferiority

29

(Solózarno, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). In U.S. history people of color have been looked upon as

second-class citizens and inferior to their White counterparts. Many times low expectations for

people of color held by teachers, family members, or society members, can cause

microaggressions to occur because someone thought it was interesting that a person of color

was educated (Solózarno, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Microaggressions for African American

students' may come in the form of White students perceptions of how they got to where they

are. In a White students mind their perception of African American students is enrolled in

college because of affirmative action and quotas and nothing else. This stems from a long

history of misrepresentation of the true meaning of affirmative action (Solózarno, Ceja, &

Yosso, 2000).

Racial microaggressions occur within the American education system and adversely

affect the psychological wellbeing of marginalized students (Hernandez, Carranza, & Almeida,

2010). Racial microaggressions are "the subtle and commonplace exchanges that somehow

convey insulting or demeaning messages to people of color" (Constantine, 2007, p. 2). The

effects of racial microaggressions and overt racism are important factors within the

psychohistory of AAMCS within education. Psychohistory includes violence, threats, and

legislation that persecuted African Americans, which contributes to current attitudes about

education and low enrollment in higher education (Thompson, Gorin Obeidat & Chen, 2006).

Cuyjet (2006) also asserted that Black males have to overcome the pressure of representing

their entire race in the classroom at predominantly White institutions. This commonly takes

place in the form of stereotypes known as microaggressions, which Sue (2010) defines as

common exchanges that send a disparaging message to the receiver based on the group they

30

belong to. Microaggressions can be filled with racial overtones that reference *ghetto* or *thug*, terms that have been used frequently in the media to describe Black males. Enquiring if the tall Black male on campus is an athlete or suggesting that one is familiar with a popular Black musician because of their race is a form of microaggression.

The media has portrayed African Americans and especially African American men as criminals, so these students come to campus with a preconceived notion of who they are perceived to be, versus who they really are (McCabe, 2009). For example, more often than not African American men are portrayed in the news as gangsters, or unintelligent men who wear their pants down to their ankles and fight. This is also the perception of who they will be in college and this perception is accepted as truth when it is not.

Oftentimes African Americans find that within the classroom they are looked to as the spokesperson for their race. Whenever a situation arises that deals with race it is expected they have the answers because they are part of the racial group (McCabe, 2009). It is also expected that their experience is the same as every other marginalized minority, which is rarely the case. McCabe (2009) noted, "alienating classroom experiences were reported most frequently to me by African American women followed by Latinas, and not very frequently by Latinos, and Black men" (p. 143), which suggests that the experience of being singled out as a spokesperson in this research was different for each population.

For many students, microaggressions become tiring to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Because of microaggressions students on college campuses may feel frustrated, burnt out, and isolated (McCabe, 2009). Microaggression can also lead to self-doubt, or not having the confidence in themselves that they can succeed. Solózarno, Ceja, and Yosso, (2000) reported,

"several students commented that racial microaggressions had affected their academic performance in overt ways such as pushing them to drop a class, changing their major and even leaving the university to attend school elsewhere" (p. 69).

African American male college students seem to encounter racial microaggression more frequently through invisibility on campus; dissimilar treatment by faculty; and negative stereotypical perceptions from fellow students, administrators, and faculty members in a college environment (Solórzano Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Oftentimes, racial microaggression occurs in faculty-student interactions. In classroom settings, AAMCS tend to be marginalized, rendered invisible, or put under strict surveillance based on societal stereotypes (Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007). The academic performance and degree completion of AAMCS are impacted based on the behaviors and attitudes of faculty members. 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 AAMCS' perceptions of their educational environment, from being supportive to being an extremely stressful, exhausting, uncomfortable, and frustrating academic climate (Brown, Williams, Jackson, Neighbors, Torres, Sellers, & Brown, 1999). Racial Microaggression could be one of many factors influencing AAMCS' desire to persist to degree completion due to lack of institutional responsiveness.

AFROCENTRIC CURRICULA

African American scholars assert Afrocentric curricula are culturally relevant, yet it appears to be avoided by mainstream scholars, who establish policies for post-secondary

curricula and standards (Congress & Gonzales, 2012). Afrocentric curricula are structured from

the center of African history. Akoto (1992) endorsed Asante's (1991) concept by stating,

> Afrocentricity as a quality of thought and practice is rooted in the cultural image and
> human interests of African people. In education, centricity refers to perspective that
> involves locating students within the context of their own cultural references so that
> they can relate socially and psychologically to other cultural perspectives.... The centrist
> paradigm is supported by research showing that the most productive method of
> teaching any student is to place his or her group within the center of the context of
> knowledge. (pp. 5-6)

It is essential for AAMCS to understand from where their heritage originated in order to be

successful in college and beyond (Akoto, 1992).

Utilizing Cross's (1991) Nigrescence theory can help put into context the issues that can

happen developmentally with a Black student regarding their racial identity in college. As post-

secondary institutions move towards attracting a more AAMCS, the administration should be

aware of the different stages of Black identity development. Nigrescence can serve as a

reference and help assess the impact of Black students' relationships with their peers, faculty,

and staff. Cross's nigrescence model (1971) introduced five stages of identity development:

pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-

commitment. In the revised nigrescence model, Cross (1991) merged the internalization and

internalization-commitment stages together into internalization. The most recent revision of

the nigrescence model occurred in 2001, and is referred to as the expanded nigrescence model.

The expanded nigrescence model groups racial identity attitudes into three categories: pre-

encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Worrell, Cross, &

Vandiver, 2001). Pre-encounter is low-salience and anti-Black attitudes and include

assimilation, miseducation, and self-hatred. Immersion-emersion is negative experiences with

Whites and interest in all things Black, and includes anti-White and intense Black involvement. Internalization is the openness to cultures and worldviews and includes: Afrocentric, bicultural, and multicultural identities. The expanded nigrescence model identifies multiple identities within each stage, it acknowledges individual racial identity is not singular (Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Worrell et al., 2001).

Culture is a key concept when developing culturally relevant curricula. Relevant refers to curricula having a significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand, but what makes it relevant is how congruent the curricula is to people's culture. Sampson and Garrison's (2011) research showed African Americans bring to the education setting cultural traditions, language, and an African worldview. These factors must be fully considered if educators are to be successful in encouraging African Americans to take part in their own re-education and recovery, which makes the curricula relevant.

Culturally-relevant curricula allow individuals' culture, beliefs, values, and lived experiences to emerge during reflective discourse. Such material permits African Americans to see themselves, encourages discourse, and enhances the process of healing (Congress & Gonzales, 2012). A culturally-relevant curriculum speaks to the ability of the curriculum to relate to the personal experiences of particular ethnic groups. By being a bridge to connect to the particular ethnic groups' language, the ethical, moral, and spiritual principles of his or her tradition promotes a healthy self-concept, interdependence, and avoids cultural genocide. This also stimulates self and group-affirmation that conveys self-validation. Some African-centered practitioners believe and make claims that the curricula enable people to overcome injustice, poverty, and fear (Akoto, 1992). This is consistent with Freire's (1970) perception of education,

34

which suggested education should be a constant process for the liberation of human beings.

According to Freire (1970), learners need to discover themselves, as well as to know the social

problems that afflicted them. Freire did not see education simply as a means toward mastering

academic standards of schooling or toward professionalization. In other words the need to

encourage people to participate in their process of immersion into public life by becoming

engaged in society as a whole (Freire, 1970).

Lived experiences and culture remain the most fundamental element of culturally-

relevant curricula because people in general construct understandings more from lived

experiences through cultural norms that are concrete and pertinent to their daily existence

(Congress & Gonzales, 2012). In other words, cultural experiences that include factors such as

race, gender, and class are central components of relevant curricula that encourage, support,

and inspire learning in and across cultural groups. According to Akoto (1992), a culturally-

relevant curriculum entails allowing African American men to connect beyond individual desires

by providing an opportunity to promote leadership that is rooted in self-determination. That

self-determination reinforces the positive facets of being African while at the same time

acknowledging their creator as they know it (Akoto, 1992). A measure of African centered

identity, the Africentrism Scale, was developed by Grills and Logshore (1996) to assess some of

the elements of an African centered ideology (i.e. spirituality, collective and holistic orientation,

harmony with nature).

> African Americans endorse attitudes based on the principles of the *Nguzo Saba* (also
> used as the seven principles of Kwanzaa). Those principles are umoja (unity),
> kujichagulia (self- determination), ujima (collective work and responsibility), ujamaa
> (cooperative economics), kuumba (creativity), nia (purpose), and imani (faith) (Karenga,

1977). An Afrocentric curriculum affirms self-validation which is normally denied or limited in curricula. (pp. 30-33)

Mental health illnesses among college students are on the rise. In fact, research conducted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (2017) indicated that one in four college students have a diagnosable illness, 40% do not seek help, 80% feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities, and 50% have been so anxious that they struggled in school. Of the many mental health illnesses prevalent amongst college students, depression is consistently ranked as one of the most common. Research conducted by Mental Health America (2013) concluded that 63% of African Americans believe that depression is a personal weakness, and only 31% of African Americans believed that depression was a health problem. Anxiety and depression are the two most common mental health disorders in the U.S. according to the Centers for Disease Control (2014). Lifetime prevalence rates for depression are higher for women (9.3%) than for men (5.8%), and slightly lower among Blacks (4.57%)and Hispanics (5.17%) (Centers for Disease Control, 2014).

The lack of culturally relevant curricula in education is problematic as it relates to working with African-American people. One of the main objectives of culturally-relevant curricula is to serve in part to reconnect, affirm, and validate the client's or student's cultural identity. This is key to legitimizing health care providers in the view of the client, and this is one of the strong indicators of their willingness to pursue mental health services (Akoto, 1992). Practitioners who used culturally relevant curricula appear to be cognizant of the psychological or psycho-cultural dimensions that marginalized minorities traditionally face. Culturally relevant curricula can address the misdiagnosis of African American men in many cases, but not all.

Constantine and Derald (2005) suggested race, ethnicity, and cultural identity are critical salient pillars of culturally-relevant curricula. If African Americans are to be successful in the curricula, it must be wrapped around these three salient pillars. Firstly, culturally-relevant curricula should develop authentic knowledge of self that is vital and essential to offering clarity on misconceptions of what it means to be an African American man. Secondly, it should also encourage the development of a better self-concept. Thirdly, culturally-relevant curricula allow African American men the opportunity to examine their reality, sociohistorical, political, and economic antecedents through discourse that is normally relegated or negated as a typically oppositional worldview. The examining of their lived experiences provides a framework that creates and affirms the symbolic relationship of a teacher providing a voice for the learner Constantine and Derald (2005).

SUMMARY

There has been a tremendous effort to retain students and increase graduation rates at higher educational institutions. Discussions and initial steps have been taken to improve retention and completion rates of AAMCS. Research reviewed thus far in the relevant professional literature showed that students who enrolled in the first term often return for the second term (Journal of African Americans in Higher Education 2010).

In this chapter, academic barriers such as college access, student involvement, and the relationship between student and teacher at the college level, provided a degree of understanding of the factors that inhibit the academic success of African American students in college. In addition, environmental factors determined student access to college funding,

facilities, and faculty, while input variables determined or influenced the extent of student

involvement, and outcome variables such as GPA, retention rate, and graduation rate were

indicators of student success: "Graduation rates play an important role in measuring the

success of affirmative action programs" (Journal of African Americans in Higher Education,

2010, p. 16).

The difference between degree completion and persistence rates of African American

females and males continues to grow. It is imperative for post-secondary institutions to assess

what factors contributed to the African American female educational attainment and

potentially replicate these findings. Assessment of effective strategies, student support

services, or programs used to engage AAMCS is equally important. Barriers and challenges

AAMCS encounter need to be recognized in order for colleges and universities to provide

adequate services to them. Researchers have identified only a few potential barriers that seem

to affect persistence rate of AAMCS including financial aid, advising, tutoring, mentoring, and

under-preparedness. Once leaders of post-secondary institutions understand the needs and

challenges of AAMCS on their campuses, they will be able to tailor and implement programs

and services to provide students with specific resources and strategies for academic success.

Unfortunately, for African Americans, it is not uncommon for experts in general to

overlook the fact that they are an oppressed people. It is especially problematic for oppressed

people when the solution to their problems came from the same ethnic group that oppressed

them and started the downward spiral (Walsh et al., 2009). This is a dilemma for African

Americans because the body of research is conducted and reported almost exclusively by

White, male, Judeo-Christians in the field of education that ultimately dictates the theory,

criteria, and methodology used to correct problems in the African American community (Walsh et al., 2009). One concept university and college leaders must understand is the key element that will affect retention is their support of true student success. Supporting AAMCS, while discussing experiences of racial microaggressions may appear to be a difficult. Often administrators, staff, and faculty in helping roles, fear saying the wrong thing or increasing the hurt felt in the situation. Employees at the institution have the power to influence the frequency of racial microaggressive acts.

Chapter Three explains the research design and methodology used in this study. Details of the study design, demographics, and procedures for investigating institutional responsiveness to African American male college students earning a post-secondary credential are specifically addressed.

Chapter Three: Methodology

INTRODUCTION

This qualitative investigation was designed to explore two distinct phenomenon related to retention and completion of African American male college students (AAMCS). The first is the perceived challenges and barriers faced by AAMCS during their own lived educational journeys, and how or if those challenges or barriers had a direct impact on their desire to persist. The second phenomenon of interest was the institutional responsiveness to the support and service needs of a marginalized population of students. Analyzing the role post-secondary institutions play in directly affecting AAMCS' educational experiences can help educators and administers provide adequate resources to all students so that they can reach their educational goals.

There are several research studies supporting the theory that retention services and programs affect students' success. (Evans et al., 2009; Kuh et al., 2006; Mahoney, 1998). However, there is limited research on which specific components of the programs and services AAMCS utilize that directly impact their persistence and ultimately to degree completion. This researcher sought to conduct an investigation that could add to the limited professional knowledge regarding this critical topic. Chapter Three describes the following elements and procedures utilized in this study including the (a) research design, (b) population and sample, (c) instrumentation and data collection, (d) data analysis procedures, and (e) limitations. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, this chapter also depicts the researcher's efforts to establish the following;

- credibility

- dependability,

- trustworthiness,

- confirmability, and;

- transferability

These elements must be addressed in a qualitative study, as they replace validity, reliability,

and generalizability that are addressed in experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational,

survey or other quantitative research designs.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The location selected for the current study was a Midwestern urban two-year post-

secondary institution, because of its enrollment of a sufficient number of AAMCS and its

offering limited academic resources to support persistence and retention for on-time college

completion. Because this study focused on the academic and educational experiences of

AAMCS in higher education, conducting a single-site phenomenological study was considered

the best approach to analyze and understand AAMCS' perspectives: "The basic purpose of

phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the

universal essence (a "grasp of the very nature of the thing," van Manen, 1990, p. 177).

Moustakas (1994), in his work, *Phenomenological Research Methods*, distinguished

phenomenological research design from other qualitative methods.

> Phenomenology is the first method of knowledge because it begins with things
> themselves; it is also the final court of appeal. Phenomenology, step by step, attempts
> to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment, setting aside presuppositions,
> and reaching a transcendental state of freshness and openness, a readiness to see in an
> unfettered way, not threatened by customs, beliefs, and prejudices of normal science,

by the habits of the natural world or by knowledge based on un-reflected everyday experience. (p. 41)

Focus groups use moderators to elicit perspectives or opinions on a particular topic using a selection of people (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). This type of research design can quickly identify issues related to the subject matter and allow participants to respond immediately to the interview protocol. This design also allows the researcher to observe participants' emotional behavior as it relates to the topic and analyze participants' reactions firsthand. One drawback to focus groups is longer interview discussions, which may lead to expression or analysis of unrelated issues causing bias in the research reporting (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

Qualitative research design studies allow the researcher to utilize methods that question the social and cultural experiences of individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon. (Merriam, 2001). A phenomenological study was determined the best approach to fully understand AAMCS' perspectives of their educational experiences attending a two-year institution. In qualitative research, the role of the qualitative researcher is to serve as an instrument, gathering data to ensure an objective viewpoint (Merriam, 2001). The investigator in this study has had a range of educational and professional positions, including 11 years of experience working at a Midwestern urban two-year post-secondary institution.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population of the study was all African American male college students in the U.S. The study sample was made up of individuals who are a small subset of the population. The sampling frame or target population of this investigation was African American male students

enrolled at a two-year college located in a large city in the Midwest. Participants were recruited from students who were enrolled in the two-year post-secondary institution that served as the research site. This is an example of convenience sampling, in that, the participants were all enrolled at the researcher's work site and experienced the phenomenon of interest. Table 5 provides limited demographic information regarding the participants. This information may be helpful during the data analysis phase of the study.

Table 5: *GPA, Program Enrollment, and Federal Financial Aid*

STUDENT #	PROGRAM	GPA	RECEIVES FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID
1	Hospitality Management and Tourism	3.00	Yes
2	Business Management	1.80	Yes
3	Business Management- Entrepreneurship	2.80	Yes
4	Liberal Arts & Science	1.60	Yes
5	Business Administration	2.00	Yes
6	Liberal Arts & Science	1.80	Yes
7	Liberal Arts & Science	2.50	No
8	Creative Writing	2.60	Yes
9	Fire Fighting	0.38	Yes
10	Liberal Arts & Science	3.20	Yes
11	Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement	3.60	Yes
12	Biology	3.30	Yes
13	Sociology	2.34	No
14	Liberal Arts & Sciences	2.75	Yes

Student #	Program	GPA	Receives Federal Financial Aid
		$m = 2.40$	85% receive federal financial aid

Five of the participants are pursuing Associates' of Arts & Science degrees, and four are pursuing Associates' degrees related to business. Other majors included pursuing Associates' degrees in creative writing, fire-fighting, criminal justice/law enforcement, biology, and sociology. The average participant GPA is 2.40, with a range of .036 to 3.60. Only two of the participants do not receive any financial aid; 85% receive federal financial aid. The average participants' age is 30.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS' APPROVAL

Approvals were requested and received by both the researcher's university Institutional Review Board (IRB), as well as the research site's IRB to conduct the focus group interview. Next, the researcher posted flyers around the campus asking for volunteers for the focus group interview. The specific information regarding the date, location, and time was posted on the recruiting flyer (see Appendix A). The participants completed the informed consent document (see Appendix B) and received copies for their records. In addition, the consent document addressed the ability to withdraw from participating in the investigation at any time. To ensure an adequate return of student consent forms, completion of the forms occurred during the initial meeting and after the participants willingly agreed to participate in the study. The researcher ensured that the confidentiality of the participants was maintained by using pseudonyms.

INSTRUMENTATION

Qualitative data were collected using a focus group interview. At the outset of the study, the researcher held a focus group interview involving 14 participants. The focus group interview protocol consisted of 13 open-ended questions that supported the study's five research questions. These guiding questions (see Appendix C) regarding lived experiences of African American male students were asked in order to gather their perceptions of factors influencing their academic achievement in an institution of higher education. These questions were constructed with neutral language that was not likely to influence participant responses. The interview protocol questions also encouraged follow-up and probing for clarification and extension of responses. Due to time constraints and the need to ask clarifying questions, the researcher was only able to ask 11 of the 13 questions. The Participant responses became the qualitative data that were analyzed and coded to identify any themes that might emerge.

A second data collection technique involved the collection of institutional documents, manuals, and other artifacts that related to any of the following topics.

- Course or program sequencing

- Advising procedures and responsibilities

- Student resources and supports available on campus including academic, social, emotional, or physical health needs

- Student activities and organizations on campus; opportunities for student engagement outside of the classroom

- Financial aid procedures and scholarship opportunities

This collection of documents and artifacts were important in the information gathered and analyzed building credibility in the results.

DOCUMENTATION OF EMERGENT FIELD METHOD

A final rigor check of biases that were employed in the study was a written field journal that carefully described the entire study process along the way. The researcher took the time prior to embarking on the investigation to reflect on personal beliefs, assumptions, and worldviews and how these might influence decision-making relative to all aspects of the study. The researcher reviewed these journal entries at least once during each cycle of data collection, analysis, and member-checking in an attempt to keep the content of reflections and their possible impact at the forefront. Doing so reminded the researcher of the necessity to set aside biases when posing pre-determined questions and follow-up probes while conducting focus group interviews. The content of the field journal entries will also be used in the data analysis process when creating categories and codes, interpreting data, and identifying themes (Merriam, 1998).

DATA ANALYSIS

The focus group interview was audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and organized by the researcher. Audiotapes and printed transcripts were stored in a locked file cabinet for security. Following the collection process, data were analyzed, and coded for the purpose of identifying emergent themes. Creswell (2007) noted that significant themes should be grouped into "meaning units" or themes. Once the potential codes/themes surfaced, the researcher noted "what" the participants' experienced when enrolled at the post-secondary institution,

and included "textural descriptions" with verbatim examples. Also, the researcher cited the

verbatim examples in order to describe "how" the experiences shaped the participants'

educational journeys (Creswell, 2007, p. 159). The researcher will try to stay low inference in

the coding, so it reflects more of the language and meaning making structure of the

participants. The emergent themes will be more thematic and presented in the form of (a)

common themes across all study participants, and (b) themes for each sub-group. The

researcher listed similar themes together, categorizing them based upon their relation to

awareness of programs and student support services, challenges and barriers encountered,

perceptions of faculty, involvement on campus, and level of satisfaction with programs and

student support services at the research institution.

CREDIBILITY

The researcher employed a number of strategies to establish the credibility of the

investigation and the results. Yin (2003) explained the importance of relying on well-established

research methods, as well as describing them in sufficient detail as one method for building

credibility in a qualitative study. The researcher utilized focus group interviews for data

collection and a field journal to record all decisions made, procedures implemented, and

personal reflections throughout the process. Institutional documents and artifacts related to

the research questions posed were gathered and analyzed. The researcher collaborated with

peers, and professors regarding the assumptions made by the investigator, whose closeness to

the project somewhat inhibited her ability to view the date objectively (Yin, 2003).

The use of three data collection techniques built credibility by involving the triangulation of information from a variety of sources and situations. Assuring the confidentiality of participant's responses within individual interviews increased the likelihood that subjects' were honest in relaying their perceptions and experiences at the research institution. Additional methods of establishing credibility in the study included the use of member-checking, peer scrutiny, construction of a thick, rich description, and examination of previous research findings (Merriam, 1998).

DEPENDABILITY

Lincoln and Guba (2000) described dependability in qualitative research as closely related to the notion of reliability. These authors further emphasized inquiry audit as one measure that enhanced the dependability of qualitative research. The audits were completed by reviewing the detailed record of the decisions made before and during the research. The idea of dependability emphasized the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurred. In the field journal, the researcher described the changes that occurred in the setting and how the changes affected the way the researcher approached the study.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

A qualitative research study must focus on garnering the reader's confidence in the investigator's insights and conclusions as trustworthy and authentic (Merriam, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggested that readers might ask the following questions as they relate to a study's finding. Are the findings "sufficiently authentic… that I may trust myself in acting on

their implications? More to the point, would I feel sufficiently secure about these findings to construct social policy or legislation based on them?" (p. 178).

Merriam (1998) identified nine strategies to build the reader's confidence in the trustworthiness of the author's interpretive findings. Merriam's nine strategies include:

1. triangulation

2. peer scrutiny

3. thick, rich description

4. audit trail

5. evolving the researcher's biases

6. lasting examination inside the study location

7. participation in study design

8. member-checking

9. negative case analysis

The researcher described items one through five in the establishment of credibility and dependability. The remaining strategies are: (a) lasting examination inside the study location, (b) participation in study design, (c) member-checking, and (d) negative case study analysis. Lasting examination inside the study location within the research site was not possible because of the short timeline for completion of the study. However, this strategy may be counter-balanced due to the long-term employment of the investigator within the research institution. Member-checking procedures were employed during the data collection period and also at the end. The study subjects' feedback was incorporated into the summary of results (Merriam, 1998).

As a final confidence-building strategy, negative case analysis was utilized, and a particular effort was made to uncover specific examples or situations that did support the emerging themes (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 2009). The researcher attempted to identify possible reasons underlying any divergent perceptions and experiences.

CONFIRMABILITY

According to Patton (1990), confirmability is related to the researcher's attempts to lend any objectivity possible to the analysis of data and formulation of results in a qualitative study. Patton explained the criticality of ensuring that the participants' perceptions and experiences are emphasized within the report, rather than those of the researcher. An audit trail, careful documentation of the procedures used, and the decisions made by the researcher in a field journal allowed for a thorough description of the processes in the research project.

TRANSFERABILITY

In order to offer readers abundant and sufficient information on which they could base a comparison of their own situations or contexts with those in the study, the researcher strived to write a thorough and detailed description.

Particular attention was given to the contexts within which the subjects experienced the phenomenon of challenges and barriers faced by African American male college students, along with institutional responsiveness for marginalized populations (Yin, 2003). Development of thick, rich descriptions was undertaken to aid readers in determining whether or not the findings reported could be transferrable to their own experiences or contexts (Merriam, 2009).

SUMMARY

The qualitative research design allowed the researcher to explore the challenges and barriers perceived by AAMCS that had a direct impact on their educational journey. As well as, to understand the institutional responsiveness to the needs of this marginalized population of students. Analyzing the role post-secondary institutions play in directly affecting AAMCS' educational experiences can help educators and administers provide adequate resources to students. For this particular study, a phenomenological approach was considered the most appropriate. The focus group interview protocol consisted of 13 questions. Research data were transcribed, organized, and coded to find common themes and patterns that emerged in the focus group interview data.

Chapter Four: Results and Findings

INTRODUCTION

This qualitative phenomenological research design allowed the researcher (a) to explore factors AAMCS perceived as contributors to their academic success, (b) to develop an understanding of the institutional responsiveness to the needs of this marginalized population of students, and (c) to give students a voice in the reform process. This study was guided by the following overarching research questions (RQ):

- RQ 1: What student support services are available to African American male college students in and outside the classroom?

- RQ 2: What obstacles do African American male college students encounter while attending a post-secondary institution?

- RQ 3: Who provided support for AAMCS college aspirations and in what way?

- RQ 4: How has the institution responded to the support and services needed to help all students succeed?

- RQ 5: What evidence-based programs have been designed specifically for AAMCS?

Research questions two, three and four were answered by analyzing the data collected during the focus group session. Research question five was answered through the review of the literature, along with investigator exploration of the services available at the college.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The researcher used a focus group that consisted of 14 participants to gain an

understanding of their perceptions of academic success. Each participant signed an informed

consent form prior to the focus group (see Appendix B). In addition to focus group interview

protocol consisted of 13 open-ended questions (see Appendix C). Research questions one, and

two were answered through researcher explorations of resources available at the study site.

The focus group session was audio-recorded, and then a verbatim transcription was completed.

The transcription texts were organized and coded by the participant, question, and response

type. The coded texts were then sorted and analyzed to identify emerging themes.

Data analysis identified seven emergent themes regarding students' perceptions of

institutional responsiveness to AAMCS completing a postsecondary credential. These themes

included (a) people who influenced them the most, (b) perceptions of cultural change at

research institution, (c) significant positive perceptions of the impact of AAMI on the AAMCS,

(d) obstacles to AAMCS success, (e) reasons participants persisted, (f) advice for new AAMCS

from participants, and (g) recommendations for institution in support of AAMCS offered by

participants. The analysis process contributed to the researcher's goal of establishing the

emergence of themes or patterns to capture the essence of the focus group members'

experience of the phenomenon of interest: the collegiate journey of African American males.

PEOPLE WHO INFLUENCED THEM THE MOST

The first theme was related to the participants' perceptions regarding people who

provided support during their educational experiences. The first question posed to the

participants was *"who are the people that have had an influence on your college life?"*

The participants indicated that family members and the African American Male Initiative (AAMI) counselors were influential in their academic success. Four of the 14 participants indicated that both family members and AAMI counselors influenced them. Participants explained that family members gave them the initial tools and desire to enroll in college. Several in the group mentioned the impact of growing up in a single parent household and how their mother pushed them to move forward. One participant expressed that seeing his brothers in prison has given him the will to prosper in life and to want more. The participants perceived the AAMI counselor to be influential in decision making and holding the AAMCS accountable, as well as keeping the brothers motivated and focused on school studies and their goals. Findings revealed that AAMI counselors listened and encouraged each of them, as well as serving as study partners and mentors. In addition, AAMI counselors played a positive role by exhibiting cooperation and trust in AAMCS. Several group members described the support they received and more importantly perhaps, was a space the program provided for the members to *fit in* with peers and AAMI counselors who looked like them.

PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURAL CHANGE AT RESEARCH INSTITUTION

The second theme reflected on the campus environment and the campus community that exist at the college. Participants were asked to *"describe for the group how they fit in at the college."*

The participants indicated they have seen changes at the research institution shift over time in two ways, (a) the institutions' culture is more welcoming to AAMCS, and (b) AAMI is

having a direct positive impact on facilitating the change. The following text includes verbatim

responses of some participants regarding this theme. As a reminder to the reader, all names

written in this report are pseudonyms.

Michael Wilcox explained that,

The research institution changed over the years. I was a student before AAMI and struggled academically. Because I did not see students that looked like me or individuals who were supposed to influence me was not around all the time…. The last couple of years the institution has added things like AAMI to
influence people of color.

Jay McLemore stated,

I am gonna keep it honest…. I have seen the environment change, I started here in high school…. and I am seeing more black people you start to see, and the environment quickly shift You started seeing more people staring, our cultural differences are truly different…. So, when you, they see you doing something or you and a group of other people start doing something, they just kind of stare and ah. And that's just kind of a, I wouldn't say a hostile environment, but it's, it makes you really think about the environment you're in… It is like I am welcome, but I still feel like an outlier in a school that is supposed to be a safe haven for education diversity and inclusion.

The theme was emerging and the researcher asked a clarifying question to be more

specific: Do you feel students, faculty, staff, are staring, judging, or, or is it a certain population

that you are seeing that from more so than another?

Jay McLemore said, "It is faculty and students because again there's not many African

Americans walking around campus. But, I guess, this is what you get."

Justin Johnson shared,

I try to communicate with people in my class, um, to like maybe try to study outside of class to help like little small study table. People are kind of socially awkward, and it is kinda hard to talk to them because they just want to get in and get out, go back home. Uh, now, I feel like I, like I do not know if it is my color, of if it is just they are just social, socially awkward.

55

Moses Soloce described,

I was pretty much by myself. I would stand by myself, eat by myself. And then, when I got in this group, it kind of opening up to see how isolationist I was and how a loner I was. And with me, my grades have always been good and me offering to study with people. But, my brothers, they take it, and it's great, and they can study, and it is, fantastic. But then when I put that offer out, outside of my brothers, people seem taken aback… because they think I should not have these skills or I should not know how to do this.

The ninth question asked if there *"was anything else you would like to say about being a*

AAMCS or the culture surrounding AAMCS?"

Moses Soloce suggested, "We need more of them, and we are treated like unicorns for

some reason. Something mythical that you hear about but you never really see."

Jay McLemore relayed,

I got a Kindle app on my phone, and I observed everybody stop and look …. One gentlemen on the elevator said "bro, I am going to work for you one day." I am like, it is sort of a thing of amazement for them to see you reading and very open about it. Even in the historical context, they were in awe about it. Like, he's reading? So, it kind of gives you that feeling. So....

Bartholomew Turner stated,

I think they've done a great job diversifying the campus. There's a lot of professors who look like me which is important…. There is a history teacher or a psychology teacher or a math teacher, um, they know what it means for us to be African American students and they kind of, they, they give us our time and their ears to listen. So, um, I have had a very profound relationship with the, uh, faculty and staff here at my respective college. There was one participant response suggested that there is a variance with respect to this theme and a need to be more closely examine within-group difference that may determine the relative fit for the program for some currently implemented and its limitations for others. The participant shared coming to college was no different for him, because he is used to being around other races and ethnicities.

AAMI IS MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT ON AAMCS

The participants were asked the third multi-faceted focus group question to think back

to the different problems they had encountered during their college life: *What are some of the*

biggest obstacles you have had to overcome in college? Who helped you through the obstacle?

Did you consider dropping out of college because of the obstacle? What made you persist in

college?

One of the participants expressed he had wanted to drop out of college:

If it wasn't for my AAMI counselor, academic advisor, and a few others suggesting that I
research AAMI and see if I would be interested in the organization, I was isolated. I have
no one to talk to, no one to really hang out with.

Bartholomew Turner explained,

African American Male Initiative has, had a profound impact…., to me as a student.
honestly consider that some of the things I've done and achieved here I wouldn't have
been able to do without everybody who's included in the program. I'm very thankful for
everything they've done whether it's just been something from a physical standpoint to
a mental standpoint that they've provided me with.

Michael Wilcox stated,

This group has definitely opened a lot of doors for me. Uh, through this group, I've
acquired my first job as a soccer trainer. Um, through this group my grades have been a
lot better than what they have in the past. And, like I said, I've been here too many
years, so I know what my grades were before this.

Jay McLemore offered, "It has definitely impacted my life, and I enjoy seeing how its, uh,

turned into what its turned into overtime."

Moses Soloce reported that, "This environment is and this school has been so positive

for me that, when I begin my transfer search to a four-year college, I will also look at HBCUs."

The participants further expressed that, by being a part of AAMI, if there was anything

that was needed, they were able to reach out to the AAMI counselors for assistance. The

participants also expressed that the experience with staff and the study site has been

tremendous. One student suggested that, "The participants have a profound relationship with

faculty and staff here at the college."

PARTICIPANTS FACED A VARIETY OF OBSTACLES

The participants described a variety of obstacles encountered along their educational

journey that might hinder completion of a postsecondary credential. The analysis of the data

correlates to the third multi-part research question: "*Thinking back to the different problems*

you have encountered during your college life. What are some of the biggest obstacles you have

had to overcome in college? Who helped you through the obstacle? Did you consider dropping

out of college because of the obstacle? What made you persist in college?"

One of the common obstacles that seven of the participants expressed was self-

confidence.

Bartholomew Turner stated,

My biggest obstacle first of all was math. Uh hum, but uh more and more probably my toughest obstacle was just my, my, myself, honestly, um, just, um, I think that myself doubt has always been larger than my self-confidence.

Carlton Banks explained,

My biggest obstacle is myself and my self-confidence, but as I continue my educational journey… my teachers and my peers, they give me reassurance and tell me that, um, I'm at least exceptionally good at most of the academic, um, struggles I had with, and I shouldn't be as, um, I shouldn't have such low confidence for myself and I because I have the potential to be great or succeed in the things I do. So, I would just say the people around me really support me, um, and just give me that push I need.

Michael Wilcox said,

For me, the biggest obstacle, like so many other brothers in here, is self-confidence. But my problem wasn't about dropping out. It was about flunking out, instead of dropping. Because going to some of these classes I would sometimes be the only African American in there. And when I would turn in some of my projects as an art student, I'd turn, in some of my projects and, um, I look at 'em, and a lot of other students look at 'em. So much better than some of the other projects I see out there, but I still get a lower grade. So why am I even trying anymore.

Jay McLemore reported that "Biased grading is definitely a thing."

Moses Soloce explained that,

Biased grading is a thing. Uh, I did have an English teacher who didn't think I wrote a paper when it was 100% me. He was like, because, I was in English Composition I, and my writing was way past English Composition I, but it's, a pre-req I have to take. So, he didn't know my background and he just was shocked, like, you wrote this? Are you sure you wrote this? I put it through the, uh, system and it said it was, you know, it was original but still, did you have anyone help you, did you go through writing.

Three participants expressed that AAMI has given them the confidence to believe in themselves to actually make it to completion; however, the participants feel that faculty does not care if AAMCS complete a post-secondary credential.

Michael Wilcox stated, "Whereas if you're outside of AMMI, you won't get that self-confidence because of our environment or what you grew up around and like that."

Jay McLemore explained that, "My biggest obstacle is, honestly, getting my teachers to work with me."

Moma Wacacae shared, "I feel like teachers do not care because, um, we are the one thing for our education and it's up to us if we pass or not."

Jay McLemore suggested,

It would be those connections I made that helped me overcome that because, for once, we had a group of people that was all on the same page and understood the basic needs that we needed, that we need these teachers to work with us like they do everybody else.

REASONS AAMCS LEAVE BUT PARTICIPANTS PERSISTED

"*What do you think are the main reasons African-American males leave college?*" was the fourth focus group question and the following analysis resulted in the theme. This question sought to gain the insight of the students as to the reasons why these students think AAMCS leave college. The discussion for this question resulted in comments on resources, mentoring, and fitting in.

Jay McLemore suggested that a "Really big thing is resources, and counseling, mentoring… a big thing, both formal and informal."

Carlton Banks explained,

It's a definitely a lack of resources or, uh, accessibility to resources or opportunities… So, it might feel like we're sort of, say like, stuck out in the desert and there's no way that we could, um, show anybody what we have.

Justin Johnson offered,

Sometimes, uh, we do have the talent, and we try to reach out to uh people that we know that can help us and network us and could bring us to another, connection and we could just make that bond… I think, uh, internships. That's the real big one. Uh, and maybe helping, helping make more connections outside of school.

Moses Soloce said, "Loose mentorships with those who've already graduated and know what we're going through."

Jay McLemore explained,

Um, coming out of high school and upper bound program uh, the college offered a summer bridge program that was one of our things for our, uh, end of the summer

checklist that we needed to do, which was check out the student support services, go check out the counseling office.

A negative case presented a different lens, and perhaps a suggestion for institutional leaders to consider as an intervention for all entering AAMCS.

PARTICIPANTS ADVICE FOR NEW AAMCS ENROLLING IN COLLEGE

"*What advice would you offer other African-American male students to advance themselves successfully at the college?*" This question sought to gain the insight from current AAMCS students to the incoming class on how to be successful in college. The discussion for this question resulted in comments on high school influence, relationships, resources and applying yourself.

- College is different than high school.

- There will not be anyone standing over you asking 'where is your homework?'

- In college, you have more freedom.

- Sign up for the student support services: The institution has great tutors.

- Resources, resources are available to you. Um, ask questions. You can't be afraid to ask questions in college.

- Surround yourself with like-minded people that have the same goals as you, and that aspire to earn a college credential.

- Do not procrastinate!

- Be honest with yourself about your intentions, and where you're going, everything else will fall into place.

Jay McLemore explained that, "The crowd you need to be around, the people that are in the same thing as you. You start to attract those people, so most definitely be honest with yourself."

Carl Weaser suggested,

When you have self-determination and you know you're gonna do something…that's also the best thing you can do for yourself, to benefit yourself and, uh, achieve your goals. I just think self-determination is a big, big thing you need to have in college.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH INSTITUTION

The participants were also asked if they had recommendations for the college. The question sought to gain the insight regarding what recommendations participants perceived to make to the college administration regarding *"changes in policies or practices you see as needed that might support and facilitate the success of African American male students?"*

The discussion for this question resulted in comments on pushing the diversity envelope, tools, and marketing.

Bartholomew Turner recommended,

Just continue to push the envelope, keep foot on gas pedal. I think that they've done some tremendous things the last couple of years. Um, but just, you know, just keep it pushing forward, 'cause I do believe that, um, with that attitude, with programs like this in place, um, it's only a recipe for success.

Jay McLemore explained,

We need to be in a place that helps us actually go into high schools and elementary, and just kind of work with that pipeline to kind of include these African American males…give them the tools needed to be successful…discuss the basis of federal financial aid…because, you know, I feel like, if there was kind of an equal balance, within the institution…really going into these high schools showing these kids that it's possible. Especially these African American kids because, that come from the lower income places.

Moses Soloce suggested,

More advertisement and recognition of this program through advertisers. I hear about to so many different degrees, other programs but I hear about, uh, the basketball team, the volleyball team, but I don't hear about the AAMI.

SUMMARY

The above stated findings showed that the students who took part in the focus group sessions constructed meaning and surfaced several issues affecting the institutional responsiveness to AAMCS persisting to completing a post-secondary credential. There were several topics that surfaced continually across the 11 questions. On numerous occasions, the students discussed the individuals who influenced them, on-going cultural changes at the institution, AAMI positive impact, obstacles, persistence, advice to students, and recommendations to the research institution.

Topics within the text of this chapter indicated this emphasis and stressed these points during the group's discussion. The students reflected on campus and classroom experiences, especially experiences related to self-confidence, relationships with faculty, staff, and brotherhood of AMMI, as well as, experiences related to academic settings. They also mentioned major area of study selection, class attendance, and influences from staff and professors. Their comments demonstrate that being a good student, reading a book for pleasure, and excelling academically are all successful tools in life. The 11 questions initiated and stimulated comments to answer the overall research questions.

The study suggested that institutional responsiveness to AAMCS especially through AAMI is "emergent." The program has been successful in facilitating AAMCS by providing role models, institutional culture change, mentorship and ensuring students are aware of all student support services that are available for AAMCS. The results suggest, however, that mentoring AAMCS begins well before AAMCS enter the university environment. Life experiences that occur earlier in an AAMCS' life can impact his belief and self-confidence with respect to post-

secondary educational success. The results further suggest that there is variability within the group and a need to go beyond the extant literature to identify how to continue making the program robust enough to accommodate important within-group differences in service needs. The above stated findings showed that the students who took part in the focus group sessions constructed meaning and surfaced several issues affecting the institutional responsiveness to AAMCS persisting to completing a post-secondary credential. There were several topics that surfaced continually across the 11 questions. On numerous occasions, the students discussed the individuals who influenced them, on-going cultural changes at the institution, AAMI positive impact, obstacles, persistence, advise to students, and recommendations to the research institution.

Topics within the text of this chapter indicated this emphasis and stressed these points during the group's discussion. The students reflected on campus and classroom experiences, especially experiences related to self-confidence, relationships with faculty, staff, and brotherhood of AMMI; as well as, experiences related to academic settings. They also mentioned major area of study selection, class attendance, and influences from staff and professors. Their comments demonstrate that being a good student, reading a book for pleasure, and excelling academically are all successful tools in life. The 11 questions initiated and stimulated comments to answer the overall research questions.

The study suggested that institutional responsiveness to AAMCS especially through AAMI is "emergent." The program has been successful in facilitating AAMCS by providing role models, institutional culture change, mentorship and ensuring students are aware of all student support services that are available for AAMCS. The results suggest, however, that mentoring

AAMCS begins well before AAMCS enter the university environment. Life experiences that occur earlier in an AAMCS' life can impact his belief and self-confidence with respect to post-secondary educational success. The results further suggest that there is variability within the group and a need to go beyond the extant literature to identify how to continue making the program robust enough to accommodate important within-group differences in service needs.

Chapter Five: Summary and Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

This qualitative phenomenological research design allowed the researcher to (a) explore factors African American Male College Students (AAMCS) perceived as contributors to their academic success, (b) to develop understanding of the institutional responsiveness to the needs of this marginalized population of students, and (c) to give students a voice in the reform process. The overarching research questions guiding the study were:

- RQ 1: What student support services are available to African American male college students in and outside the classroom?

- RQ 2: What obstacles do African American male college students encounter while attending a post-secondary institution?

- RQ 3: Who provided support for AAMCS college aspirations and in what way?

- RQ 4: How has the institution responded to the support and services needed to help all students succeed?

- RQ 5: What evidence-based programs have been designed specifically for AAMCS?

The qualitative phenomenological study was completed by conducting a focus group with 14 AAMCS in a public two-year Midwestern, urban institution of higher education. The researcher posted an invitation flyer (Appendix A) on the college campus. Informed consents (Appendix B) were submitted by each participants for the study. The focus group consisted of 11 questions and clarifying questions when necessary to gain insight and understanding of the participants' responses. The focus group was audio-recorded and transcribed. The researcher

coded the factors participants considered institutional responsiveness to AAMCS completing a

post-secondary credential for common themes and patterns. Pseudonyms were used to protect

the identity of students.

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

RQ1: What student support services are available to African American male college students in and outside the classroom?

The findings revealed that pre-college experiences have considerable influence on

higher education enrollment for the participants of the study. Poor academic progress, lack of

faculty support and the absence of positive role models before African American Male Initiative

(AAMI) permeates the lives and transcends into the early educational experiences of these

AAMCS. In particular, the reactions from students about their experiences in college offer an

interesting insight into early challenges and obstacles education placed in their pathway to

success in college. Disengagement, bad behavior and lack of academic stamina were results of

negative interactions with peers and teachers for the participants of the study, but alternative

feeling of belongingness, and academic success were expressed by participants when they

connected with AAMI counselor or found support or connection to a faculty and staff. The

feelings expressed by participants when they connected with teachers and peers support the

influence social and academic integration has on students who previously viewed school with

resistance. The findings are consistent with previous research that found undergraduate

students are not retained including the fact that students feel no connection with faculty,

fellow students, and staff. For example, Tinto's (1993) research revealed a number of reasons

Astin (1982) reported that the environment at post-secondary institutions should promote

healthy and supportive relationships with faculty, fellow students, and staff, while at the same time strengthening the integration of social and academic engagement.

AAMCS can assess the value of their educational experiences, research by Tinto's (1993) revealed a number of reasons undergraduate students are not retained including the fact that students feel no connection with faculty, fellow students, and staff. Astin (1982) reported that the environment at post-secondary institutions should promote healthy and supportive relationships with faculty, fellow students, and staff, while at the same time strengthening the integration of social and academic engagement.

RQ2: What obstacles do African American male college students encounter while attending a post-secondary institution?

The participants of this study found an opportunity to engage with their education, connect with role models while being connected to AAMI, and develop an internal motivation to attend college after experiencing challenges and barriers along their educational pathway. The findings suggest that self-confidence within themselves was the biggest obstacle. Challenges included lack of belief in self, non-caring faculty, lack of confidence from educators, and lack of self-initiative. Participants realized society has negative opinions of AAMCS. They perceived these negative opinions could affect belief in their ability to succeed. Even after participants experienced these challenges and obstacles, they mustered the resolve to seek out support and positive reinforcement from faculty and peers within AAMI and then strove toward the goal of persisting in higher education. The findings are consistent with Tinto (1975) attributes confidence-building factors and the development of a college identify in AAMCS to social activities that occur outside of the classroom such as joining a social club, establishing a

network of friends through residential housing assignments , or simply having the time after class to gather with other students and faculty members with similar interests and backgrounds and developing a peer and even a faculty network where the eventual integration into college life occurs.

RQ3: Who provided support for AAMCS college aspirations and in what way?

The findings showed that family and AAMI counselors influenced the participants for their persistence and retention in college. Family support was found to play a vital role in the academic achievement of AAMCS. The participants acknowledged the support and encouragement received from family were influential in their achieving success. African American males recognized the values family placed on an education and duplicated the same values. Family constantly reminded the AAMCS of their responsibility to get an education if they wanted to be successful in life. One participant said he wanted to show his brother who has been in prison most of his life absent that he could be successful. Another said that he wanted to be like his grandfather and be a chief. Half of the participants expressed that AAMI has had a profound impact on their education experience at the research site. The program's goals are to promote the value of education and provide workshops and other events that showcase successful role models for young AAMCS. This program incorporates community leaders and successful African American businessmen to inspire the students through their stories and successes, and also to help them understand their capabilities and talents (Brooms, 2016). The AAMI is individualized and tailored to the needs of each student.

RQ4: How has the institution responded to the support and services needed to help all students succeed?

The participants expressed the profound impact of AAMI has had on their educational journey. The program offers educational and cultural activities to all student participants, and they also offer services such as tutoring, career choice planning and counseling, professional development opportunities, community service, and spiritual enrichment. All programs are designed to promote positive thinking and high self-esteem in AAMCS (Student African American Brotherhood, 2018). One of the participants expressed that AAMI has given him opportunities that he probably would not have been extended to him such as speaking engagements, conference attendance, and mental stability. AAMI has really open doors for AAMCS within the college, and within the community. The participants further expressed that the study site has invested a tremendous amount of money and time in the program, please keep diversifying the campus and the investment.

RQ5: *What evidence-based programs have been designed specifically for AAMCS?*

AAMCS can benefit greatly from an organization like AAMI and mentorship programs. These programs allow students to be supported by adults who come from the same culture as them and are successful as professionals in careers other than sports. Student organizations specifically designed to support and aid in the retention of African American males, such as the Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB), and the AAMI are highlighted in the literature, as being impactful in terms of enabling persistence and degree completion for Black male college students (Brooms, 2016). As the men in this study reported, these programs provide peer-mentoring opportunities, which foster institutional commitment, camaraderie, and support.

BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

This research project was beneficial because it provided a look into how these AAMCS view institutional responsiveness to their needs on campus. Additionally, it uncovered how AAMCS view the issues that affect their retention in higher education. Furthermore, it allowed AAMCS to detail some of the ways they feel and how they view themselves, and the environment around them.

This research also serves as an indicator of the areas that need attention. There is a paucity of professional literature on the topic of institutional responsiveness to AAMC completing a post-secondary credential is lacking. The participants expressed they aware of the student support services available to students, but administrators, faculty or staff did not express the value in utilizing the services. Colleges and universities could benefit from this research and future research regarding institutional responsiveness. Based on the comments from these students, there needs to be a commitment to responsiveness to AAMCS. Additionally, there needs to be an emphasis placed on providing support for AAMCS. Also, there needs to be a forum that allows AAMCS to openly discuss the things that are weighing on their minds, such as the feelings that they are different from everyone else.

LIMITATIONS

Key limitations in the study were the size of the sample and the institution where the study was conducted. The study site has fewer than 100 AAMCS enrolled per semester. A second limitation in the study was that the findings were linear because all of the participants in the study were involved in AAMI. Similarities in culture and upbringing could have framed

many of their responses from a similar lens or perspective. The third limitation for the research study was that all of the study participants attended one institution in the state of Ohio.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It is necessary to continue to study the factors that affect the institutional responsiveness to AAMCS completing a post-secondary credential. After conducting the focus group session, it became increasingly obvious that this marginalized group of students was carrying a lack of self-confidence with them. As stated by one of the participants, "My biggest obstacle is honestly myself. I think my self-doubt has always been larger than my self-confidence." As a researcher, I feel it is necessary for future research to be conducted to uncover specific problems that plague many AAMCS, and what evidence-based interventions and resources are needed to be successful and overcome the barriers.

This study consisted of a small group. It would be beneficial for future research to include more focus groups that included different populations of AAMCS. Additional groups could be comprised of students in specific majors, from urban or rural areas, based on hours completed, students from first generation backgrounds, students from backgrounds with parents who are college graduates, students from backgrounds with parents who are not college graduates, students from single parent homes, students from low income backgrounds, and even alumni.

Based on the emerging themes from the data analysis, there was another topic that warrants consideration for future research. The possibility of college administrators and staff going into K-12 schools and working with African American male students to give them the

necessary tools for college. They could provide basic federal financial aid knowledge.

Mentorship at an early age, especially for African American males, is critical. At the primary and

secondary levels of education, teachers, counselors, and administrators can shape student

perceptions of their own educational futures and can act as the first positive role model for

African American males.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this qualitative phenomenological study examined institutional

responsiveness to AAMCS completing a post-secondary credential. Institutional responsiveness

to AAMCS especially through AAMI is "emergent." The program has been successful in

facilitating AAMCS by providing role models, institutional culture change, mentorship and

ensuring students are aware of all student support services that are available for AAMCS. The

participants were provided an opportunity to describe individuals who influenced them, a

culture changing, positive impact of AAMI; as well as, obstacles, and encouragement for new

students. The emergent themes from the focus group may help higher education institutions

understand their response to helping AAMCS succeed. The relevant research literature on

institutional responsiveness to AAMCS completing is lacking. Therefore, any future research will

possibly provide educators and school administrators with suggested information regarding

how best to support the academic success of AAMCS. Furthermore, findings from this study can

fuel future research questions that may lead to ensuring AAMCS begin the trend of fostering a

generation of high achievers among this population of students.

References

Adler, J. (1998, March 30). The tutor age. *Newsweek*, 46–56.

Akoto, K. A. (1992) *Nation building: Theory and practice in Afrikan-centered education*. Washington, DC: Pan-Afrikan World Institute.

Asante, M. (1991). The Afrocentric idea in education. *The Journal of Negro Education, 60*, 170-179. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/2295608?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Ashburn, E. (Nov. 2010). Gates's millions: Can big bucks turn students into graduates? *Education Digest: Essential Readings condensed for Quick Review*, 76 (3), 4-9. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/openview/ 9d025fbf3ad870636f8ab82cca139939/ 1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=25066

Astin, A. (1982). *Minorities in higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Black student college graduation rates remain low, but modest progress begins to show. (2010) The *Journal of African Americans in Higher Education*, *67*(11) 88-96. Retrieved from http://www.jbhe.com/features/50_blackstudent_gradrates.html

Bonner, F. A. II & Bailey, K. (2006). Assessing the academic climate for African American men. In M. Cuyjet (Ed.) *African American Men in College,* 24-46. San Francisco, CA

Brooms, R., D. (2016). Building us up': Supporting black male college students in a black male initiative program. *Critical Sociology*, *44*(1), 141–155. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0896920516658940

Brown, T. N., Williams, D. R., Jackson, J. S., Neighbors, H. W., Torres, T., Sellers, S. L., & Brown, K. T. (1999). "Being black and feeling blue": The mental health consequences of racial discrimination. *Race and Society, 2*, 117-131. Retrieved from https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1090952400000103

Bryant, G., Seaman, J. & Java, N. (2017). *Driving toward a degree: The evolution of academic advising in higher education.* Retrieved from http://drivetodegree.org/reportarchive/driving-toward-degree-evolution-academic-advising-higher-education/

Carlstom, A., & Miller M. A. (2012). *2011 NACADA National survey academic advising*. Retrieved from http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/2011-NACADA-National-Survey.aspx

Centers for Disease Control (2014). *Burden of mental illness*. Retrieved from
     https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db172.htm

Claxton, C. S. (1991). Teaching, learning, and community: An interview with Parker J. Palmer.
     Journal of Developmental Education, 15(2), 22-25. Retrieved from
     http://ncde.appstate.edu/publications/journal-developmental-education-jde

Congress, E., & Gonzales, M. (2012). *Multicultural perspectives in social work practice with
     families.* New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.

Constantine, G. M., & Derald, W. S. (2005). *Strategies for building multicultural competence in
     mental health and educational setting*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Constantine, M. G. (2007). Racial microaggression against African American clients' in cross-
     racial counseling relationship. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54,* 1-16. Retrieved
     from http://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2006-23057-001.html

Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (2 Sage. ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA.

Cross, T., & Slater. R. B. (2000). The alarming decline in the academic performance of African
     American men. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 27*, 82-87.

Cross, W. E., Jr., & Vandiver, B. J. (2001). Nigrescence theory and measurement: Introducing the
     Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS). In Ponterotto, Joseph G. (Ed); Casas, J. Manuel (Ed);
     Suzuki, Lisa A. (Ed); Alexander, Charlene M. (Ed), (2001). *Handbook of multicultural
     counseling (2nd ed.),* (371-393). Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage.

Cross, W. E., Jr. (1971). The Negro-to-Black conversion experience: Towards a psychology of
     Black liberation. *Black World, 20*, 13-27. Retrieved from
     https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ041879

Cross, W. E., Jr. (1991). *Shades of Black: Diversity in African-American identity.* Philadelphia, PA:
     Temple University Press.

Cuyjet, M. J. (2006). *African American men in college*. Indianapolis, IN: Jossey-Bass.

Donaldson, P., McKinney, L., Lee, M., Pino, D. (2016). First-year community college students'
     perceptions of and attitudes toward intrusive academic advising. *NACADA Journal, 36*(1)
     2016. Retrieved from http://www.nacadajournal.org/doi/abs/10.12930/NACADA-15-
     012?code=naaa-site

Dvorak, J. (2004). Managing tutoring aspects of the learning assistance center. Research for
     Educational Reform, 9(4), 39-50. Retrieved from http://education.jhu.edu/research/
     crre/

Erlich, R. J., & Russ-Eft, D. F. (2013). Assessing student learning in academic advising using social cognitive theory. *NACADA Journal*, 33(1), 16-33. Retrieved from http://www.nacadajournal.org/doi/abs/10.12930/NACADA-13-135

Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., Guido, F. M., Patton, L. D., & Renn, K. A. (2009). Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Feagin, J. R., & McKinney, K. D. (2003). *The many costs of racism*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Friere, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppress*. New York, NY: Seabury Press.

Flowers, L. (2006). Effects of attending a 2-year institution on African American males' academic and social integration in the first year of college. *Teachers College Record,* 108, 267-286. Retrieved from http://interwork.sdsu.edu/sp/m2c3/wp-content/blogs.dir/2/files/ 2012/10/Flowers-2006.pdf

Gall, J.P., Gall, M.D. & Borg, W.R. (2003). *Educational research: An introduction*. 7 Plains, NY: Longman.

Gandara, P. (2001). Paving the way to postsecondary education: K-12 intervention programs for underrepresented youth. Report of the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative Working Group on Access to Postsecondary Education (No. NCES-2001-205). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction (3rd ed.).* New York, NY: Pearson.

Graesser, A., Person, N., & Magliano, J. (1995). Collaborative dialogue patterns in naturalistic one-to-one tutoring. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 9*(6), 495-522. doi: 10.1002/acp.2350090604

Grayson, J. P., & Grayson, K. (2003). *Research on retention and attrition*. Retrieved from http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca/images/Publications/retention_final.pdf

Grills, C. & Longshore, D. (1996). Africentrism: Psychometric analyses of a self-report measure*. Journal of Black Psychology, 22*, 86-106. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/00957984960221007

Gaustad, J. (1992) Tutoring at-risk students. *OSSC Bulletin 36*(3) 1-82. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED353642

Habley, W. R., & Morales, R. H. (1998). Advising models: Goal achievement and program effectiveness. *NACADA Journal*, 18(1), pp. 35-41. doi: 10-1293002719571

Hagedorn, S. L. (2005). How to define retention: A new look at an old problem. Paper sponsored by the Transfer and Retention of Urban Community College Students Project (TRUCCS) funded by the Lumina Foundation (Grant # 1415). Retrieved from www.chepa.org.

Hairston, C.C. (2013). Supporting men of color along the educational pipeline: Research and practice. Institute for Higher Education Policy. Retrieved from http://www.ihep.org/ sites/default/files/uploads/docs/pubs/pcn_supportingmenofcolor.pdf.

Harper, S. R., & Quaye, S. J. (2009). *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations.* New York: Routledge.

Harper, S. R. (2014). (Re)Setting the agenda for college men of color: Lessons learned from a 15-year movement to improve Black male student success. In R. A. Williams (Ed.), *Men of color in higher education: New foundations for developing models for success,* 116-143. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Harper, S. W. (2012). *Black male student success in higher education*. Report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study. Retrieved from https://www.gse.upenn.edu/ equity/sites/gse.upenn.edu.equity/files/publications/b mss.pdf

Haycock, K. (2006) *Promise abandoned*: *How policy choices and institutional practices restrict college opportunities*. Washington, DC: The Education Trust.

Hernandez, P., Carranza, M., & Almeida, R. (2010). Mental health professionals' adaptive response to racial microaggressions: An exploratory study. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice,* 41*,* 202-209.   Retrieved from http://psycnet.apa.org/ record/2010-11935-004

Horn, V.C. (2015). A talent development model for finding development model for finding and nurturing potential in underserved populations. *Sage Journal* 38. Retrieved from journals.sagepub.com

Hunt, J. B., Jr., Carruthers, G., Callan, P. M., & Ewell, P. T. (2006). *Measuring up 2006: The national report card on higher education*. The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education Report #06-5. Retrieved from ERIC Database. (ED493360)

Kantrowitz, M. (2012). The college completion agenda may sacrifice college access for low-income, minority and other at-risk students. Retrieved from http://www.finaid.org/ educators/studentaidpolicy.phtml

Kerr, C. (2001). *The uses of the university. Boston: Harvard University* Press.

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., & Whitt, E. J. (2010). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter.* Washington, D.C.; John Wiley & Sons.

Karenga, M. (1977) Kawaida and its critics: A sociohistorical analysis. *Journal of Black Studies*, 8, 125-148. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/002193477700800202

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed.) (pp.163-188). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Mahoney, R. G. (1998). Components of TRiO's success: How one Student Support Services program achieved success. *Journal of Negro Education*, 381-388. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/2668138?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

McCabe, J. (2009): Racial and gender microaggressions on campus a predominantly- white campus: experiences of black. Latina/o and white undergraduates. Race, Gender & Class.   16(1-2) pp. 133-151. Retrieved from: http://www.academia.edu/3332876/Racial_and_Gender_Microaggressions_on_a- Predominantly-White_Campus_Experiences_of_Black_Latina

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education: Revised and expanded from case study research in education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S.B. (2001). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mental Health America (2014). Black & African American Communities and Mental Health. Retrieved from http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/african-american-mental-health

Miles, M. B, & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis,* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Moody, S. W., Vaughn, S., & Schumm, J. S. (1997). Instructional grouping for reading: Teachers' views. Remedial and Special Education, 18, 347–356. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/074193259701800604

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. National Alliance on Mental Illness (2017). Retrieved from https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-By-the-Numbers

Nasim, A., Roberts, A., Harrell, J., & Young, H. (2005). Non-Cognitive Predictors of Academic Achievement for African Americans across Cultural Contexts*. Journal of Negro Education, 74*, 344. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40026734?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Noguera, P. (2003). The trouble with Black boys: The role and influence of environmental and cultural factors on academic performance of African American males. *Urban Education*, *38*, 431-459. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/ 10.1177/0042085903038004005

Palmer, R. T., Davis, R. J., Moore, J. L., & Hilton, A. A. (2010). A national risk: Increasing college participation and persistence among African American males to stimulate U.S. global competitiveness. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, *1*, 106-115. Retrieved from http://journalofafricanamericanmales.com/wpcontent/ uploads/downloads/2010/05/FINAL-PALMER.pdf

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terrenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Psychohistory. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/ psychohistory

Radovcic, A. EdD. (2010). *Factors impacting persistence for African American and Latino community college students.* Loyola Marymount University, 121 pages. (AAT 3432891).

Rheinheimer, D. C., & McKenzie, K. (2010). The impact of tutoring on the academic success of undeclared students. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, *41*(2) 22-36. doi.org/10.1080/10790195.2011.10850340

Rheinheimer, D., Odeleye, B., Francois, G., & Kusorgbor, C. (2010). Tutoring: A support strategy for at-risk students. *Learning Assistance Review, 15*(1), 23-24. Retrieved from http://www.nclca.org

Sampson, D., & Garrison-wade, D. (2011). Cultural vibrancy: Exploring the preferences of African American children toward culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant lessons. *The Urban Review, 43*(2), 279-309. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/article/ 10.1007/s11256-010-0170-x

Sedlacek, W. E. (2003). Alternative measures in admissions and scholarship selection. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 35*, 263-272. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/openview/c17393549010868f2c6e1d 7f69466110/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=34423

Sedlacek, W. E., Benjamin, E., Schlosser, L. Z., & Sheu, H. B. (2007). Mentoring in academia: Considerations for diverse populations. In T. D. Allen & L. T. Eby (Eds.), *The Blackwell handbook of mentoring: A multiple perspectives approach,* 259-280. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Schulenberg, J., & Lindhorst, M. (2010). The historical foundations and scholarly future of academic advising. In P. L. Hagen, T. L. Kuhn, & G. M. Padak (Eds.), *Scholarly inquiry in academic advising, 20*, 17-28: NACADA. Retrieved from http://www.nacadajournal.org/doi/abs/10.12930/0271-9517-28.1.43

Schwandt, T. A. (2000). *Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism* in N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, eds., The Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Shuford, R. T. (2009). Why affirmative action reminds essential in the age of Obama. *Campbell Law Review*, *3*, 503-533. Retrieved from https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle =hein.journals/camplr31&div=22&g_sent=1&casa_token=

Smith, C. L., & Allen, J. M. (2014). Does contact with advisors predict judgments and attitudes consistent with student success? A multi-institutional study. *NACADA Journal*, *34*(1), 50-63. Retrieved from http://www.nacadajournal.org/doi/abs/10.12930/NACADA-13-019

Smith, W. A., Allen, R.W., & Danley, L.L. (2007). Assume the position ...you fit the description: Psychological experiences and racial battle fatigue among African American male college students. *American Behavioral Scientist, 51*(4), 551-578. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0002764207307742

Sowers, J. (2010). *Fatherless Generation.* Grand Rapids, MI Zondervan

Smith, W. A., Yosso, T. J., & Solórzano, D. G. (2007). Racial primes and black misandry on historically white campuses: Toward critical race accountability in educational administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43*, 559-585. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0013161X07307793

Solózarno, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *The Journal of Negro Education, 69*(1/2), 60-73. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/ stable/2696265

Strayhorn, T.L. (2011). Bridging the pipeline: Increasing underrepresented students' preparation for college through a summer bridge program. *American Behavioral Scientist, 55*(2), 142–159. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/ 10.1177/0002764210381871

Strayhorn, L.T. & Saddler, T. (2009). Gender differences in the influence of faculty student mentoring relationships on satisfaction with college among African Americans. *Journal of African American Studies, 13*(4), 476-493. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/ article/10.1007/s12111-008-9082-1

Student African American Brotherhood (2018). Retrieved from http://www.saabnational.org

Sue, D. W. (2010). Microaggressive impact on education and teaching: Facilitating difficult dialogues on race in the classroom. In D. W. Sue (Ed.), *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation,* 231-254. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist, 62,* 271-286. Retrieved from http://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2007-07130-001.html

Swail, W. S., Redd, K. E., & Perna, L. W. (2003). *Retaining minority students in higher education: A framework for success.* ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 2. Washington, DC: The George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED483024

Swecker, H. K., Fifolt, M., & Searby, L. (2013). Academic advising and first-generation college students: A quantitative study on student retention. *NACADA Journal, 33*(1), 46-53. Retrieved from http://www.nacadajournal.org/doi/abs/10.12930/NACADA-13-192

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, *45,* 89-125. Retrieved from http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/00346543045001089

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (2008). Access without support is not opportunity. *Insidehighered.com.* Retrieved from http://www.insidehighered.com

Tracey, T., & Sedlacek, W. (1987). A comparison of white and black student academic success using noncognitive variables: A LISREL analysis. *Research in Higher Education*, *27*, 333-348. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF00991662

Tuttle, K. N. (2000). Academic advising. *New Directions for Higher Education, 111,* 15-24. Retrieved from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/he.11102

U.S. Department of Education. (2018). *The federal role in education*. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html?src=ln

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2003, November). *Remedial education at degree-granting postsecondary institutions in fall 2000.* NCES 2004-010. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004010.pdf

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2003) *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups.* Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_321.20.asp?current=yes

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). *Remedial education at degree-granting postsecondary institutions in fall 2008.* NCES 2008-010. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). *Remedial education at degree-granting postsecondary institutions in fall 2008.*

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2013-2014) *Status and trends in the education of blacks.* Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/ digest/d16/tables/dt16_321.20.asp?current=yes

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *The U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Completion Survey.* 2007-010. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017024.pdf

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2017) *Status and trends in the education of blacks.* Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017051.pdf

Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. London, Ontario, Canada: The University of Western Ontario.

Veerkamp, M., Kamps, D. & Cooper, L. (2007). The effects of class wide peer tutoring on the reading achievement of urban middle school student. *Education and Treatment of Children, 30*(2), 21-51. doi: 10.1353/etc.2007.0010

Vianden, J., & Barlow, P. J. (2015). Strengthen the bond: Relationships between academic advising quality and undergraduate student loyalty. *NACADA Journal, 35*(2), 15-27. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1090140.pdf

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Young-Jones, A. D., Burt, T. D., Dixon, S., & Hawthorne, M. J. (2013). Academic advising: Does it really impact student success? *Quality Assurance in Education*, *21*(1), 7-19. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1004439

Wasik, B. A., & Slavin, R. E., (1993). Preventing early reading failure with one-to-one tutoring: A Review of five programs. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *28*(2), 178–200. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ462260

Walsh, C., Larsen, C., & Parry, D. (2009). Academic tutors at the frontline of student support in a cohort of students succeeding in higher education. *Educational Studies, 35*(4), 405-424. doi: 10.1080/03055690902876438

Worrell, F. C., Cross W. E., Jr., & Vandiver, B. J. (2001). Nigrescence theory: Current status and challenges for the future. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 29*(3), 201-213. Retrieved from http://psycnet.apa.org/record/2001-07547-003

Wyatt, S. (2009). The brotherhood: Empowering adolescent African-American males toward excellence. *Professional School Counseling, 12*(6), 463-470. Retrieved from professionalschoolcounseling.org

Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE COLLEGE STUDENTs LET YOUR VOICES BE HEARD

Institutional Responsiveness to African American Males Completing Post-Secondary Credential

Invitational Participants in Research Interview Focus Group

Date: May 7th 2018

Time: 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Location: Sinclair Community College. 8-027

Hello Sinclair Community College African American Male College Students! I am Tina L. Hummons, Doctoral Student at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, MI. I am seeking volunteers to participate in a research study entitled "Institutional Responsiveness to African American Male College Student's Completing Post-Secondary Credential."

To be eligible to participate, the following must apply: must be African American College Male Student; enrolled at Sinclair Community College; traditional age college student (18 years or older); and willing to sign an informed consent from acknowledging your willingness to participate. Your participation would involve one session, approximately 60 minutes.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact me at Tina L. Hummons at (937) 238-0090, Monday – Friday 8:00a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or email me at hummont@ferris.edu

The study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Review Board, Ferris State University and Sinclair Community College. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a subject in this study, please contact: Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants, 1010 Campus Drive, FLITE 410D, Big Rapids, MI 49307, (231) 591-2553, IRB@ferris.edu.
There is a page break at this point.)

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Tina L. Hummons, in the Doctorate in Community College Leadership program at Ferris State University and I am working on a dissertation project designed exploring the perceptions of Sinclair's African American Male College Students (AAMCS) concerning institutional factors contributing to their academic achievement.

To inform this project I am conducting focus groups with AAMCS. I am contacting you to see if you would be willing to answer a series of questions about institutional support to your academic success.

You were selected as a possible participant because you were identified as a African American male student, 18 years or older, enrolled at Sinclair Community College. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.
Your participation in this study is voluntary which is explained along with other details in the informed consent information below. When the focus group is completed, I will use pseudonyms for participants and their institutions to protect the anonymity of all participants. If you have any questions please give me a call at 937-238-0090 or send an email to hummont@ferris.edu

I hope to hear from you soon,
Tina L. Hummons

<table>
<tr><td>**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**</td></tr>
</table>

Project Title: Institutional Responsiveness to African American Males Completing Post-Secondary Credential.
Principal Investigator: Tina L. Hummons
      Email: hummont@ferris.edu   Phone: 937-238-0090
Faculty Advisor: Sandy Balkema, PhD.,
      Email: balkemas@ferris.edu   Phone: *231-591-5631*

<table>
<tr><td>**STUDY PURPOSE**</td></tr>
</table>

The purpose of this study is to understand institutional challenges AAMCS perceive as barriers to their academic success as well as investigate the challenges and solutions students believe to be necessary for improving academic success. This research will lend insight into how faculty, staff and administrators can aid AAMCS in developing necessary skills, strategies, and attitudes essential to building academic success.

<table>
<tr><td>**PARTICIPATION**</td></tr>
</table>

Participation in this research will include a qualitative focus group. The session will take no longer than one hour and it will be held at a neutral location on the campus of Sinclair Community College, which will allow for comfortable discussions and interactions. The discussion will be recorded using an audiotape recorder for the purpose of transcribing the information accurately. The audio-taped information will be kept by the researcher in a locked and secure vault. A transcriptionist will be hired to transcribe all audio tapes. A signed

Confidentiality Agreement for the transcriptionist will be obtained. The transcriptions of the focus group, audio recordings, and other data collected for this study will be destroyed via shredding and permanently deleted from all password-protected computer files once requirements for research and the dissertation is completed. All student participants have the right to refuse to answer any questions during the focus group and may terminate the session at any time, or have any information deleted from analysis.

Participants will not receive any monetary or other incentives for participating in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

POTENTIAL RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts, including physical inconveniences, psychological, social, legal, or financial risks or harms that might result from participating in the research. The researcher reassures involvement in the study will have no bearing on academic records or college enrollment and that their involvement is purely voluntary. Participants will be informed records obtained in this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant.

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

The benefits to participation in this study would include helping researchers and educators understand factors that play an important role in influencing academic success among AAMCS in higher education and understand the role institutions student support services, faculty, staff, and administrators play in their ability to achieve academic success.
Society will benefit by gaining first-hand knowledge and understanding from AAMCS on how best to support them in attaining academic success and hope of finding answers to barriers and possible solutions for improving their academic achievements. This research may provide the opportunity to reverse the cycle of low-achieving AAMCS and begin the trend of improving the trend of AAMCS earning post-secondary credential.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Signing this form is required in order for you to take part in the study and gives the researchers your permission to obtain, use and share information about you for this study. The results of this study could be published in an article or academic presentation, but would not include any information that would identify you. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of identifying each participant with a fictitious name. There are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see the information you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for making sure the research is conducted safely and properly, including Ferris State University.

In order to keep your information safe, the researchers will protect your anonymity and maintain your confidentiality. The data you provide will be stored in a locked file. The researchers will retain the data for 3 years after which time the researchers will dispose of your

data by standard state of the art methods for secure disposal. The data will not be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study.

<div align="center">**CONTACT INFORMATION**</div>

The main researcher conducting this study is Tina L. Hummons a doctoral student at Ferris State University. If you have any questions you may email her at hummont@ferris.edu or call 937-238-0090. You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr Sandra Balkema at sandrabalkema@ferris.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a subject in this study, please contact: Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants, 1010 Campus Drive, FLITE 410D, Big Rapids, MI 49307, (231) 591-2553, IRB@ferris.edu.

<div align="center">**SIGNATURES**</div>

Research Subject: I understand the information printed on this form. I understand that if I have more questions or concerns about the study or my participation as a research subject, I may contact the people listed above in the "Contact Information" section. I understand that I may make a copy of this form. I understand that if my ability to consent for myself changes, either I or my legal representative may be asked to re-consent prior to my continued participation.

Signature of Subject: _____ **Date of Signature:** _____

Printed Name: _____

Contact Information: email - _____ **phone -** _____

Researcher: I have given this research subject information about this study that I believe is accurate and complete. The subject has indicated that he or she understands the nature of the study and the risks and benefits of participating.

Printed Name: _____**Title:** _____

Signature: _____ **Date of Signature:** _____

Appendix C: Focus Group Questions

1. Take a minute to think about the people in your life, the people at work, school, etc. Who are the people that have had an influence on your college life? (Please be specific about how the person or persons have helped, and how it impacted your college experience.)

2. Reflect on the campus environment and the campus community that exist at the college. Can each of you describe for the group how you fit in at the college?

3. Thinking back to the different problems you have encountered during your college life. What are some of the biggest obstacles you have had to overcome in college? Who helped you through the obstacle? Did you consider dropping out of college because of the obstacle? What made you persist in college?

4. What do you think are the main reasons African-American males leave college?

5. What advice would you offer other African-American male students to advance themselves successfully at the college?

6. How would you describe your relationship with faculty members, advisors, staff and administration?

7. Describe your engagement in student life/activities at the college?

8. Describe the student support services you use/used at the college? How did you become aware of the services? Did you know they were available and were they relevant to your needs and if not explain why.

9. Is there anything else you would like to say about being a African American male at the college or the culture surrounding African American male males at the college?

10. What influence has the African American Male Initiative had on your success at the college?

11. Based on your experience, what would you say are the strengths of the initiative?

12. What recommendations would you make to the college administration regarding changes you see as needed in policies or practices that would support and facilitate the success of African American male students?

13. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your experiences at the college?

   That's all the questions I have for you today. Thank you so much for taking time out of your schedule to assist me in my research. If you have any questions or concerns, I will answer any questions to the best of my ability. If you don't have any questions, you are free to go now.

APPENDIX D: IRB Approval Letter

Tina Hummons
Registrar
Sinclair Community College

RE: Institutional Responsiveness to African American Males

Dear Tina:

As chair of the Sinclair Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBOOO05624), I am writing to inform you that I have reviewed your proposal and approved the protocol as it meets the criteria for exempt status as established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under category two. Please note that exempt proposals need not be reviewed by the full IRB (see Section 101, subsection b.1). Your planned research is fully compliant with Sinclair protocols.

Please note that any information that could potentially identify a focus group participant (e.g. "Who are the people that have had an influence on your college life?) must be employed in the final work in a manner that preserves your subjects' anonymity.

Any serious adverse events or issues relating from this study must be reported immediately to the IRB. Additionally, any changes to protocols or informed consent documents must have IRB approval before implementation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Chad Atkinson, Ph.D.
Manager of Research
Sinclair Community College, Research, Analytics, and Reporting
Chair, Sinclair Institutional Review Board
Phone: 937-512-4118
chad.atkinson4026@sinclair.edu

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Date: April 12, 2018

To: Sandra Balkema
From: Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair
Re: IRB Application for Review

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, " *Institutional Responsiveness to African American Males Completing Post-Secondary Credential*" and determined that it does not meet the Federal Definition of research on human subjects, as defined by the Department of Health and Human Services or the Food and Drug Administration. This project does not meet the federal definition of research on human subjects because the project involves collecting data on 6-10 students at a specific institution with the intent of relating how their race, background and experiences connect and influence their collegiate experience. It provides valuable insights to the institution, however has limited generalizability and it represents more of a oral or case history. As such, approval by the Ferris IRB is not required for the proposed project.

This determination applies only to the activities described in the submission; it does not apply should changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities are research involving human subjects, submit a new request to the IRB for determination. This letter only applies to Ferris IRB Review; it is your responsibility to ensure all necessary institutional permissions are obtained and policies are met prior to beginning the project, such as documentation of institutional or department support. Note that quality improvement project findings may be published, but any findings presented or published should be clearly identified as part of a quality improvement initiative and not as research.

Your project will remain on file with the Ferris IRB for purposes of tracking research efforts at Ferris. Should you have any questions regarding the determination of this letter, please contact the IRB.

Regards,

Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair
Ferris State University Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs