A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ACADEMIC ADVISORS' CULTURALLY

RESPONSIVE ADVISING OF BLACK MALES AT AN URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

DURING COVID-19

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine how academic advisors utilized culturally competent academic advising in their engagement with Black males and if that advising had any impact on Black males' persistence while studying at an urban community college during a global pandemic. The phenomenological study utilized a mixed-method approach that explored academic advisors' culturally responsive academic advising of Black males at an urban community college during COVID-19 through general interviews questions and a questionnaire to collect statistical data. The purpose of a phenomenological study is to highlight a specific phenomenon through how it is perceived by the main actors of that situation (Bowes, 2017). Academic advisors have traditionally been the deliberators concerning school reforms as well as subjects for change (Allen & Smith, 2008). Comprehending the essence of academic advisors' thoughts, feelings, motivations, and responses regarding Black males is fundamental to how academic reforms are made (Carnaje, 2016; Bowes, 2017).

The results of the research study will add to the literature with the intent to inform academic advisors who advise Black males attending urban community colleges that culturally competent advising is an important skill that can be utilized to improve retention and graduation rates of Black male collegiate students (Vasquez & Wood, 2014).

Key Words: Black male students, COVID-19 pandemic, culturally competent academic advising, academic advising, cultural competency, mentoring, retention, persistence, graduation rates.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

On March 11, 2020, coronavirus (COVID-19) was classified as a pandemic because of the increase in confirmed cases of the virus globally (Bright, 2020). As institutions of higher education enacted quarantines, travel bans, as well as suspending in-person schooling, practitioners and policymakers implemented numerous new procedures to alleviate the public health impacts of COVID-19 (Di Petro et al., 2020). Simultaneously, the COVID-19 catastrophe exposed severe disparity and injustice occurring in higher education globally relating to people of color (Crawford et al., 2020). Due to COVID-19, students in Texas enrolled in community colleges experienced a storm of educational, health, financial, as well as familial challenges. Numerous Texas students faced merely days' notice regarding the loss of their on-campus housing or jobs. Along with the financial and housing insecurity, students confronted the extra challenges of adjusting to digital classrooms and attaining academic help, all under the austere stress of pandemic (Di Petro et al., 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2020). While the financial provision of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act has been useful for many Texans for meeting the challenges of COVID-19, numerous Texas students were excluded from that support overall. According to Brown (2020), direct payments of the CARES Act excluded any person over 17 years claimed as a dependent for tax purposes, which means that many college students in Texas who lost jobs, housing, or other campus resources did not get any direct support. While scholars might be mainly excluded from financial assistance, the Act comprised a $14.25 billion maintenance fund for higher education that would be allotted to states

as per their student population to aid higher education in response to COVID-19 (Brown, 2020; Di Petro et al., 2020).

The changes affected other student populations as well. Community colleges were becoming a greater source of academic and career development (Chang, 2005). Many urban community colleges rely on international scholars who usually pay full tuition. With such students barred from entering the country as part of the pandemic limitations, many colleges lost a substantial base of tuition fees (Orisbayev, 2021; Piotrowski & King, 2020). Moreover, staff and academic advisors at some colleges were already facing temporary pay cuts, furloughs, as well as layoffs. As the long-term effects of the pandemic continue, there are expectations that some small institutions might need to merge or close, while larger institutions might need to decrease substantial numbers of employees, or at least decrease their benefits and pay (Crawford et al., 2020). In this precarious environment, academic advisors strive to keep their students connected and help them by scheduling online appointments. In the impending months, academic advisors need to explore novel technological methods to serve students coming from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds (Di Pietro, 2020). For those living in low socio-economic areas, these colleges offer great support and smaller classrooms to allow for more teacher-student interaction. African American and Latino-Hispanic Americans are enrolling at community colleges more each year, which is an indicator for colleges that faculty development for cultural awareness and diversity inclusion are important methods that can support the interaction between students and instructors (Chang, 2005).

Urban community colleges define success through graduation rates and high retention; in both areas, minority groups have generally struggled (Miller et al., 2021). Community Colleges offer affordable tuition plans and fast-paced technical degrees that allow for the working student

to earn a quality level of education (Chang, 2005). According to Miller et al. (2021) working students attending a community college can continue supporting their families without increased debt and enroll in courses more often than at universities. Abdul-Alim (2020) would argue that African Americans, mainly Black males, have struggled nationwide having low retention, persistence, and graduation rates as compared to their white counterparts, while the enrollment rate for that group is improving. Black males face a lack of culturally competent and skilled teachers, lack of mentorship, low educational expectations by others, and a lack of community support. The research would further indicate that urban community colleges invest substantial energy in increasing mentorship programs for Black students (Abdul-Alim, 2020). Even if those mentors do not belong from that certain community, the necessity of academic advising cannot be overstated (Butler et al., 2020). Institutions must consider how academic advisors can integrate theoretical information in their advising practice as well as apply successful advising approaches in their interactions with Black students (Donaldson et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2019). Advisors assist students in getting connected with the institution from the very first semester by involving students in campus activities and resources (Palmer, 2014). This process starts with academic advisors being conscious of factors that increase enrollment, reduce drop out, and increase graduation rates of Black students, specifically Black males (Palmer, 2014; Smith, 2016).

The purpose of this study was to examine how academic advisors utilized culturally responsive advising in their engagement with Black males and if that advising had any impact on Black males' persistence while studying at an urban community college during a global pandemic. Retention and completion rates of racial and ethnic minority students continue to be a foremost concern for higher education researchers, policy makers, and practitioners (Museus &

Ravello, 2021). Proactive academic advisors can help create better scholastic experiences for Black males of urban community colleges (Johnson et al., 2019). Culturally competent advisors line up their advising strategies with the foundational aim of education to pose a greater influence on the future of the education sector (Strayhorn, 2015). For this study *Culturally Responsive Academic Advising* is defined as an Academic Advisor's ability to recognize a student's cultural background and influences, ethnic identity, nationality, socio-economic status or gender identity during an advising session and being able to promote, connect or provide institutional resources in an effort to support student retention (Allen, 2015; Coney, 2017; Back & Keys, 2020; Allen, 2021). It is about building warm and welcoming relationships with students of color to support high academic expectations and helping them navigate complex systems within the institution (Bowes, 2017). Comeaux et al. (2021) reviewed of *Cultural Competency*, which according to their findings, was documented first in the counseling psychology literature by Sue et al., (1982, 1992). Cultural Competency identifies suitable levels of awareness, knowledge, and skills among counseling professionals that address the needs of marginalized and culturally diverse populations (Sue & Sue, 2003; Vesely et al., 2017). Awareness incorporates being conscious of one's own cultural background and the ways this background can impact personal attitudes, values, and beliefs; knowledge refers to a variety of worldviews and value patterns of marginalized and culturally diverse populations; and skills entails the ability to effectively intercede and engage with these populations (Sue & Sue, 2003; Comeaux et al., 2021). Comeaux et al. (2021) highlighted that these three specific, yet interrelated dimensions have in many ways advanced our appreciation of cultural competence and significantly influenced the research, practice, and training of professionals.

Mbindyo et al. (2021) highlighted that *Transformational Leadership* (TL) can influence the practice of academic advising. The review emphasized that traditional advising methods and TL techniques share harmonizing intersections that warrant exploration. TL as applied in advising allows the advisor to incorporate behaviors that are likely to increase student motivation and achievement (Mbindyo et al., 2021). These behaviors include setting high expectations, generating measurable goals, encouraging self-management, openly distributing information and knowledge as well as intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, these behaviors, as noted by Mbindyo et al. (2021) provide advisors an opportunity to serve as an inspiration to their students through effective communication and by commitment to student's academic success.

Mbindyo et al. (2021) outlined these key areas from their study:

An advisor who embraces the tenets of TL is likely to,

- Influence students through motivation while respecting their individuality.

- Encourage students to seek help when they need it.

- Help identify areas in need of improvement and help students to realign their goals for academic success.

- Improve the mindset of students through proactive communication.

- Show professionalism in all areas of their work.

- Help with individual goal setting and goal commitment for students by holding them responsible for accomplishing those goals.

- Empower students to develop leadership characteristics through mutual responsibility and trust.

According to McClellan (2007) an advisor's responsibility includes leading students in the appropriate path through their college career. The definition of *Academic Advisi*ng can be further refined to include applying the information of a particular field to empower students, the campus, and community members to successfully pilot academic interactions related to higher

education (Larson et al., 2018). Young-Jones et al. (2013) emphasized academic advising as an activity enhanced student experiences by helping students set professional and personal goals, by encouraging students to take part in co- curricular activities as well as informing them about student development opportunities. In order for institutions of higher education to capitalize on the effectiveness of academic advising administrators must have a better understanding the qualities of advisors and the advising process that supports or hinders success among racial and ethnic minority college students (Museus & Ravello, 2021). In addition, research on faculty-student interactions can be utilized to understand how academic advisors should interact with undergraduates of color in significant ways that increase success among those students (Museus & Ravello, 2021). Given structural, cultural, and financial barriers, community college students often tend to obtain inadequate support in the area of academic advising (Martinez & Elue, 2020). Advisors are meant to establish meaningful connections between students and the institution (Morris & Miller, 2007), coaching, teaching, college policy interpretation, advocacy etc. (McClellan & Moser, 2011). According to McArthur (2005), Academic advising is one of the most effective retention strategies utilized by U.S. colleges and universities (Swecker, et al., 2013; Martinez & Elue, 2020). Martinez and Elue (2020) conducted a study about academic advising at community colleges that offer baccalaureate degrees and highlighted that there are examples of robust, dependable, and effective advising at community colleges, however, these efforts usually exist on a minor scale and are limited to certain programs and students (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera, 2016). Emekako and Van der Westhuizen (2021) also noted in their study of academic advising goes beyond mere recordkeeping of student academic activities (Drake, 2011). The literature expressed that academic advising is centered on the human art, or ability of building connections with students in a way that positively reveal the best personal, emotional

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and academic goals of students to attain academic success and, subsequently, their life goals. Furthermore, academic advising becomes one of the crucial tools useful to higher education stakeholders – such as faculty management, support centers of teaching and learning, and even professional associations – to increase student persistence and success (Emekako & Van der Westhuizen, 2021). Finally, the study highlighted time-management skills, study methods, better academic success and test and exam preparation as the highest-ranking reasons why students refer to an academic advisor (Emekako & Van der Westhuizen, 2021).

According to Johnson (2013), Black males can gain from the assistance and support that academic advisors provide (Jeschke et al., 2001). Johnson's (2013) study suggested that the importance of timing, trusting interpersonal relationships, culturally relevant advice, and even high expectations when it comes to advising Black males. Johnson (2013) noted the need for more college educators who serve in formal and informal advising roles, such as those who work in high schools as counselors, federal TRIO programs, precollege outreach programs, and the large and ever-growing number of Black male initiatives across the country (Johnson, 2013). Wood and Palmer's (2013) study of Black males at a community college found that Black males in the community college, in comparison to their male counterparts, have lower odds of establishing recognizing goals that are intrinsic and greater odds of having goals which are extrinsic in nature. The study noted that Black males had lower odds of wanting leisure time and living close to relatives, and greater odds of moving away. In addition, lower levels of interest in maintaining associations and personal improvement in relation to their peers, Asian, Hispanic and White males. In contrast, the study found that Black males were more likely to have goals of community leadership and financial prosperity, goals which are inherently extrinsic. Additional findings from the study referenced larger cultural and societal issues impacting differing

racial/ethnic groups as opposed to college-related aspirations (Wood & Palmer, 2013). Furthermore, findings from the study have propositions for diversity officers and other professionals in the community college. Lastly, professionals can serve to assist students' internalization of external goals, thereby motivating Black males toward improved personal development and, ultimately, greater levels of success. College professionals can aid students in achieving their personal goals in a variety of ways (Wood & Palmer, 2013).

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of the study was to examine how academic advisors utilized culturally responsive academic advising in their engagement with Black males and if that advising had any impact on Black males' persistence while studying at an urban community college during a global pandemic. Academic advisors have traditionally been the deliberators concerning school reforms as well as subjects for change (Allen & Smith, 2008). Comprehending the essence of academic advisors' thoughts, feelings, motivations, and responses regarding Black males is fundamental to how academic reforms are made (Carnaje, 2016; Bowes, 2017). The purpose of a phenomenological study is to highlight a specific phenomenon through how it is perceived by the main actors of that situation (Bowes, 2017). This approach normally translates into collecting deep information as well as perceptions of the people through inductive and qualitative methods like interviews, observation, or discussions, and presenting the information from the viewpoint of the participants (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018).

The phenomenological design was suitable for the current study since it uses detailed descriptions from subjects of their perceptions, motivations, thoughts, and lived experiences (Williams, 2012). This study utilized a mixed-method approach that explored academic advisors' culturally responsive advising of Black males at an urban community college during COVID-19

through general interviews questions and a questionnaire to collect statistical data. The results of the research study will add to the literature with the intent to inform academic advisors who advise Black males attending urban community colleges that culturally competent advising is an important skill that can be utilized to improve retention and graduation rates of Black male collegiate students (Vasquez & Wood, 2014).

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Academic advising is among the most critical functional areas of higher education, where students access resources, tools, and information to successfully navigate through college (Vasquez et al., 2020). A group of students that is likely to gain much from the assistance of academic advisors is Black college men, particularly considering evidence about their unjustified position in postsecondary educational institutes (Bowes, 2017). With COVID-19 and with community colleges limiting and occasionally excluding in-person classes, advisors are required to take novel approaches to give scholars the guidance they require without possibly putting them at risk. As protests against racial inequality in education continue to occur across the state, a demand has emerged to hire more diverse persons of color to offer students of color the services they need (Wick & Willis, 2020).

At some institutions, students are also demanding that colleges make new advising centers precisely staffed by and designated for people of color (Back & Keys, 2020; McPherson & Marrero, 2021; Vasquez et al., 2020). Student Affairs experts find this request to be fair, considering the lack of individuals of color employed in campus advising centers and how black males currently need academic advice during the pandemic (Johnson et al., 2019). As minority student enrollment increases at urban community colleges, students of color are rapidly becoming the majority, however, the employee diversity at institutions does not mirror the

cultural shift of the student population (Wick & Willis, 2020). Therefore, it is significant to explore the academic advisors' culturally responsive advising of Black males at an urban community college during COVID-19 to ensure the academic success of Black males (Vasquez et al., 2020; Smith & Allen, 2016). This research study is intended for academic advisors, advising centers and institutional leaders at urban community colleges who collectively support retention and graduation efforts for Black male students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This mixed-method study aimed to explore academic advisors' culturally responsive advising of Black males at an urban community college during COVID-19. The purpose of the study was to examine how academic advisors utilized culturally competent advising in their engagement with Black males and if that advising had any impact on Black males' persistence while studying at an urban community college during a global pandemic.

The following questions guided the research investigation:

1. What do academic advisors believe about culturally responsive academic advising and its impact on enrollment, persistence, and success of Black males at an urban community college?

2. What were academic advisors' perceptions of Black males who attend urban community colleges compared to all other students who attend the same institution?

3. What were academic advisors' perceptions regarding urban community college's ability to support Black male students in comparison to other types of collegiate institutions?

4. What were the perceptions of academic advisors regarding how senior administration and the institution treated Black males within urban community colleges during COVID-19?

5. Were academic advisors providing more, less, or the same resources for Black males as compared to other students during COVID-19?

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6. Were academic advisors encouraged by the administration to participate in mentoring activities centered on Black males?

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The phenomenological mixed-method study included limitations as well as delimitations, which were observed to assess the limits of the study. There are numerous limitations to the research, comprising the possible participant bias. The participants may attempt to give culturally satisfactory responses to please the researcher and may overwhelmingly choose and state socially acceptable responses. Moreover, the survey was limited in its scope and might not accurately represent the beliefs of all academic advisors. To diminish the potential bias, the study utilized the bracketing technique. Bracketing relates to suspending the judgment regarding the natural world and using pictures with diverse exposure settings. Bracketing helps in restraining the bias as well as preconceived notions of participants (Williams, 2012).

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

The mixed-method study utilized qualitative and quantitative methods to capture information from participants for this case study. For the qualitative method, referred to as *Phase One* six purposively selected six academic advisors who engaged in direct one-on-one interviews with the researcher for sessions that lasted no longer than sixty minutes. These selected six participants were full-time academic advisors working within various campuses within the same urban community college. The sessions comprised of six interview questions that were presented by the researcher during the interview to allow for a direct response from the participant. The study captured recorded and stored video/audio from the individual interviews with each participant to produce a transcription of the responses. Purposeful sampling for qualitative research allowed for the researcher to best select a small number of participants for a better

understanding of the problem and research questions (Creswell, 2013). The responses of the participants and the findings of the study have been furthered explored in Chapter IV. The transcriptions were shared with the participants to allow them to provide accuracy and clarification regarding responses.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIONS

The study involved interviews of six academic advisors. Three female academic advisors and three male academic advisors. Of the three female advisors, 1 was Black and 2 White, and of the three male advisors 1 was Asian, 1 White, and 1 Black. All original names of the participants were coded to protect their identities as outlined in the study's Informed Consent.

Survey Data Collection

Phase Two consisted of a survey in the form of a questionnaire which was collected from thirteen at-large academic advisors within the urban community college to gather additional information related to the research questions. The questionnaire was administered utilized Qualtrics and was sent via email to all academic advisors not in the control group within the community college district during the same time as individual interviews were taking place. No individual personal information was gathered from the surveys, and no direct interaction with these participants occurred. The questions focused on advisors' knowledge of male diversity and retention within the college, advisors' engagement in cultural competency training, and advisors' perceptions of how they felt the institution perceived of Black male students who were enrolled.

SETTING FOR THE STUDY

The study focused on the entire district that was within the urban community college system, which in 2020, was located in the largest city consisting of 6,371 residents within the

Southeast Texas region and the fourth largest city in the United States (Macrotrends, 2020). The institution of the study was a Hispanic Serving and Minority Serving Institution with eighteen individual campuses located in the largest county in Southeast Texas. The overall student population in 2020 was 58,276 students enrolled, of which 85% were of minorities. Tuition was $3,358 per year, and the teacher-to-student ratio was 1:44. The enrolled full-time students were 17,288 and the 40,988 part-time students were all commuter students. The demographic breakdown of the student demographics was Asian (11%), Hispanic (30%), African American (27%), Caucasian (15%), Other (16%). The gender breakdown was 50% male, 50% female, and the majority of student household income was below $25,000 per year. The enrollment per gender per ethnicity was African American males (9,117), African American females (16,575), Hispanic males (12,178), Hispanic females (17,114), Caucasian males (6,130), Caucasian females (6,269), Asian males (5,720), Asian females (6,421), Other males (1,566) and Other females (1,929). The overall diversity rate was .79, higher than the state's diversity rate, which was .69.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

To avoid confusion, the following definitions are offered for terms used throughout this dissertation.

- Phenomenological Study: A qualitative research that is theoretically informed by interviewing people about their lived experiences to comprehend what influences impact their behavior. The research does not need to refute or confirm to the hypothesis or peripheral behavior in any research situation (Williams, 2012).

- Academic Advisors: A kind of counselor or mentor who works with scholars and is responsible for assisting students to select their major and minor at the college level. They provide educationally related information as well as guidance to students throughout their educational tenure to ensure their educational success (Carnaje, 2016).

- Academic Advising: Can be further refined to include applying the information of a particular field to empower students, the campus, and community members to successfully pilot academic interactions related to higher education (Larson et al., 2018). Young-Jones et al. (2013) emphasized academic advising as an activity enhanced student experiences by helping students set professional and personal goals, by encouraging students to take part in co- curricular activities as well as informing them about student development opportunities.

- Cultural Competency: Identifies suitable levels of awareness, knowledge, and skills among counseling professionals that address the needs of marginalized and culturally diverse populations. Awareness incorporates being conscious of one's own cultural background and the ways this background can impact personal attitudes, values, and beliefs; knowledge refers to a variety of worldviews and value patterns of marginalized and culturally diverse populations; and skills entails the ability to effectively intercede and engage with these populations (Sue & Sue, 2003; Vesely et al., 2017; Comeaux et al., 2021).

- Culturally Responsive Academic Advising: An Academic Advisor's ability to recognize a student's cultural background and influences, ethnic identity, nationality, socio-economic status or gender identity during an advising session and being able to promote, connect or provide institutional resources in an effort to support student retention (Allen, 2015; Coney, 2017; Back & Keys, 2020; Allen, 2021).

- Transformational Leadership: TL as applied in advising allows the advisor to incorporate behaviors that are likely to increase student motivation and success (Nandedkar, Mbindyo & O'Connor, 2020). These behaviors include setting high expectations, creating measurable goals, encouraging self-management, openly sharing information and knowledge and intrinsic motivation.

- Black Males: The category of Black males refers to males having origins from a Black race of Africa. African Americans are a racial group of Americans having ancestry from racial clusters of Africa (Crawford et al., 2020).

- Urban Community College: Colleges located close to or in major urban cities. They play a major role in higher education by aiding educationally, economically, and ethnically disadvantaged, as well as nationally varied student populations (Scott et al., 2013).

- COVID-19: It refers to Coronavirus disease 2019, a current pandemic, which is caused by a virus named coronavirus. The virus spread through direct human contact from an infected individual and by touching the places contaminated with coronavirus (Yoshikawa et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

This research study examined literature that highlighted economic, cultural, and institutional systemic issues that have been indicative of the academic and career success of Black males in college (Griffith, 2015; Griffin, 2016). The importance of culturally responsive academic advising as it relates to retention of Black males in college is an essential component as advisors may have a critical role in the fight against societal influences that may have a negative impact in the life of Black male college student (Coney, 2017; Druery, 2019; Donaldson et al., 2020). The urban community college located within an urban city also plays an important role in the success of a Black male collegiate student as their environment, which in some cases they cannot change their physical local, the college itself and all the amenities it provides could be a safe haven for students (Bowes, 2017; Boyd & Mitchell, 2018; Hines, 2020). This research study, the setting, the participants and the location produced a set of critical findings that could potentially influence the way academic advising centers, institutional leaders and even students themselves determine if urban institutions are adequately equipped to support Black male students. The literature, that is highlighted in Chapter II, references re-existing concerns related to the persistence rates of Black males regardless of the institutional setting. The results of this study identified that academic advising at its core is essential based on the responses of the participants. Chapter II reviewed additional research related to how health concerns, the pandemic, and the importance of programs that support Black males. In addition, the importance of culturally responsive academic advising as the central theme is explored as the foundational element which is associated with how academic advisors can be more effective in their engagement with Black male students. Furthermore, the findings of this study, which are

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addressed in Chapter IV, referenced that colleges have to take more of a direct approach in

supporting marginalized populations in a more strategic manner.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The current phenomenological study aims to explore the academic advisors' culturally responsive advising of Black males at an urban community college during COVID-19. The purpose of the study is to examine how academic advisors perceive and advise Black males and how advising impacted Black male enrollment, persistence, and success during a pandemic. This chapter will explore literary research and empirical data to provide a historical and present review concerning health and educationally related topics. These topics referenced themes that have impacted the Black community, Black male academic achievement, and culturally responsive practices in institutions of higher learning.

THE IMPACT OF ILLNESS AND DISEASE ON THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Illness and disease, such as AIDS, HIV have presented a constant narrative of health issues in the Black community that intrinsically have had negative impacts in many areas of the life of Black families, namely Black males (Bogart et al., 2019; Volpe et al., 2021). If Black males are living in households where sickness, death, and medical bills are high, these stressors could lead to a decline in collegiate engagement due to the various pressures in the home (Adebayo et al., 2020; Nonan et al., 2016; Volpe et al., 2021). A social-ecological research model was conducted nationwide data on the health of African Americans (Noon et al., 2016). Several studies noted that the Black community was the highest at-risk demographic in the United States with health-related issues that impacted their quality of life (McBride et al., 1988; Noon et al., 2016; Fabisiak et al., 2020). Although the policies and resources to eliminated health

inequalities are present in America, there has been an insufficient long-standing commitment to funding and successfully implementing strategies to support health equity opportunities (Murphy & Taylor, 2020). The Black community has not been present in the political or fiscal positions to guarantee the successful planning and execution of long-term efforts (Adebayo et al., 2020; Sekou, 2020). Thus, it was observed that the well-being of the Black community is not a priority of policymakers while they also do not have adequate knowledge of the history and social mores of the Black community. However, the findings of the study could be outdated since it utilized a systematic review and relied solely on secondary data, thus, primary and current data were lacking (Noonan et al., 2016).

Kershaw et al. (2015) highlighted the risk of several diseases that varies across races. It was found that Black males displayed the greatest risk for cancer, heart disease, HIV, as well as unintentional injuries, with 46% of Black males suffering cardiovascular diseases due to having high blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol, obesity, smoking, and physical inactivity (American Sociological Association, 2015; Bogart et al., 2019; Uzoeghelu et at., 2021). It was found that African Americans are facing the ill effects of deprived health since healthcare facilities are often not readily available to them. However, the research is limited as additional work is required to better describe the individual pathways connected with the risk of several diseases (Kershaw et al., 2015). Racial health inequalities linked with hypertension in the Black community warrant greater attention, and that comprehensive care policies are compulsory to successfully eradicate the burden of hypertension in the Black community (Musemwa & Gadegbeku, 2017; Laurencin et al., 2021). Health effects of hypertension was nearly 50% of mortality rate in the Black community and their pathophysiology was also found to be complex due to the interaction of poor social, genetic, and biological factors predominant in the Black community (Musemwa &

Gadegbeku, 2017). These factors indicated that pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic therapy were needed, along with treatment guidelines for the Black community. Multi-disciplinary research was noted to be an important factor to comprehend the inter-relationship between different biological factors to support more promising treatments (Musemwa & Gadegbeku, 2017).

Nearly 22% of US counties comprised of African Americans which accounted for around 52% of diagnoses and 58% of deaths due to COVID-19 (Bright, 2020). Data regarding the cases and deaths due to COVID-19 in US counties defined racial inequalities that identified publicly accessible predictors of coronavirus cases and deaths and compared the data for Black and other communities. Structural racism, social conditions, and other factors increased the risk of COVID-19 deaths and diagnoses in Black communities (Laurencin et al., 2021; Volpe et al., 2021). These health disparities ascend from a complex interaction of underlying environmental, social, financial, and structural inequalities (Douglas et al., 2021; Phiri et al., 2021). However, the county-level data accessible here signify an ecological analysis that can be subjected to structural confounding since more Black individuals reside in urban centers that are more affected by the COVID-19 (Bright, 2020); McClendon, 2021). Black individuals were being admitted to hospitals as well as dying in unequal numbers due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Peek et al., 2021). The *Washington Post* noted that Black counties had three times more COVID-19 infection rate and six times more death rates than White counties (Scott, 2020). The excessive deaths of African Americans had been tied to pre-existing underlying medical illnesses including obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and asthma in Black communities (Douglas et at., 2021; McClendon, 2021). However, the actual scale of health inequality is unknown since very few states include ethnic data. Many Black individuals in the US also work in indispensable jobs that

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require in-person interaction and cannot be accomplished from home (Williams, 2020). Most of them also reside in southern states in which Republican governors postponed lockdowns and downplayed the risk of virus. These concerns were only a small variance of what the major underlining health inequalities were that the Black community had been facing (Williams, 2020; Peek et al., 2021).

The Black community experiences more obesity and is more debilitated by related illnesses (Hastings, 2019; Keiser, 2021; Tamrat, 2021). The research aimed to examine the association between self-reported health and obesity across four gender and racial specific groups of the Black population to evaluate whether health inequalities are gender or race driven. According to Hastings' (2019) data for 5,191 persons was collected using the National Survey of American Life and analyzed using logistic regression models. The study found a statistically significant link between self-reported health and obesity, where health was found to be decreasing with increasing obesity levels in all groups, but especially in Black women (Laurencin et al., 2021). Thus, it was found that obesity harms the self-rated health of the Black population even if a chronic disease like diabetes is absent, recommending that health experts should emphasize healthy weight strategies that are specific and relevant to Black culture to resolve obesity health inequality in African Americans (Hastings, 2019; Keiser, 2021).

INSTITUTIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF BLACK MALES IN COLLEGE

In addition to various health related issues impacting the Black community higher education enrollment for Black males was also greatly impacted during the COVID pandemic (Volpe et al., 2021). Institutional perceptions prior to and during this time influenced enrollment and persistence of Black males (Wright, 2018; Di Petro et al., 2020). The importance of focusing on the institutional characteristics; the degree of urbanization, geographic region, size, and

faculty and staff demographics could have a major impact on the institutions perception of Black males and their graduation rates (Vasquez et al., 2014). Museus' (2014) Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) model was formalized due to an assessment of prevailing college persistence and completion models. In the CECE model, the learning environment is conceptualized in terms of perceptions of belonging, student support, and opportunities to connect to and contribute to one's own cultural community (Museus, 2014). In addition, the survey's measures prompt students to identify and reflect on their cultural communities. The CECE survey allows for specific nuanced self-identification of racial and cultural heritages, along with other characteristics and identities (Museus, 2014; McDougal III, 2021). Campus climate operates as heuristic because it provides educational scholars and experts readily accepted ways to intellectualize and to assess aspects of the environments in the social world (Hertwig & Hoffrage, 2013; Abrica et al., 2021). Bottiani's et al. (2016) findings indicated the necessity for intervention to advance student support services for Black students, mainly in less diverse and lower-income colleges. Supportive associations with Black students are critical for student engagement. Narratives were comprised of 43 Black males who were enrolled in a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) to assess their perspectives about campus racial climate and diversity. Findings proposed that both race and ethnicity shape manners in which Black males engage in campus activities. Arguments made by Griffin et al. (2016) viewed the possible range of standpoints within the Black student community, concentrating specifically on differences by nativity and ethnicity. An observational study was conducted to assess the discipline gap in Black–White males in 58 Maryland colleges using a sample of 19,726 students (Bottiani et al., 2017). The study employed a multilevel framework and collected data from the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights and Maryland Safe and Supportive Schools

School Climate Survey. Bottiani et al. (2017) found that college-level discipline gaps were linked with Black students' views of less school belonging, less school equity, and amplified adjustment problems, even when accounting for contextual factors and student demographics, whereas white students enjoyed more equity, belonging, and were readily adjusted. The study also assessed the risk of Black students' out-of-school suspension which was found to be negatively linked with perceived school belonging and equity and positively linked with adjustment difficulties. Griffin et al. (2016) also noted that Black immigrants experienced and perceived more lack of ethnic diversity and stereotyping within the campus, whereas native Black students faced more recurrent social marginalization. In addition, the students communicated interest in building relationships with peers from varied backgrounds, however, noted fluctuating levels of inclusion as well as a desire to find friendly settings in which they can engage with their peers (Griffin et al., 2016). A qualitative method was utilized to document the practices and ideologies of teachers who engage with Black male students (Allen, 2015). Overall, Allen (2015) found that most teachers drew upon opposing cultural and structural descriptions of Black males while describing their academic and social outcomes. Teachers also engaged in practices that generated obstacles for Black males. The teachers' beliefs and practices with Black male students were varying in many ways; however, they did display agency in support of Black males which was a vital component to the educational progress of those students (Allen, 2015).

Turner (2020) argued that two-year Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) often create spaces of racial separation which becomes an issue due to the prevailing white culture that sets the foundation for campus climate. African American students at PWIs may spend a lot of energy and time dealing with impressions of alienation and vexation from their campus environment, as well as a lack of institutional support (Campbell et al., 2019). Observing racial

discrimination can also lead to race-related stress, which is caused by the psychological anxiety that results from a situation or event that an individual considers as distressing because of racial discrimination or isolation (Campbell et al., 2019). Allen (2021) further argued that that White faculty tends to hold lower academic expectations for Black males and limit their exchanges with Black male students. Additionally, Black men on campus are often thought to be cisgender, heterosexual, and athletes, and gay Black men have described how racism, homophobia, and heteronormativity intersect in distinct ways that inform their educational experiences and sense of belonging (Nadal et al., 2011; Allen, 2021).

The impact on faculty of color could also weigh in on how Black males are supported. Underrepresented minority faculty, specifically Black women, at predominantly white institutions also recognized discrimination against themselves as they sought to engage with students of color (Porter et al., 2020). Discriminatory institutional practices, like micro-aggressions, contributed to and manifested unwelcoming institutional climates (Zambrana et al., 2017). Zambrana et al. (2017) highlighted three important findings that revealed that the data included significant degrees of outright, subtle, or blatant ethnic discrimination, undervaluing the merit and competency of Black males, along with the burden of undue diversity work. The study used a mixed-method quantitative and qualitative review with findings that indicated that 543 Black respondents reported extreme racial discrimination and various racist encounters. Certain studies highlighted that Black female faculty were more likely than Black males to report that faculty meetings and committees created additional stress but were more likely to give academic and personal support to their students (Zambrana et al., 2017). Egan (2019) argued that to address underrepresentation of minority faculty and staff, educational leaders should consider promoting for an empirically supported three-pronged approach to include a hiring committee

toolkit, a cultural competency and implicit bias video or workshop, and professional mentoring. The suggested interventions by no means serve as the sole remedy to these complex issues, but higher education leaders should create more direct opportunities that lead to more equitable institutions for marginalized faculty, who could in turn, support marginalized populations (Egan, 2019). Brooms and Davis (2017) emphasized the student voice on this issue stating, "…students continue to desire increased diversity on college campuses in general and also call for increases in recruiting and retaining Black faculty members more specifically" (p. 322). Post-secondary institutions faculty and staff should work to increase diversity among their peers on campus and should implement evidence-based practices to mitigate the experiences Black male undergraduates encounter on some college campuses (Brooms & Davis, 2017).

ENROLLMENT AND PERSISTENCE OF BLACK MALES IN COLLEGE

Enrollment and persistence of Black males in college have long been a challenge across all fifty states and all types of academic institutions (Harper, 2015; Hines et al., 2020). A case study by Boyd and Mitchell (2018) pursued to solve the issue of the insufficient narrative of Black males in colleges by emphasizing how they persisted in colleges despite facing extreme stereotypes and how they managed those continuing experiences. Six participants were selected for the study while the data was collected through naturalistic observations and interviews. Boyd and Mitchell (2018) found that the research suggested that the Black participants greatly suffered internalized feelings because of constant stereotyping which were reinforced in numerous ways. However, they managed to persist throughout the college by ignoring, confronting, and dispelling those stereotypes, in addition to alleviating pressures linked with stereotypes. Furthermore, the participants also offered advice to other Black males as they enroll through college (Boyd & Mitchell, 2018).

Prospere (2018) conducted a phenomenological study to comprehend how at-risk Black male students who attended Central Florida high schools are at elevated risk for failure and how mentoring influences their motivation for enrolling in colleges. The underlying theories that guided this research comprised Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Newman, 2018), Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Basford et al., 2021), and Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (Kitchen & Hypolite, 2021). The findings suggested the need for colleges to implement well-structured mentoring programs that can serve as a tool for intervention. Similarly, mentoring programs can be utilized to progress the academic accomplishment of at-risk Black males and enhance their motivation for enrolling in colleges (Hines et al., 2020). Mentoring can also help to cultivate significant relationships between students and mentors who would simplify the enhancement of perseverance, cognitive engagement, enthusiasm, and behavior which can aid academic advancement (Prospere, 2018). Hines et al. (2020) emphasized that college persistence even begins before Black males finish high school. The influence and support from school college readiness counselors is important regarding interactions with parents and knowing more about the life outside of school of Black males (Basford et al., 2021; Hines et al., 2019; Hines et al., 2020). Brooms and Davis (2017) examined the collegiate involvement of 59 African American males at three different historically white institutes to see how these Black males form meaning from their efforts for learning success and from their college experiences. The findings of the emphasized that Black males were confronted by a lack of perspective that frequently translated into a lack of expectations from them across the college environment and positioned them as outsiders. Brooms and Davis (2017) would note that these Black males expressed two critical constituents of the college experience that constructively shaped their persistence, which included peer-to-peer bonding or links with other Black students in addition to mentoring they

received from Black teachers. Findings recommended that these micro-communities and social networks both enhanced and supported the persistence of Black males in college (Brooms & Davis, 2017). This argument is consistent with the notion that institutions should be helping Black males set high expectations for their success while in college (Egan, 2019; Hines et al., 2020). Proctor et al. (2018) also investigated the experiences and perceptions of eight African American students about their persistence and retention towards Psychology degree completion. Findings specified that participants considered that faculty offered positive support to all students, and they enjoy supportive interactions with faculty members in addition to access to diversity, which proved to be effective retention strategies for them. In addition, participants also defined reliance and social engagement with family and peers as effective persistence strategies (Proctor et al, 2018). The research provides a strong parallel to student persistence and faculty engagement (Lewis, 2016; Egan, 2019). It is highly recommended for colleges that are interested in retaining Black students to work to create strategies for faculty to really take more of a direct approach to student success (Lewis, 2016; Proctor et al., 2018).

Swanson et al. (2017) argued that the gender gap was related to academic difficulties, enrollment, and graduation rate of 828 Black students. The research revealed a considerable gender gap where Black males showed greater rates of academic complications, lower college enrollment, as well as lower graduation rates as compared to their female counterparts. This actually showed a thirty-year difference in trends where Smith (1988) found that Black males had higher grades and opportunities over Black females. There were also substantial differences observed in first-term GPA as well as 1st and 3rd-year persistence in both cohorts when cohorts were matched with a control group of White students. The study presented convincing evidence for greater academic difficulties, lower enrollment, and lower graduation rates of Black students

as compared to White students (ASHE Higher Education Report, June 2014). Black males experienced more social stigma and masculine norms, which make them seek less social support (Swanson et al., 2017). However, as related to mental and physical health in college, Felder et al. (2019) found that Black men recognized that engagement with their Black female counterparts actually had positive results on their persistence. Black males would often receive encouragement from Black women which influenced positive health behaviors (Felder et al., 2019). This is consistent with Gardner (2021) in relation to increases in recruitment and enrollment efforts for Black students, especially related to the decline in community college enrollment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Research indicated that students of color persistence is intertwined for both genders, meaning, these groups of students depend on each other for collegiate success (Dean & Provost, 2021; Gardner, 2021).

Coney (2017) reviewed Black male students' differential perceptions about institutional services and their consequent effects on their persistence in colleges. The study utilized data from 212 Black males enrolled in an urban community college using a Community College Survey of Men. The study analyzed the data using covariance or ANCOVA which the findings demonstrated that students' perceptions and experiences of institutional services differ meaningfully across levels of persistence, especially for male students who expected to exit before concluding their educational objectives. It was found that institutional services greatly contributed towards their degree completion (Coney, 2017). This is consistent with Palmer (2014) regarding how TRIO Programs help support low-income Black males gain exposure to college resources prior to becoming official students. Black males can begin to develop connections with support staff and build familiarity with institutional support services, such as admissions reps, financial aid specialists, and academic advisors (Palmer, 2014). Ottley and Ellis

(2019) aimed to find out the administrator and student perception of retention strategies used by Black males in colleges. It was found out that the graduation and retention rate of Black males at colleges is extremely dismal when compared to white males. Ottley and Ellis (2019) recorded that only 30% of Black males get enrolled in a four-year college earn a degree as compared to 57% white males. It was found out that retention initiatives for Black males were perceived to be monolithic by both administrators and students (Hines et al., 2019; Ottley & Ellis, 2019).

Moreover, Davis and Otto (2016) assessed the factors affecting the reverse gender gap between Black males and females in college enrollment and compares them with the factors influencing the gender gap between Whites. Data was used from the National Educational Longitudinal Study and logistic regression. It was found that Black males fare poorer than all race-gender groups on nearly every predictor of enrollment, where the strongest factor was lower academic performance which is reoccurring element in the literature (Villavicencio et al., 2013; Davis & Otto, 2016; Morona, 2021). Returns on social, academic, and family economic features differ along with gender and racial lines; however, the strongest variances in returns were between ethnic groups instead of genders of the same race. Thus, Black scholars benefit less from positive peer influences, higher GPAs, and parental economic assets than whites, while Black male students benefit least from positive peer influences, higher GPAs, and parental economic assets than Black females (Davis & Otto, 2016).

Harper (2015) explored how undergraduate Black males resist and respond to the internalized stereotyping at PWIs. For this reason, interviews were conducted with 221 Black males at 30 PWIs, while they were selected by their campus administrators based on the criteria of having a 3.0 GPA. The findings displayed those undergraduate Black males were regularly confronted with stereotypes; however, they resisted them utilizing their campus leadership roles,

engagement in student groups, and by using a three-step redirection process. Confrontation and communication skills learned through out-of-class involvement enabled Black males to efficiently resist the damaging threat of ethnic stereotypes faced in classrooms. However, due to the restricted number of administrators who inquired to nominate students, selection bias could be present, which is a major limitation of the study (Harper, 2015).

BLACK MEN IN EDUCATION DEGREE PATHWAYS

Various assumptions about Blackness and maleness have shaped struggles for Black civic recognition, consider social studies an essential point of withdrawal for an investigation into what it means to belong within the Black community and within the communities that comprise the African Diaspora (Woodson et al., 2020). While necessary across school disciplines, interrogations of Black masculine visions of leadership and history might produce uniquely rich conclusions within social studies. Social studies draw themes and content from civics, economics, history, geography, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, among other disciplines and fields. The importance in the presence of Black teachers in academic backdrops does have an impact on student outcomes (Allen & Smith, 2008; Brooms & Davis, 2017). When Black students have a Black teacher, they are more likely to be in gifted programs, disciplined less frequently, have increased standardized test scores, and graduation rates (Butler et al., 2012; Richardson, 2019). Additionally, Black male teachers play a critical role serving as father figures in teaching positions and improving overall academic outcomes (Richardson, 2019). While their presence is critical in the academic setting, their representation is dismal. Nationally, Black men comprise only 2% of teachers (Richardson, 2019).

A case study by Richardson (2019) recommended that a counter narrative is created regarding Black males and their interest in education degree programs. The study emphasized

that Black men are present in education degree programs. Creating this counter narrative can assist in attracting more Black males into education degree programs. Many Black males pursuing degrees in education are informed that education is the entrance to the American Dream (Smith et al., 2011). A strong desire to complete a degree is rooted in the longing for Black males to become educated. In a cyclical way, educated Black males tend to produce more educated Black males. Impacting the next generation is a strong motivation for Black males to pursue education degrees (Smith et al., 2011). In examining the representation of Black males in education degree programs at the top 50 minority producing degree programs, Richardson et al. (2019) found that a total of 2,262 Black males enrolled in the top 50 programs in 2017. The top 10 list of these schools included Ashford University (407), Grand Canyon University (137), Georgia State University(93), Jackson State University (92), Liberty University (72), Kaplan University-Davenport (67), University of Memphis (63), LSU–A&M College (56), Alabama State University (53) and University of Central Florida (51), This indicates that Black men are indeed present in education degree programs. Additionally, 18% of these Black men were enrolled exclusively at one university, which is featured as an online university. The concentration of Black men in education degree programs at online universities should warrant further investigation. Examination of the Top 50 data reveals that approximately 32% of these Black males attended HBCUs and 68% were enrolled at PWIs. These findings suggest that Black males are more likely to enroll in education degree programs at PWIs. Based on findings, approximately one-third of Black males are enrolled in online education degree programs based while two-third were enrolled in brick-and-mortar colleges and universities. Additionally, the top two universities account for 24% of the Black male enrollment and both were fully online programs. This demonstrated a higher concentration of enrolled Black males in online education

degree programs. Richardson et al. (2019) highlighted that utilizing this data to connect Black males across high enrollment education degree programs, could be a catalyst for their persistent and retention within the field. Education programs must also begin to resist the old adage that Black males are not interested in becoming teachers or educators, as this was dispelled from the findings of the study.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ACADEMIC ADVISING

Culturally Responsive Academic Advising as defined is an Academic Advisor's ability to recognize a student's cultural background and influences, ethnic identity, nationality, socio-economic status or gender identity during an advising session and being able to promote, connect or provide institutional resources in an effort to support student retention (Allen, 2015; Coney, 2017; Back & Keys, 2020; Allen, 2021). Focusing on the importance of academic advising, Bowes (2015) performed a sequential explanatory study to assess the impact of response academic advising on the academic achievement of 23 Black males enrolled in colleges. Bowes used a culturally responsive model of academic advisement. The study found out that Black males met their advisors, therefore, met academic benchmarks because of effective and culturally responsive academic advising (Bowes, 2017). In Wood's (2014) study the researcher examined academic variables affecting persistence of Black males and discovered that Black males had the lowest 3-year graduation rate among all racial ethnic peers within the community college. Consistent with Smith and Allen (2016) and with Palmer (2014), Wood (2014) emphasized the importance of academic advising services as an integral component of Black male student success. Whether the advising come is provided by a faculty member or a student-affairs professional, the literature continues to reflect the notion that cultural-competent advising is essential (Noy & Ray, 2012; Gillett, 2016).

Donaldson et al. (2016) also analyzed the link between college success and intrusive academic advising by conducting in-person interviews with twelve Black students. It was found out that students assumed that compulsory advising had a negative implication and stated that they would not have sought help except if it was needed, stating that it played no role in their college success. It is generally assumed that the support obtained from the academic advisor helps scholars develop their educational goals, instills help-seeking behaviors, and increases their confidence (Wood, 2014). This is consistent with Campbell (2019) that intrusive advising allows for an opportunity more personal engagement with students (Donaldson et al., 2016).

Comeaux et al. (2021) reviewed *Cultural Competency*, which according to this study, identifies suitable levels of awareness, knowledge, and skills among counseling professionals that address the needs of marginalized and culturally diverse populations (Sue & Sue, 2003; Vesely et al., 2017). Cultural Competency awareness incorporates being conscious of one's own cultural background and the ways this background can influence personal attitudes, values, and beliefs; knowledge refers to a variety of worldviews and value patterns of marginalized and culturally diverse populations; and skills entails the ability to effectively intervene and engage with these populations (Sue & Sue, 2003; Comeaux et al., 2021). Cuyject (2020), related to cultural competence noted, the importance of the awareness of the different cultural characteristics in others around us. Cuyject (2020) emphasized that student affairs practitioners as they grow in cultural competence, should also strive to cultivate cultural competence ideals in students in order that students to will have a real appreciation of other cultures and have value for the characteristics of members of those other cultural groups. In addition, appreciating the cultural values of people different from themselves, there is a need to teach students to recognize

the importance, worth, dignity, and quality of those characteristics in and among others without degrading them (Cuyject, 2020).

Smith and Allen's (2008) research focused on culturally responsive academic advising from the perspective of students enrolled in an urban university. The study surveyed 2,100 students to see which functions of advising were most significant to them. Results indicated that scholars rated all advising functions as highly significant; however, satisfaction with academic advising was not proportionate with the significance scholars attached to it. Student characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, financial need, enrollment status, age, and level of education influenced the significance but not contentment with advising functions. Black and multi-ethnic scholars rated several functions to be significant than white students, which suggests that they may lack good academic advising as compared to whites. However, all of them were not satisfied with the academic advising provided. The study did not include the implications for academic advisors and did not conclude the changes which are needed to be made to progress the outcomes of academic advising (Smith & Allen, 2016).

Carnaje (2016) evaluated various characteristics, approaches, and perspectives of students and faculty on academic advising and found out that both students and faculty agreed about the general functions of academic advising for attaining academic success. However, the study did not examine the experiences of academic advising of Black students yet attempted to understand that the interactions between Black students and advisors are vital, and culturally competent advising of these ethnic minorities is required in PWIs. The study also suggested that by understanding the characteristics, approaches, and perspectives of Black students on academic advising, these institutions can offer inclusive academic settings, generate positive advising affairs, and increase the retention and general success of Black students (Carnje, 2016; Smith &

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Allen, 2016). Nonetheless, due to the restricted nature of data collection and the omission of Black students, the findings of the study are not deemed generalizable (Carnaje, 2016). Lee (2018) aimed to discuss advocacy, affirmation, and support in relation to culturally-response academic advising of Black males in PWIs using critical race theory. It was found that students want to connect with academic advisors who genuinely help them to succeed (Strayhorn, 2015; Lee, 2018). Students enter higher education institutions as complex individuals with multiple identities that shape their college journey (Woodson et al., 2020). While recognizing the experiences of students, advocating for them, and supporting them through oppression are significant for all students, the nature of oppression, power, and privilege associated with majority White advisors proves to be a barrier for Black students (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Swanson et al., 2017). Thus, to work efficiently with Black students, advisors need to consider the wider implications of interpersonal and systemic racialized oppression and must work as an antiracist (Coney, 2017). They should fight and speak against racist policies, ideologies, norms, and procedures to disassemble the broader system (Smith et al., 2011). They should consciously and consistently pursue culturally-response academic advising, adjusting accordingly to make sure that they are retreating the racialized privilege consistently at play (Smith et al., 2011; Smith & Allen, 2016). However, the findings of the study could be outdated since it utilized a systematic review and relied solely on secondary data, thus, primary, and current data was lacking (Lee, 2018).

Englert-Copeland (2019) also wanted to examine how academic advisors comprehend the effect of their biases and privileges while interacting with students of color and what strategies they use to practice culturally-response advising. For this reason, the author used a qualitative study including four academic advisors employed from a medium-sized community college. The

study was informed by numerous theoretical concepts comprising multicultural competence, implicit bias, advising, privilege, student retention, and student success. Seven themes arose from the study which signified the significance of an advisor's practices. It was found that lived experiences, privileges, and bias shaped the attitudes of all academic advisors while they interacted with Black students. Moreover, relationship building with Black students, giving them independence, seeing Black students as individuals with exclusive needs, as well as transforming the environment using shared stories about being culturally-response can have a profound impact on culturally-response advising. However, the study lacks diversity and advisors from diverse identity groups. The sample size was also very small. Therefore, a bigger sample and more diverse participants might help in discovering more emergent themes (Englert-Copeland, 2019).

Noya and Ray (2012) assessed the impact of academic advisors and how graduate students perceive their advisors by examining the correlation between race and gender and the perception of students. Six prevalent features of academic advisors were recognized including affective, intellectual, available, instrumental, respectful, and exploitative. Furthermore, affective advisors were the ones who offered emotional support to students; instrumental advisors were the ones who acted as guides; intellectual advisors were the ones who solely provided academic feedback; available advisors were the ones who were always accessible; respectful advisors interacted with them equally; and exploitative advisors exploited their power to place unrealistic demands on students' time. It was found that Black students displayed a strong necessity for instrumental advisors to survive in college. Black males described academic advisors as less respectful and effective towards them. These findings validate that effective culturally-response advising can positively influence the progress of Black males. However, the study lacks in

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identifying the effective mentoring strategies that can be applied to mitigate the negative effect (Noy & Ray, 2012).

BLACK MEN IN HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Johnson and McGowan (2017) aimed to assess the challenges faced by high-achieving Black male students while they navigated through their educational pipeline. The study aimed to assess the role historically Black colleges' play in promoting the enrollment and degree accomplishment of high-achieving Black male students. Nineteen Black males were selected from nine institutions and data was collected using interviews. The results of the study indicated that early experiences dealing with negative stereotypes linked with the achievement of Black males intensely influenced their choices to enroll in historically Black colleges. Historically Black Colleges through their campus environment, nurtured opportunities for constructive interactions which were significant for the personal, academic, as well as professional development of Black male students. Johnson and McGowan (2017) found that the study offered insights on how historically Black colleges can enroll and preserve high-achieving Black males. This is consistent with Shorette and Palmer's (2015) study that participants discussed how their college influenced their sense of belonging and perceptions of their prospects as Black men in college. Many referred to the self-determining nature of seeing Black people in management positions, such as professors and administrators which justified the participants' belief in themselves and their potential to achieve their goals (Shorette & Palmer, 2015).

These collegiate fraternities were established by founders who were scholars and activists, roughly no more than one generation removed from slavery (Langston et al., 2015). Black fraternities would become channels for expanding the various forms of capital to the wider Black population (Brown et al., 2012). They would act as brokers between the Black community and the mainstream in upholding Black culture.

Young and Deskins (2001) argued that archetypes can be an effective and culturally relevant means of educating Black male college students in the spirit of social justice. Examples of archetypes are iconic Black men that exemplify social justice through sport and their affiliation with Black Greek fraternities. Chambers (2014) noted that scholars often view social movements as complicated and a provisional set of interactions between localized and geographically distinct movements of individuals, groups, and organizations that gather into a larger coalition of interconnected pursuits. The need to establish a "free space" and a collective identity propelled the Black Greek-letter organization from a small, concentrated group of college students into an immense social and political entity at the national level. This free space can be described as a secure area, a haven, a sequestered social site, or a small-scale backdrop which provides activist autonomy from dominant groups where activist can nurture opposing movement identities (Chambers, 2014).

As African American students in PWIs and HBCUs began to apply for and gain membership in Greek fraternities and sororities, the necessity of a parallel Greek organization that mirrored African American social experience came into existence. In collegiate institutions, the establishment of Black fraternities served as organized efforts by Black men to support social-emotional growth, a sense of cultural pride, an intake of leadership values, masculine individuality, and community development. Fraternities would also offer opportunities for Greek

chapter leaders to create opportunities for students to participate in group academic advising

sessions, group tutoring along with collegiate programming (Strayhorn & McCall, 2012).

McKeown (2021) examined decisions made by student affairs personnel who decided to choose

a career as a fraternity/sorority advisor. McKeown (2021) conducted a study of Greek fraternity

advisors and found that they often had a wide range of responsibilities including budget

management, promoting student development, supporting academic advising and mentoring as

well as dealing with high-risk student concerns. Even though the study indicated that the

advisors often experienced high levels of stress, low pay and long hours, they were able to create

systemic change, increase student satisfaction, and encourage spiritual and religious growth. This

also had positive influences on social service motivators for student career and community

development (McKeown, 2021). Black fraternities, while material ranging from social media to

scholarly critiques, have prolonged negative social descriptions of Black males, the unique

struggle for social justice, civil rights, and education, are at the underpinning of Black Greek

fraternities (Clark et al., 2015). Resistant capital is reflected in the groundwork of Black and

Latinx fraternities (sororities) through activism while also maintaining the stability between

being affiliated with mainstream student organizations and maintaining one's cultural heritage

(Muñoz et al., 2019). Regardless of any negative stereotypes that may have linked itself to Black

fraternities, *Culturally Responsive Academic Advising* remains a central element in supporting

student success (Allen, 2015). This is consistent with defining *Culturally Responsive Academic*

Advising as it relates to McKeown's (2021) findings as an Academic Advisor's ability to

recognize a student's cultural background and influences, ethnic identity, nationality, socio-

economic status or gender identity during an advising session and being able to promote, connect

or provide institutional resources in an effort to support student retention (Allen, 2015; Coney, 2017; Back & Keys, 2020; Allen, 2021).

PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT COLLEGIATE RETENTION OF BLACK MALES

Video profiles of young Black doctors created by UCLA aimed to inspire underrepresented minority students to consider becoming physicians. The videos were prominently placed on the institution's website, circulated through various via social media outlets and shared by the medical school's community engagement groups, as well as other outreach groups affiliated with the school. The project focused on Black men because the total of Black men enrolled in U.S. medical schools had actually fallen over the years, according to the 2015 Association of American Medical Colleges report (AAMC), Altering the Course, Black Males in Medicine (Dennis, 2018). Among ethnic groups, the proportion of male-to-female medical school applicants is lowest for African Americans. According to Dennis (2018), the AAMC report not only included data about the dwindling numbers of Black male medical students, it cited likely reasons for the decline — among them, a lack of role models and negative portrayals of young Black men in the media.

Among African American college students, those who explored and internalized an Afrocentric racial identity were more likely to have participated in political action in the African American community (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015). Hope et al., (2020) would note in a case study that Black male adolescents who value their Blackness and the Black community are more vigilant of racial injustice than Black male adolescents who do not, which in turn catalyzes engagement in low-risk acts of resistance combined with pursuit of racial justice. Hrabowski (2015) a senior administrator in college would work to increase the number of Black men excelling in undergraduate science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and continuing on

to pursue STEM doctorates. These efforts also included academic advising support, tutoring and opportunities for field experience. During the late 1980s, he could not find a single PWI that was succeeding in this effort. Hrabowski (2015) and other colleagues at his institution started strengths-based program in 1988 that focused on students' positive traits and experiences rather than their weaknesses. The program was designed to provide an alternative vision of Black male success. From 1988 through 2015 the program broadened to include other minorities, women, and students of all races interested in solving the problem of underrepresentation. Masculinity can be defined as the goals, beliefs, or values one associates with being a man (Griffith, 2015). For Black men on college campuses, masculinity has been shown to impact their behavior and interaction with others on the campus (Von Robertson & Chaney, 2015).

Strang (2018) conducted a transcendental phenomenology study with thirteen participants to comprehend how Black students experience college readiness in their freshman year and which programs are available to them. Data were gathered using interviews, focus groups, and narratives. Black students described their experiences of college readiness as self-discovery, where they were capable to develop a sense of individual identity and determine which strategies can help them become successful. Numerous college readiness programs were executed at different levels to increase the levels of readiness in students. All partakers felt they had changed and grown due to their freshman year which mostly accounted for college readiness programs available to them. Consistent with Hrabowski (2015) the students in Strang's (2018) study benefited from unique and specific programming related to their major, career goals, and advising support that infused elements related to their cultural and gender identity.

Culturally Competent Academic Advising is also a recurring theme within athletics as most sports programs have designated academic advisors who help students stay on course by

following academic degree plans in order to transfer or graduate in a timely manner. This is consistent with Brecht and Burnett's (2019) study that was published in the National Academic Advising Association Journal related to advising student athletes for success. It is also noted that academic advisors have to be culturally competent in recognizing the unique position that student athletes are in as they have to balance school and sports. According to Dexter et al. (2021) Black male student athletes have to navigate social and racial pressure as in some cases they are often only represented on sports teams at institutions and make a small percentage of the overall student body.

Sato et al. (2018) investigated six Black student-athletes' experiences with mentorship at a PWI. Four major, complex, and interrelated themes arose from the analysis, including mentoring habits and routines, mentoring time management and academic schedule, personal development in an isolated setting, and the support of family members. To support Black students, athletic advisors and faculty should embrace, respect, and value racial identities, languages, origins, and culture of Black student-athletes. Moreover, formal, responsive, and program-wide mentoring programs should be in place which must be focused on social and academic learning outcomes (Sato et al., 2018; Brecht & Burnett, 2019).

Brooms (2018) aimed to explore Black male students' engagement and experiences of Black Male Initiative programs (BMIs), which were mainly organized as social cohesion approaches to increase the graduation and retention rate of Black males. The qualitative study was employed, and interviews were conducted with forty Black students at two different institutions. First, students' narratives were analyzed regarding their meaning-making and contribution of BMIs, which led to the finding that BMIs play a vital role in supporting Black male students through providing access to sociocultural capital that they bring to campus.

Moreover, it was also analyzed how their engagement in BMIs enhanced their sense of self and academic experiences, which led to the finding that BMIs provided holistic support, emphasized their unique identities, and stimulated their persistence which ultimately led to their enhanced sense of self and academic experiences (Brooms, 2018). McDougall III (2021) would further suggest that these sociocultural norms also connect with curriculum which helps to foster program retention efforts.

Harris (2018) discussed the influence that an in-college support and retention program had on the success of African American males. The results argued that Black males experienced educational challenges throughout their elementary years that negatively impacted their college matriculation. Educational outcomes are more miserable for Black males and signify a crisis of the Black community. The failure to achieve higher learning is associated with numerous difficulties that compete with unemployment, violence, incarceration, gang membership, and intergenerational poverty. These factors avoid the demonstration of mastery and academic skills of Black males consistent with competence and ability levels. Therefore, in-college retention and college transition support programs are vital to emphasize academic success, to promote awareness regarding these barriers, and to decrease their impact. However, the study lack generalizability since the data was collected from only one college. Moreover, a qualitative study would also be helpful to uncover the perceptions of Black males (Harris, 2018).

Druery and Brooms (2019) focused on recognizing the advising and mentoring support Black males receive through their engagement in Black male initiative programs such as Black Male Leadership Collective (BMLC). For this reason, they used the in-depth and qualitative study to explore the experiences of five Black male students who were enrolled in BMLC at a midsized PWI. A culturally engaging campus setting model was used as a conceptual model to

understand and analyze their experiences with BMLC. Along with providing personal narratives, Black males stated how the program functioned as a culturally enriching atmosphere and contributed constructively to their college experience (Harper, 2015; Lee, 2018). They attributed their contribution in the program to various critical features that enhanced their college tenures, including a sense of brotherhood they get through peer-to-peer bonding, collectivist cultural orientations, cultural familiarity, cultural community service, culturally validating environment, holistic support, humanized educational environment, and personal development. All these elements collectively and individually improved their campus engagement and reinforced their persistence and resilience until graduation. However, the findings of the study are not generalizable since the sample size was very small and participants were recruited from only one institution (Druery & Brooms, 2019).

CHAPTER CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The literature review suggested that the Black community is mostly affected by illnesses and diseases due to the lack of healthcare services provided to them and due to the existence of healthcare inequity in the United States (Piotrowski & King, 2020; Phiri et al., 2021). Institutions all around the United States also perceive Black males in a negative light and subject them to frequent bias, stereotyping, undervalue their merit and competency. Moreover, Black males face severe complications throughout their college enrollment due to which their graduation and persistence rate is affected. They experienced more social stigma and masculine norms, which make them seek less social support. For this reason, culturally responsive academic advising is necessary for Black males. Black males are successful in meeting their academic benchmarks due to effective and culturally responsive academic advising (Coney, 2017). Chapter II emphasized the importance of why cultural competency is important in a variety of programs

that support students, including the development of faculty and staff that support those students. Chapter II also highlighted that there were pre-existing barriers that have traditionally impacted the success of Black male college students, whether it be health disparities, a lack of academic preparedness for college, or systemic barriers that have existed in college settings – they all played a role in retention and graduation rates of Black male students. Moreover, additional programs are also necessary for Black males in community colleges, such as Black male initiative programs, in-college retention and support program, program-wide mentoring programs, and college readiness programs (Wright, 2018). Chapter III outlines the setting, research questions, the methods utilizing a mixed-method approach using a two-phase approach, and the details of the participants. The current phenomenological study builds on these identified needs as it aimed to explore academic advisors' culturally responsive advising of Black males at an urban community college during the global pandemic of COVID-19.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The current mixed-method study aimed to explore the academic advisors' culturally responsive advising of Black males at an urban community college during COVID-19. The purpose of the study was to examine how academic advisors utilized culturally competent advising in their engagement with Black males and if that advising had any impact on Black males' persistence while studying at an urban community college during a global pandemic. The results of the research study will add to the literature with the intent to inform academic advisors who advise Black males attending urban community colleges that culturally competent advising is an important skill that can be utilized to improve retention and graduation rates of Black male collegiate students. The purpose of a phenomenological study is to highlight a specific phenomenon through how it is perceived by the main actors of that situation (Bowes, 2017). This approach normally translates into collecting deep information as well as perceptions of the people through inductive and qualitative methods like interviews, observation, or discussions, and presenting the information from the viewpoint of the participants (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018).

The phenomenological design is suitable for the current study since it uses detailed descriptions from subjects of their perceptions, motivations, thoughts, and lived experiences (Williams, 2012). This study utilized a mixed-method approach that explored academic advisors' culturally responsive advising of Black males at an urban community college during COVID-19 through general interviews questions and a questionnaire to collect statistical data.

Creswell (2002) noted that qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding centered on specific methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. This study presented a complex, holistic picture, analyze words, detailed views of the participants, and interviews were conducted in a virtual setting. Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. In addition, a mixed-method approach was utilized with the intent to collect a mixture of data which was distributed as a questionnaire that contained closed-ended questions to collect the numerical, or quantitative data to coincide with the narrative, or qualitative data gathered (Creswell, 2003). In general, qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a diversity of empirical materials in a case study, personal experience, introspective, life story interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts-that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

PURPOSE STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current mixed-method study aimed to explore the academic advisors' culturally responsive advising of Black males at an urban community college during COVID-19. The purpose of the study was to examine how academic advisors utilized culturally competent advising in their engagement with Black males and if that advising had any impact on Black males' persistence while studying at an urban community college during a global pandemic.

1. What do academic advisors believe about culturally responsive academic advising and its impact on enrollment, persistence, and success of Black males at an urban community college?

2. What were academic advisors' perceptions of Black males who attend urban community colleges compared to all other students who attend the same institution?

3. What were academic advisors' perceptions regarding urban community college's ability to support Black male students in comparison to other types of collegiate institutions?

4. What were the perceptions of academic advisors regarding how Black males within urban community colleges are treated by senior administration and the institution during COVID-19?

5. Were academic advisors providing more, less, or the same resources for Black males as compared to other students during COVID-19?

6. Were academic advisors encouraged by the administration to participate in mentoring activities centered around Black males?

RESEARCH DESIGN

This phenomenological study was conducted at an urban community college located in Southeast Texas during the COVID-19 pandemic focused on academic advisors' culturally responsive advising of Black males. The research was chiefly intended for academic advisors at an urban community college who serve Black males. The mixed-methods approach consisted of interviews with two phases: *Phase One* consisted of interviews with six academic advisors and *Phase Two* consisted of a twelve survey questions sent to twenty-five at-large academic advisors. The design of the interview questions allowed for a direct responses from the participants to gain first-hand knowledge of their experiences. The responses gathered from the interviews and observation utilized a virtual Zoom platform were all recorded and transcribed by the researcher allowing for detailed accuracy. The mixed-methods approach to research is an extension of rather than a replacement for the quantitative and qualitative approaches to research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The study provided an in-depth investigation into a phenomenon by selecting a small, but an informative sample, associated with qualitative research.

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The purpose of the questionnaire portion of the mixed-method study was to gather additional data from academic advisors concerning culturally responsive advising while engaging with Black males and compare the results to the narrative findings from the six individual participants who were interviewed. The questionnaire was administered to twenty-five at-large academic advisors utilizing Qualtrics survey software consisting of eleven questions that were emailed via a link to at-large academic advisors (not including the six individual Participants). The data and responses from the questionnaire were stored on the researcher's Google Drive Cloud and were shared only with members of the Dissertation Committee.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

The mixed-method study utilized qualitative and quantitative methods to capture information from participants for this case study. For the qualitative method, referred to as *Phase One* six purposively selected six academic advisors who engaged in direct one-on-one interviews with the researcher for sessions that lasted no longer than sixty minutes. These selected six participants were full-time academic advisors working within various campuses within the same urban community college. The sessions comprised of six interview questions that were presented by the researcher during the interview to allow for a direct response from the participant. The study captured recorded and stored video/audio from the individual interviews with each participant to produce a transcription of the responses. Purposeful sampling for qualitative research allowed for the researcher to best select a small number of participants for a better understanding of the problem and research questions (Creswell, 2013). All participants had attained a minimum baccalaureate degree and had experiences with student success in higher education at the community college level. The responses of the participants and the findings of

the study have been furthered explored in Chapter IV. The transcriptions were shared with the participants to allow them to provide accuracy and clarification regarding responses.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIONS

The study involved interviews of six academic advisors. Three female academic advisors and three male academic advisors. Of the three female advisors there were 1 Black and 2 White, and of the three male advisors there was 1 Asian, 1 White, and 1 Black. All original names of the participants were coded to protect their identities as outlined in the study's Informed Consent. The Black female for this study will be referred to as *Participant Female #1* or PF1. PF1 was 33 years of age at the time of the study and attended a HBCU for her undergraduate degree located in the fourth largest city in the United States for her baccalaureate degree from age 18–23. PF1 had re-enrolled at that same HBCU during the time of the study to complete a master's degree in education. The first white female will be referred to as *Participant Female #2* or PF2. PF2 was 46 years at the time of the study and attended a PWI located in the fourth largest city in the United States for her baccalaureate degree from age 18–23. The second white female will be referred to as *Participant Female #3* or PF3. PF3 was 52 years at the time of the study and attended a PWI located in the fourth largest city in the United States for her baccalaureate degree from age 18–23. The Black male will be referred to as *Participant Male #1* or PM1. PM1 was 49 years of age at the time of the study, and he attended a HBCU located in Louisiana near the coastline of the state when he was 19–24 years of age to earn his baccalaureate degree. The Asian male will be referred to as *Participant Male #2* or PM2 attended a private university located in Southeast Texas in the largest city in the state to earn his baccalaureate degree from age 19-23. He was 55 years of age at the time of the study. The White male will be referred to as

Participant Male #3 or PM3. He was 40 years of age at the time of the study and attended a fully online accredited religious-based university from 23–29 years of age.

Table 1: Profile of Study Participants

Participant Code	Gender	Age During Study	Race	Undergraduate Institution	Age During Undergraduate Career
PF1	Female	33	African-American	Historically Black College	18 - 23
PF2	Female	46	Caucasian	Predominantly White Institution	18 - 23
PF3	Female	52	Caucasian	Predominantly White Institution	18 - 23
PM1	Male	49	African-American	Historically Black College	19 - 24
PM2	Male	55	Asian	Private University	19 - 23
PM3	Male	40	Caucasian	Online Accredited Religious University	23 - 29

Interview Data Collection

The six participant individual sessions were hosted utilizing Zoom web conferencing software and were video/audio recorded (consent provided from the researcher to the participant) and were initially stored on the researcher's electronic device. Topics centered on student retention, student campus involvement, advisor's perception and interaction with students, and advisor's perception of institutional value of Black males.

Survey Data Collection

Phase Two consisted of a survey in the form of a questionnaire which was collected from thirteen at-large academic advisors within the urban community college to gather additional information related to the research questions. The questionnaire was administered utilized Qualtrics and was sent via email to all academic advisors not in the control group within the community college district during the same time as individual interviews were taking place. No

individual personal information was gathered from the surveys, and no direct interaction with these participants occurred. Their information was found using the institutions directory. Of the participants, 23% were over the age of 55, 30% of the participants were ages 38 - 54. And 47% were between the ages of 30-37. Also, 69% of the participants were Black males and 31% were Black females, thus 100% of the participants who responded to the survey were African American. Of the participants, 40% had 15+ years of experience, 7% had between 10-15 years, 30% had between 5-10 years, and 23% of the participants had 5 years or less experience as an academic advisor in a higher education setting. The participants' experience ranges from three to twenty years.

The questions focused on advisors' knowledge of male diversity and retention within the college, advisors' engagement in cultural competency training, and advisors' perceptions of how they felt the institution perceived of Black male students who were enrolled. The following questions were asked utilizing Qualtrics:

- SQ1 - Please select your age.

- SQ2 - Please select the ethnicity and gender that you most identify with

- SQ3 - How many years of experience do you have in academic advising in higher education?

- SQ4 - Compare and Contrast Question Segment: Based on the African American Males that you have advised at your current institution, in your opinion, how do they compare in college readiness in relation to Caucasian Males?

- SQ5 - How do they compare in college readiness in relation to Hispanic Males?

- SQ6 - How do they compare in college readiness in relation to Asian Males?

- SQ7 - Are there any academic support programs that currently exist that directly target African American males for support at your institution? - If so, do you participate?

- SQ8 - Do you personally mentor African American males within your current institution?

- SQ9 - With only 13% of African Americans in the U.S., they lead the nation in percentages in relation to the most health-related deaths of any ethnicity, and Black males have the shortest lifespan of any demographic. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 has your institution's Health Center presented any information specifically addressing the support of African Americans/African American males?

- SQ10 - What is the biggest challenge - in your opinion - at your institution impacting African American males? — please elaborate if necessary.

- SQ11 - In your opinion, what do you believe is your Administration's view of African American males enrolled at your institution? — please elaborate if necessary.

SETTING FOR THE STUDY

The study focused on the entire district that was within the urban community college system, which in 2020, was located in the largest city consisting of 6,371 residents within the Southeast Texas region and the fourth largest city in the United States (Macrotrends, 2020). The institution of the study was a Hispanic Serving and Minority Serving Institution with eighteen individual campuses located in the largest county in Southeast Texas. The overall student population in 2020 was 58,276 students enrolled, of which 85% were of minorities. Tuition was $3,358 per year, and the teacher-to-student ratio was 1:44. The enrolled full-time students were 17,288 and the 40,988 part-time students were all commuter students. The demographic breakdown of the student demographics was Asian (11%), Hispanic (30%), African American (27%), Caucasian (15%), Other (16%). The gender breakdown was 50% male, 50% female, and the majority of student household income was below $25,000 per year. The enrollment per gender per ethnicity was African American males (9,117), African-American females (16,575), Hispanic males (12,178), Hispanic females (17,114), Caucasian males (6,130), Caucasian females (6,269), Asian males (5,720), Asian females (6,421), Other males (1,566) and Other

females (1,929). The overall diversity rate was .79, compared to being higher than the state, which was .69.

Table 2: Setting for the Study

Category	Total Population	Full-Time Enrolled	Part-Time Enrolled	Cost of FT Tuition	Teacher-to-Student Ratio	Household Income
Hispanic and Minority Serving Institution	58, 276	17, 288	40, 988	$3,385 per year	1:44	Majority Below $25,000 annually

Table 3: Institutional Demographics, Student Population

	Overall Demographic		Overall Diversity Rate			
	Minority	White / Other	Institution		State	
	85%	15%	.79		.69	
Racial Breakdown	Asian	African American	Caucasian	Hispanic	Other
Percent Enrolled	11%	27%	15%	30%	16%
Gender: Male	5,720	9,117	6,130	12,178	1,566
Gender: Female	6,421	16,757	6,269	17,114	1,929

Six Instructional Divisions are in the college including College Readiness, English and Communication, Liberal Arts/Humanities/Education, Earth/Life/Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Social and Behavioral Sciences. There were fourteen Centers of Excellence which were Automotive, Business, Construction, Consumer Arts and Sciences, Digital and Information Technologies, Engineering, Global Energy, Health Sciences, Logistics, Manufacturing, Material Science, Media Arts and Technology, and Public Safety, Visual and Performing Arts. The urban community college district awards certificates, completion of the core curriculum, occupational skills, continuing education credit, adult basic education, general educational development, and associate degrees (AA, AS, AAS, AAT) that offer opportunities for students to transfer into four-

year granting institutions. The top four transfer universities in 2017 were the University of Houston, the University of Houston-Downtown, Texas A&M University, and the University of Texas-Austin.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The data collected was used to highlight the importance of academic advising in relation to supporting Black male student success at an urban community during a pandemic, but also to emphasize the need for continued support during non-pandemic seasons. The chosen setting was fitting in that the urban community college where the academic advisors' work had multiple campuses located within a metropolitan city that had a large diverse student population. The significance of the metropolitan city chosen is important in that it reflects the population demographic change of urban communities that make up the enrollment of urban community colleges in the region. Chapter IV will also highlight three general themes associated with the findings, 1) Culturally Responsive Academic Advising 2) Campus Climate 3) and requirements for professional development for personnel who support diverse student populations. Chapter IV provides the narrative of the participants along with the analysis of the data from the quantitative portion of the study.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

This phenomenological study was conducted at an urban community college located in Southeast Texas during the COVID-19 pandemic focused on academic advisors' culturally responsive advising of Black males. The research was chiefly intended for academic advisors at an urban community college who serve Black males. With this in mind, it is imperative that all data received be analyzed meticulously. A thorough analysis of the data will hopefully speak to the statement of the problem and possibly show the need for further exploration/observation. For this study *Culturally Responsive Academic Advising* has been defined as an Academic Advisor's ability to recognize a student's cultural background and influences, ethnic identity, nationality, socio-economic status or gender identity during an advising session and being able to promote, connect or provide institutional resources in an effort to support student retention (Allen, 2015; Coney, 2017; Back & Keys, 2020; Allen, 2021).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For this study, the following research questions guided the investigation:

1. What do academic advisors believe about culturally responsive academic advising and its impact on enrollment, persistence, and success of Black males at an urban community college?

2. What were academic advisors' perceptions of Black males who attend urban community colleges compared to all other students who attend the same institution?

3. What were academic advisors' perceptions regarding urban community college's ability to support Black male students in comparison to other types of collegiate institutions?

4. What were the perceptions of academic advisors regarding how senior administration and the institution treat Black males within urban community colleges during COVID-19?

5. Were academic advisors providing more, less, or the same resources for Black males as compared to other students during COVID-19?

6. Were academic advisors encouraged by the administration to participate in mentoring activities centered around Black males?

During the interviews, the six participants discussed their experiences as academic advisors. These interviews were conducted individually utilizing Zoom.

The Go-Getter

PF1, who was a 33-year-old Black female attended an HBCU. PF1 had re-enrolled at that same HBCU during the time of the study to complete a master's degree in education. The fact that she re-enrolled and was determined to get her degree to stabilize her in the education field was remarkable, to say the least, this is why the researcher refers to her as the "Go-Getter." She provided the following responses:

- Q1.PF1: I believe that culturally responsive academic advising is imperative for a successful outcome with the Black male student. Retention is key and sometimes the success of a student, Black males in particular, need more assistance. Reaching out to them during such a stressful time is showing the Black male student that we are aware and that we care.

- Q2.PF1: Unfortunately, as a Black woman, I see the stigma already placed on many of the Black male students. It is not often you see them in the science majors or transfer programs. They are typically in the trade/workforce programs. I just feel that they need to be made aware of all the resources and options available for them to be just as successful.

- Q3.PF1: The perception of academic advisors is pretty general around our community. All students of color, including Black males, tend to be looked upon as not as successful. The service area has a low percentage of successful Black males graduating from college. It is sad but it is the perception within this area.

- Q4.PF1: I feel that with what was given, our Black males received several resources to help them through this time. We went virtual and those in need of Wi-Fi or a

computer, received resources to make the transition easier. During Thanksgiving, all students in need received vouchers and food from the pantry. We are currently assisting students who qualify for our REV program which pays for their tuition. The pandemic has caused a lot of strife, but the governor has stepped up and given the college money to further assist students in need. Our Black males are being taken care of during the pandemic. I just hope this continues after it is all over.

- Q5.PF1: In my area, yes – we are providing the same assistance for Black males compared to all other students. The entire system received the same amount of money to assist their students during this time. There is no doubt that it can be better as we do not have a specific club or organization dedicated to Black males but, for the time being, they are being assisted.

- Q6: Were academic advisors encouraged by the administration to participate in mentoring activities centered around Black males?

- Q6.PF1: This has never been discussed by my supervisor, and I want to believe it because they do not want to single out a particular cultural group. Even if it is needed, morally, I do not see it being approved within our community. Black males, just like first-year students, need a little extra support, and it would be great to have an organization dedicated to them. I believe that it is one of the most important aspects of being an advisor. You have to be culturally responsive. And as a Black woman, I am more culturally aware of how certain scenarios can affect a Black man. We have yearly advising workshops where culturally responsive behavior is a main topic. So yes, sessions should be offered at every collegiate level so that all advisors are aware. If it focused solely on Black males, I believe there would be some pushback. It would be as if we are targeting a certain audience, but I do agree that it is needed.

  Personally, I feel that anytime someone emphasizes support specific to Black folks there is an issue. I have seen so many programs for Hispanics – no disrespect – but you can't mention support for Black males without there being some type of rules and regulations we have to follow. I see so many Black males – of all ages – just floating. High school didn't prepare them – I know I went to school is the nearby ISD and nothing has changed. They are just here spinning their wheels and you can tell most of them have no idea what they want to do. The retention rate is so bad – so many drop out because they don't know what careers are most important – and more importantly they don't have any idea how to align their passion with a career. They need so much more than just an academic understanding – which is important – but they need soft skills, someone to believe in them, an understanding of step-by-step related to the financial aid process and also a group that can centralize them. As a college we talk about students in general, but no one has taken a deeper dive into what each group needs – specifically Black males. I'm sorry – whoooh – sorry if it feels like I'm ranting.

Researcher (response to PF1): As a follow-up to what you mentioned about specifically

supporting Black males at your college, that it becomes an issue related to rules and regulations:

Do you think there is discrimination related to Black male support at your college or related to

advising success?

- PF1: Well…um…I wouldn't say that it's not direct discrimination – but – it's more of the lack of a conversation and willingness to really address these issues. In advising specifically we really don't have any conversations with leadership about specific groups of students. It's probably because almost all of the students we see are Black or Hispanic, so we know that they are in difficult situations. Every now and then we have kool-aid talk with other advisors about what we think should or should not happen. We do talk about Black males, but mostly it's with other Black colleagues – but at the end of the day we try to support them where we can.

  We do have a fair share of Black people that do work at this college too, but some of them are distracted because of other duties and some of them get burned out and then leave. This is a good college, and our communities need it so bad – but our lack of direct engagement for specific groups – to me does feel like passive discrimination – if that makes any sense. We don't have any direct advising initiatives such as group advising for Black males or program specific advising – we treat everyone the same. You know – equality rather than equity – something I'm learning in my graduate program – it should be equity so they can get what they need.

The Less-Enthusiastic Respondent

PF2, who was a 46-year-old White female at the time of the study, attended a PWI as an

undergraduate student. The following are the responses provided by PF2 during the interview for

the case study research questions:

- Q1.PF2: The advisors I spoke with at the college shared that they believe culturally responsive advising is important to supporting students' enrollment, persistence, and success. Even so – I'm not quite sure that we all understand what culturally responsive advising is. It's not a term that I have generally heard before, but it sounds like it could be very useful.

- Q2.PF2: Well, I would say that I treat all students the same. I provide them with a holistic advising approach that includes a review of their degree plan, we review certificate or transfer options, we discuss steps towards a career path, and I pull up their financial info or scholarship information to see if they qualify for anything. I do this for every student I encounter – regardless of their gender or ethnicity. Due to demographic that attend this college almost all of the students we advise are Black or

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Brown – mostly Brown - I would say and more female than male. Depending on what situation they may be in or what their goals I do try to point them in the right direction as far as maybe printing out or emailing them additional information – if I can find it. As far as Black males – most of the students I see are interested in a trade or workforce cert – like welding, construction, or CNC Machinist – then again, I get a few who want to take their basics and transfer to a university. Most often the Black males who want the cert are older and more mature, so they seem to have a basic understanding of career options and they stick the degree plan – so – yea – that's basically what happens.

- Q3.PF2: The advisors I connect with feel that our college is trying to support Black male students and that two-year colleges are conscious and aware of the issues. One advisor, who had worked at another urban community college in another state before coming to our college shared that her previous institution completely ignored the needs of Black male students. Two advisors who had previously worked at a 4-year university in our state felt that our community college was doing much more to support Black male students than their previous institution had. Personally, I have not seen any direct initiatives related to Black males here, but this campus is a majority Black and Brown school so we do have wraparound services like child care, a health clinic, we were the first to start offering the COVID testing employees and students. We provided masks on campus and sanitizer stations all throughout our building for everyone to have access too. Specifically related to advising – we advise with the intent to help students move forward with their degree plan so they can accomplish their goals.

- Q4:PF2: Umm…well as far the administration – there wasn't anything specific that I remember seeing specifically related to Black males, but there is constant news and info updates posted on the website and sent to students via email about being safe during COVID. The messaging is directed toward everyone. Our current Dean in my area is a Black male and the Director of Student Life is a Hispanic male and I have seen them interact with both Black and Brown males in personal ways. So, I would think that there may be some good mentoring taking place for Black males. I don't interact with Presidents or anything so I'm not sure what they are doing.

- Q5:PF2: It's kind-of like I said earlier – in advising we are providing all the students with info that will keep them on track in completing their degree plan. I'm not doing anything specific for any demographic or population. We do a lot of virtual appointments so its different not being able to interact in person. In-person interactions help provide direct contact with students and you can pick up on body language and really get a feel for the student.

Researcher (follow-up question): Did you provide students info on tutoring and academic support resources? – I would assume that during COVID drop-out rates were high due home-work-life balance for students. If so – was the info the same or different for Black males?

- Q5PF2: We do have faculty that contact us for early alerts because students are not attending, but I don't research their demographic or anything prior to meeting with them so I just contact them as I would any other student. For those that I can get to schedule an appointment with me I go over tips for academic success – especially those who are on academic probation. Generally, it's the same info – even during COVID. I do get students who tell me that they have lost a loved one or their job or are having internet issues at home and could not access the class. I can't really recall anything again specific to Black males or anything that I do differently with advising.

- Q6.PF2: I would say no – not really. I don't really know of any specific groups on campus related to Black male support and the Administration has told advising about any specifically – at least I haven't heard about it. I know our Director of Student Activities oversees student clubs and we have our Campus Support Services Center which is where the tutoring takes place. Both of those areas are within our division, but I don't interact with them a lot to know if they have any Black male groups or support staff so I couldn't really say. A while back – maybe like a year ago there was a conference that took place to support Black males, but it was high schoolers and not current students. I'm not sure who put it on, but I passed by on lunch break and I students on campus. I knew it was specific to Black males because there like a hundred of them, but again, they were in high school. I didn't stop to ask what it was – you know – I'm White – lol – I didn't think I would be useful in the setting, but as long as they get what they need then that's good.

The Woke Participant

PF3, a 52-year-old white female, attended a PWI located in the fourth largest city in the United States for her baccalaureate degree from age 18–23. The following are the answers that she gave to the aforementioned questions:

- Q1.PF3: That's a good question. We often say things that we don't mean or really actually do – like I know you are interviewing other advisors – who might for example, when asked this question might offer a "politically correct statement." However, their actions would demonstrate otherwise. Culturally responsiveness is the topic of the times or more like this conversation around diversity and inclusion – even critical race theory has the country in a whirlwind. In an "age of Trump," it seems we are moving backward. It's affecting everything – even education. Academic advisors are always being replaced – for the most part. These are typically young people who are college students themselves. The problem is they are typically not culturally responsive – unless your advisor pool is reflective of the student body's race — they never stay around long enough to have an impact on enrollment, persistence, and success of not only Black males, but any students of color in college. The model of academic advising must be looked at and revised. That's my opinion.

- Q2.PF3: I would like to think that the perceptions are positive - but this is not always the case. I feel that the United States is long overdue for an all-inclusive education where history is properly told. Only then will the individual perceptions of Black males attending urban colleges and those who have completed college and are actively working in their respective fields – will the collective perception of Black males in the nation will be positive. That is, that Black male students are not only seen capable, but also not as a threat on campus or in the community. When I see Black males on campus, I know they are students so it doesn't bother me at all and I feel comfortable supporting them any way I can. There are a lot of them who I often interact with that are on academic probation or on the verge of failing out. We don't have too many Black male teachers here – at least I don't remember seeing any – for me to be able to point them to too – but I do try to develop a relationship with the faculty so that when I ask for support opportunities for students – the faculty who have I have a relationship with are more willing to support.

- Q3.PF3: The United States as a whole, whether at the community college or university level, do not put their money where their mouths are. We say we believe in education, in teachers, in professors, but this is not what we demonstrate in our culture. I believe education is not appreciated and the proof of that is when we look at the educational budgets of cities/districts or states. These budgets have been drastically cut. So not only are students not equipped with the proper resources, but they do not have staff who are professionally trained in terms of cultural sensitivity at more prestigious institutions. Even here at this college – we don't have culturally sensitive training. I think because we fill that our students are majority Black and Brown and at least most of staff – those I interact with – represent that same demographic – that as an institution we are in a good place. To me this is not the case. We have not done anything different than any other college would normally do related to students – even more specifically Black males. Don't get me wrong I see colleagues interacting and supporting students (Black males), but I mean like real work related to impacting the culture of the student. I know that private institutions may have more money to do things – but we aren't broke as a college. I haven't seen anything different or unique that we are doing specifically related to Black males. I have not seen it at this college – maybe it's happening – but where? – you know.

- Q4.PF3: There is a lack of leadership and attempts to reach out to Black males at this most opportune time. Putting up billboards and an article in the newspaper is simply not enough. As an institution we have to do more in terms of marketing and recruiting. This can only happen if senior leadership/administrators get involved. I know that set goals and priorities, but they never ask us – the advisors – what we think – especially now during COVID – this is the prime time to know from us what we see. A lot of my colleagues are Black and Brown – I would think they would have some insight as to how they personally feel as advisors during this time. Everyone is stressed out. Everyone. I know if we are – the students are – and not once have the administration at this point asked our input. So, if they don't ask our input and we are on the front line – then how would know anything about what is happening with any specific population of students – if we are talking about Black males. They wouldn't – unless they are running some data somewhere – which again – no one shares that

information with advisors. So, I would say that yes – as a college – we providing support for students during COVID – but it's the same as everyone else. Again – I'm not seeing anything different from the administration related to Black males.

- Q5.PF3: It would think it would be less. "Trump fever" has so changed things in our nation, particularly in education. And then again, we must just look at enrollment. It is down. Colleges are already talking about cutting or reducing costs – if they have not already. As such, resources and mentorship suffer/are lacking.

Researcher (follow-up question): You have mentioned Trump a few times. What do you

mean specifically – how has Trump impacted colleges' perceptions of Black males?

- Q5.PF3: Ok yes – you know since Trump has been in office – I know this is not a political study – I'm sorry I don't mean to take it there, but I think it is related – because before him Barack was President and even though some White folks disagree with it – they were less likely to do anything about it – you know like in their local communities. I just know in my own family – some of my family members would have side conversations about what they thought he (Barack) was doing or not doing as President. But now that Trump is in office all the White folks everywhere are bold. They are taking their thoughts public about how they feel about folks of color – specifically Hispanics related to immigration. Police brutality – social unrest – inequality – all of these things are becoming front news like every day. So - when it comes to education, I think it has been negative impacted all the way around. The Black Lives Matter movement – at least for White folks – those I know – they don't see it as positive for people of color – they see it as a threat. I'm sorry – I'm ranting – let me answer your question – but no – even during the pandemic we have not done anything unique or specific to support Black males in advising nor have we talked about it. So again – no one is asking us (advisors) what we think and for sure no one has asked us about supporting Black males – not even before the pandemic – no one asked.

- Q6. PF3: No – we have not. However, with all the talk about "reverse-discrimination" and "affirmative action," I doubt this has been a broached topic. At least not from where I sit. I believe academic advisors would participate if the leadership were to come up with such an initiative. Culturally responsive training is not new and probably was gaining some traction before "Trump fever" – sorry I said it again - I believe if leadership would push for the establishment of cultural awareness training, the advisors would be on board to participate in these sessions whether at their institution or another.

The Experienced Respondent

PM1, a 49-year-old Black male, who at the time of the study attended a HBCU located in Louisiana near the coastline of the state where he earned his baccalaureate degree. The following are the answers that he gave to the aforementioned questions:

- Q1. PM1: Culturally responsive academic advising plays a vital role in enrollment, persistence, and the success of Black males at any college – no matter the type – but more importantly here because it ultimately influences the students' overall collegiate experience. I went to an HBCU – you know I went to Southern University – Black is in my DNA – literally. I've been doing this a long time – 20+ years — and only until the last few years have been people really be trying to do diversity initiatives in colleges. I'll be honest with you – I don't think it had anything to do simply with Black folks because we been trying to go to colleges and graduate. I think its because all across the US – specifically here in Texas the Hispanic population is growing faster than anyone can count. Now as a country we have to look at economics – you know. Black folks only make up 12…13% of the country's population – you can write us off and you won't miss anything. The US has a done a good job killing us off – you know – prisons, drugs, gangs, poverty, disease, single parent homes, - you name it – it has wiped us out. There were more of us (Black people) in the US during slavery, post-slavery and in the early 1900s than there are now 150 years later. Don't get me wrong – we (Black people) are to blame as well for some of our setbacks – but let's be clear – we have never – ever – had a leg up in education. So, we you talk about cultural diversity – culturally responsive advising as you put it – man…we should have had that conversation in the 1980s – in all aspects of college support.

- Q2. PM1: I think that some of them are not prepared and require more academic support. In advising sometimes we have conversations about Black males – but not formal conversations -but rather statements and questions about the young men we advise who we wonder how they made it out of high school. However, personally, my perception is that Black male students are fully capable, yet they need different tools that are more culturally appropriate to better prepare and assist them to navigate and acclimate to the college experience. Being that this is a community college a lot of them come here because this was the only place they could get into – whether financial or academic or location because we are in the neighborhood. Even so – they come here not knowing what to do – not knowing what careers are. You might be surprised, but I do a lot of career advising rather than only degree plan advising. They lack exposure and understanding of really how the world works. I understand some of them are fresh out of high school, so their experience is limited, but are they not exposing kids to careers in high school? - come on now – then they come to us with no realistic goals in mind. But yes – I think they are – for the most part are underprepared – I think Hispanics males are too to some degree.

- Q3. PM1: For an urban community college to be equipped to successfully support Black male students, they would have to update their teaching practices and ensure that the curriculum reflects various cultures and has a more inclusive approach. I also teach as an adjunct and they (academic department) give us a general syllabus and the textbook they want to us use. Now my class is freshman seminar which is pretty basic that covers the first-year experience of a student. But to be honest – I go completely off script and often use my personal life experience in teaching some of the content. Don't get me wrong I do use the assignments and the Blackboard class requirements, but I also talk about Black and Brown success in my class. I talk to them about study skills during the first year, how to connect with the professor, how to do time management – you know all of the things they will need. But I still make sure to have time for real talk and group sessions so we can talk about what's going on at home and what trends we see in the lives of people of color in our area.

Researcher (follow-up question): So, would you say that your classroom experience is a part of the institution's attempt — the freshman seminar class — to support Black males better, worse, or the same as other institutions?

- Q3: PM1: No – because all students have to take the seminar class which I think they do that at every college. So no, – it's not unique to this college and I have taught for years because its what I like to do. So, its not as if the institution sought me directly or wanted to do something to support Black males with this class. I do think we have the resources – we have the people (employees) – that represent the community enough to make an impact – but there is still more to do. A lot the Black males I see that come through – both in advising in this class over the years – were not prepared. K12 is not preparing these boys and we (the college) would do them a disservice if we were to teach at a lower standard.

- Q4. PM1: From my experience, the senior administration of most institutions has been very considerate and understanding of the academic challenges that all students would potentially face during COVID-19. I think most institutions have tried their best to provide resources for all students. This pandemic has impacted everyone – rich and poor – Black, White and Brown – but you know Black folks have traditionally been casualties of modern diseases more than other groups. I know institutions have been receiving funds – the CARES Act and various other resources to help students in college. I haven't seen anything specific to Black males related to COVID, but everyone knows about the support and to my knowledge the administration has pushed it out and students are using it – so I guess its working.

- Q5. PM1: I would say the same. Again, there has been nothing specific related to COVID to support Black males only. In advising we're not having those conversations in meetings – I talk about with peers when are lunch – but the advising leadership is giving us general instructions about our daily tasks. Things like updates

to the degree plans, using PeopleSoft, grade updates, transfer opportunities for students and connecting with academic departments more. Those are all good things. One thing good we have done recently is the college has been hosting seminars related to racial inequality, Black Lives Matter, and posting information about social justice platforms. This I think is start in the right direction – I hope it lasts. Excuse me if I'm optimistic, but we (USA & colleges) start doing these things for a short time during a crisis or around national news pertaining to a murder (George Floyd), but the work never continues. I really hope it does – that these sessions continue. I want to speak on really quick on that previous question (Q4) – I still don't see much related to Black males. I would like to see that change.

- Q6. PM1: Given my role, I have was encouraged once by the Dean of Students – who happens to be Black - to support and mentor Black males. Now let me be specific – it wasn't in a formal way or in a meeting or related to a unique project – but more of again – general talk. Now don't get me wrong – I appreciate the conversation we had that day – but we did not formally outline strategies to support Black males.

Researcher (follow-up question): Do you think the Dean was trying to give you the

opportunity to create initiatives yourself to target Black males related to advising support or any

other additional initiatives?

- Q6.PM1: But I identify as a Black male; therefore, I have the interest to support/mentor and have the abilities to do so. And so, that may be why. However, I am not confident that advisors and other colleagues across campuses both of color and who are not of color have been encouraged to do that same. I believe academic advisors would be in support of culturally responsive development opportunities that focus on better supporting and helping to develop Black male students. I would say that I don't think the Dean was trying to give me that power should I say – but it was more of general talk because we share the same demographic. This is not just a me thing – it has to be across the board because I already engage Black males as often as I can. I have even helped my peers from time-to-time, but I'm hopeful – let me say that. I'm hopeful that we are potentially moving toward something better to help our students. We have to – if we really want retention and graduation rates to increase – we must.

The Optimistic Participant

PM2, a 55-year-old Asian male, attended a private university located in Southeast Texas

in the largest city in the state to earn his baccalaureate degree from age 19-23. The following are

the answers that he gave to the aforementioned questions:

- Q1.PM2: My experience has been that academic advisors recognize the value and need for culturally responsive advising. As is true with classroom teaching, students often identify with those who are culturally relevant and sensitive to the needs of students of color, particularly Black males. When students have the support needed, it increases persistence and success in the educational journey.

- Q2.PM2: My experience has been that there are a variety of perceptions that academic advisors have of Black males who attend urban community colleges. Those perceptions range from recognizing the scholastic achievement of Black male students to some feeling that Black male students only attend urban community colleges because they could not gain admittance elsewhere. From what I personally see is that they (Black males) end up here because they were not prepared in high school and for those who are older – they may have lost a job and did not have anything to fall back on so they decided to come to school – somewhere near their home. I see a lot of them often hanging out (before COVID because virtual advising is taking place) in the student lounge when I walk by during my lunch – which is really the time when they should be in class – they seem to be having a good time. I'm not sure they (Black males) are taking this seriously. I see the young women – specifically Hispanic women really doing a great job. They are always in groups sitting at tables studying or in the computer lab.

- Q3.PM2: I think that some academic advisors believe that community colleges are not well-equipped to support Black male students as well as other higher education institutions, particularly private institutions, specifically in terms of resources that require funding, i.e., Black Male programs, mentoring, multicultural centers, etc. I haven't seen anything specific here related to Black males. I did overhear a colleague (Black male advisor) say he went to another one of our campuses and they had a Men of Honor Program and he attended a luncheon. As an urban community college – a minority serving institution – we should be supporting all students – and I think there is a way to do it specific to each demographic. Private institutions have more money and bigger endowment – I know I went to one – you many – many moons ago and I don't remember see anything for Black males. As a matter of fact, I don't remember seeing a lot of Black males at the school period – even now – I go visit from time to time because my daughter is a senior there and I still don't see a lot of Black males there. I would assume that they are at the Black colleges, because this college has a good number of them, but mostly Hispanic students. I would think that the Black colleges maybe doing a better job.

- Q4.PM2: Specific to the pandemic my experience has been that some academic advisors perceive the urban community colleges are lacking in their support and treatment of Black males. Many institutions were not prepared for the effects of the global pandemic and many students were not adequately provided the support needed for academic success and this is certainly the case for Black males. As a college – specifically in advising is that we have sent messages to all students related to COVID. There are postings everywhere, hand sanitizing stations and they have even made all of the restroom sinks automatic, so you don't have to touch them – so we are getting the message out about health safety. I don't see anything specific to Black

males, but I would say that this information is geared toward all students. I don't think that is a bad thing.

- Q5.PM2: From discussion with colleagues at some of the country's urban community colleges, it appears that Black male students were provided fewer resources and mentorship as compared to other students during the COVID-19 pandemic. I have a few friends I with connect at another campus ever so often and we were just talking about general resources. One of them is a Black male and he did express that his campus had specifically created a few programs to support Hispanic young women in the nursing program related to COVID but had completely left out Black students in general. I asked him did he think it was specific to the nursing program, but he said no because the President of his campus came to the event and there were not Black students (male or female) there. The event was about providing support to Hispanic families related to COVID and he (my colleague) was upset because a few weeks had went by and there were no events related to the Black community. He said the advising team in the nursing program along with the nursing faculty hosted the event.

- Q6.PM2: We are not encouraged by our supervisor to participate in mentoring or providing additional specific to Black males. There are often a variety of reasons for this, but two come to mind: leadership desires to "treat all students the same," often overlooking the cultural and learning differences of students, and there are often not supervisors of color or those who are culturally competent enough to recognize the value and need of offering additional supports for Black male students. From my experience, academic advisors generally only view culturally responsive professional development as an important activity in which to participate if leadership makes it a priority for the institution. Otherwise, it often is not something that is on the radar of the average academic advisor. If college leadership places a strong emphasis on the need to have culturally responsive staff and are willing to invest in offering workshops, training, and sessions with the support of Black males as the end goal. I believe it should become a part of the fabric and culture of the college. As times are changing and more diversity initiatives are underway – we will see what happens. Often advisors are left out of these conversations. It most often happens on the academic side.

The Lost Respondent

PM3, a 40-year-old White male at the time of the study, attended a fully online accredited religious-based university from 23–29 years of age. The following are the answers that he gave to the aforementioned questions:

- *Q1.PM3:* The community college administration has offered no distinct response to Black Male students, positive or negative. The pandemic COVID-19 has caused an

inadequate response to the entire student population from the college's administration.

Researcher (follow-up question): So, do you feel that culturally responsive advising has

an impact on the persistence rates of Black male students here at this college?

- Q1.PM3: Culturally responsive advising – I haven't heard it quite put like that before. But I would say that there various factors that impact any students' ability to persist in college. It could be financial need, transportation, class offerings, family-work-life balance, a lack of preparation – you know so many. If by "cultural awareness" you mean an awareness of and being conversant with the cultural norms and exposures (music, film, entertainment, sports, social media, etc.) that informs the attitudes and behavior of Black males in the urban community college… some academic advisors have a broad knowledge, some have limited exposure and others are foreign to them.

- Q2.PM3: It varies. Advisors are not a monolith. Some see Black male students in light of their potential, while others measure them solely in terms of prior preparation and current performance. For some advisors, interaction with any student is primarily a job task to be discharged and forgotten. Since this campus is a majority minority campus, I recognize that these students quite often come from low-socio economic homes and are first-gen. That typically is the general student that I advise, but I make sure to provide them all – color doesn't matter - with the same detailed support. I go over the degree plan, graduation preparation, I connect them with the career center if needed, and send follow-up emails or schedule virtual advising appointments.

- Q3.PM3: Many advisors see their role as encompassing a mentoring role. Beyond developing pathways to completion, they have a holistic view of student engagement which includes a "hands-on" involvement in a student's life outside of the academic environment. The advisor becomes a sounding board for the student's life concerns and a dispenser of sound guidance. I think this is the same across the board at various institutions for all students. I have worked at two-PWI institutions in advising and admissions – both out of state – and they have actually had more resources to support students. They had more centers, more staff per student ratio and the amenities were better than what we have here. I don't recall any programs for Black males specifically. I do think just because of the community we are in – for this college at least – that we should be aware of the students needs a little better. I went to the military after high school and then attended college online because I was stationed in so many places - so I have interacted with all types of people. I am the first person in my family to go to college, but my undergraduate experience was a little different. I connect more with military personnel a little better, but to be honest I still don't interact with too many of them that are Black males.

- Q4.PM3: I can't really say for sure that it is any different than any other student enrolled here. The administration seems to be trying to help all students the same from what I see. I can't recall if anything is specifically targeted at any one group –

however, we do see information sometimes in Spanish, but that does make sense based on the majority of students who attend and their families who still may not be familiar with English. The institution constantly makes us aware of changes happening from a system level related to COVID.

- Q5.PM3: In general, I advise all students the same – in a sense that the resources we provide are very important and useful to help a student navigate their collegiate experience. It can have a positive impact (academic advising). Not that advisors seek to emulate or imitate the cultural influences – for those like myself – being that I am White male - but acknowledge and respect for them can become a bridge of relevance which can be a helpful tool in facilitating persistence and completion. I think that goes for any population of students.

- Q6.PM3: The key factor is intentionality driven by institutional intervention. Black male students need validation through engagement with advisors, faculty, and peers. Also, training of the senior administrators and other stakeholders is essential. The total support of the College's governing board is required so that programs become institutional policy.

Researcher (follow-up question): So, is the administration encouraging or providing opportunities for academic advisors to participate in mentoring activities or programs related to Black males?

- *Q6.PM3:* I can't really say for sure – whether are or aren't. We have multiple campuses so it could be happening there. Specifically, here…no…I don't recall see any information related to Black males before or during the pandemic. But again – there is a lot happening with support of students related to state and local support bringing provided which I would think helps everyone. I don't recall seeing and "cultural awareness" trainings at this campus – unless I missed it somehow – and we have not offered any for academic advisors.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

For the second phase of this study, collected data was also proposed as a series of open-ended questions in an online survey. Thirteen Academic Advisors were used for this study. The following questions were asked utilizing Qualtrics:

- SQ1 - Please select your age.

- SQ2 - Please select the ethnicity and gender that you most identify with

- SQ3 - How many years of experience do you have in academic advising in higher education?

- SQ4 - Compare and Contrast Question Segment: Based on the African American Males that you have advised at your current institution, in your opinion, how do they compare in college readiness in relation to Caucasian Males?

- SQ5 - How do they compare in college readiness in relation to Hispanic Males?

- SQ6 - How do they compare in college readiness in relation to Asian Males?

- SQ7 - Are there any academic support programs that currently exist that directly target African American males for support at your institution? - If so, do you participate?

- SQ8 - Do you personally mentor African American males within your current institution?

- SQ9 - With only 13% of African Americans in the U.S., they lead the nation in percentages in relation to the most health-related deaths of any ethnicity, and Black males have the shortest lifespan of any demographic. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 has your institution's Health Center presented any information specifically addressing the support of African Americans/African American males?

- SQ10 - What is the biggest challenge - in your opinion - at your institution impacting African American males? — please elaborate if necessary.

- SQ11 - In your opinion, what do you believe is your Administration's view of African American males enrolled at your institution? — please elaborate if necessary.

Survey Participants

Of the participants, 23% were over the age of 55, 30% of the participants were ages 38 - 54. And 47% were between the ages of 30-37. Also, 69% of the participants were Black males and 31% were Black females, thus 100% of the participants who responded to the survey were African-American. Of the participants, 40% had 15+ years of experience, 7% had between 10-15 years, 30% had between 5-10 years, and 23% of the participants had 5 years or less experience as an academic advisor in a higher education setting. The participants' experience ranges from three to twenty years.

Survey Responses

       The survey results from Questions #4 - #11 (*SQ4 – SQ11)* were captured to provide

details and then were analyzed in correlation with the responses provided by the Phase One

Participants. These are results from Phase Two:

       SQ4: Of the participants, 7% felt that Black males were better prepared than White males

versus the 69% of the participants who felt that Black males were less prepared for college than

their counterparts.

       SQ5: Of the participants, 69% believed that both Black and Hispanic males were

prepared the same for college.

       SQ6: Of the participants, 61% felt that Black males were less prepared than Asian males

versus the 15% who felt that Black males were better prepared than the Asian males.

       SQ7: Of the participants, 38% stated that support systems were in place to aid the Black

male population and that they were actively participating in the services provided. While 31%

stated that programs were available, they were not actively a part of the programs. Lastly, 31%

of the participants stated that there were no such programs at their school.

       SQ8: Of the participants, 76% stated that they do participate in mentoring of Black males,

while the remaining 24% of the participants stated that they were not mentors to Black males.

       SQ9: Of the participants, 23% stated that their institution's Health Center had produced

information related to African-Americans, while 61% stated that no information was produced

related specifically to African Americans.

       SQ10 (open ended question): In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge at your

institution impacting African American males?

- Roles models at the institution that the students can connect to and supporting resources.

- The biggest challenge is the unknown. They are not built and prepared for college, so they are unaware of all of the resources available. Tutoring, scholarships, college readiness, jumpstart, etc.

- Lack of concern. More concerned about numbers, funds, and other irrelevant issues.

- The biggest challenge that I regularly perceive is that there are not enough Black males in our various departments that our students can relate to. Oftentimes, our Black males tend to fair better when they can interact with those who have been where they are now. The lack of diversity in my department, for example, makes it difficult for them to make lasting connections with those that can relate to their difficulties.

- Not enough mentors

- There is a lack of diversity within leadership as a whole and there is a lack of understanding as to what direction the institution needs to go and to better support Black males.

- Retention and cultural activities

- Absence of specific named programs

- Increasing Black male student enrollment

- Access is the biggest challenge. Access to accurate information, resources, and mentors.

*SQ11 (*open ended question): *In your opinion, what do you believe is your Administration's view of Black males enrolled at your institution?*

- I work for an institution that is considered an access institution, so we are intentional in our recruit plan to focus on Black males.

- I believe that my institution knows and is aware of the drastic difference in our Black males' readiness for college. It is a known factor that needs to be addressed shortly for greater retention rates for our Black males.

- The institution's view of Black males is that there must be more of a concerted effort to ensure that men of color have all appropriate resources to include intrusive advising methodologies, key check-in dates at midterm and after the students first

year and ensure that faculty and staff are equipped with competencies to support men of color.

- I believe the university recognizes the retention issues in Black males and has made an effort to fix the issue through mentor programming and collaborative programming with various officials in the division of student affairs.

- My institution believes Black males are one of the same. No one is treated above and beyond nor are there any plans to prepare Black males for any advancement or career readiness in regard to their future.

- While the institution recognizes African American registration numbers, I think that more can be done to encourage Black males. When I look at programs that emphasize minorities, I think the institution does more to target Hispanic males rather than Black males.

- My institution focuses more on Hispanic students than any other race.

- The administration has been supportive and wants to better support our Black student population.

- Strongly supportive of Black male students.

- No clue

- I believe that Black male enrollment in our institution is not as important to the administration team as it needs to be.

- My institution has a program that targets minority males; however, the focus is primarily on Hispanic males and females.

Analysis of Results

SQ5, 6, and 7 all refer to the preparedness of Black males to their other male counterparts and the findings suggest that in general Black males are not prepare for college. These results were consistent with Kniess et al. (2020) in relation to recognizing that the transition from high school to college is tough for men of color. Kniess et al. (2020) would further state that stigma related to racist stereotypes, academic inferiority coming from high school and home life leads to dissatisfaction with school. Kniess et al.'s (2020) study found that pre-college influences, first

year challenges and success and leadership programs may have lasting impacts. This is also consistent with responses in Phase One from PF1 and PM1 that racist stereotypes linger, and pre-college preparedness is lacking. Also noted in the findings from Phase One is the lack of connection to the community. It was indicated by PM2 and PF3 that due to the location and characteristics of the urban community college there should be more of a connection in order to better support the students due to the proximity. Abrica et al. (2021) would emphasize the importance of campus climate and how certain changes could positively or negatively impact student success. This is consistent with Vasquez and Wood (2014) where it is emphasized that the two-year colleges' ability to retain and graduate more Black males has to do with the important functions and characteristics of the college. If the institution can provide resources that are directly linked to the population they serve – namely Black males – then the institution is more likely to graduate students at a higher level (Johnson et al., 2019).

In Phase Two the findings for SQ7 would reference the need for programs dedicated to Black males where there were mixed responses from the participants. Based on the findings, 30% of the participants indicated that there were programs that support Black males and that they participate, but overwhelming 69% would say that either programs exist or do not exist in which as academic advisors they do not participate. In Phase One only PM1 participated in some sort of engagement with Black males, albeit it was of his own accord in both teaching as well as a moment of encouragement from the Dean of Students to participate directly with Black males. PM1 did not mention that were programs specifically at his campus location dedicated to Black males nor did any other of the other participants in Phase One during the individual interviews. However, PM1 indicated that Black was in his DNA in referencing his collegiate experience at an HBCU. PF1 would also indicate that she was completing her graduate degree during the time

of the study at an HBCU. PF1 and PM1's review of their positive experience at the HBCU is consistent with the literature. Johnson and McGowan's (2017) study found that HBCUs enhance students' academic skills, supports students' racial identity along with students' aspirations to further their education and advance their careers. In addition, the study also found that HBCUs offer a family environment that promote positive faculty-student interactions – specifically related to Black males (Johnson & McGowan, 2017). This is consistent in PM1's statements about participating in mentoring of Black male students because of his undergraduate collegiate experience at an HBCU. Furthermore, PF1 expressed the importance of culturally responsive advising in a sense that there were undertones of discrimination related to Black males concerning additional support, programs, and comparisons to other ethnicities. As new centers are designed and emphasis is placed on supporting Black students, colleges should be equipped with resources, programs or centers where Black students – namely Black males can find support unique to them instead of having to go looking for it (Allen & Smith, 2008; Mitchel et al., 2010; Donaldson et al., 2016).

According to the findings in Phase Two SQ8, overwhelming 77% of academic advisors in the study participated in mentoring of Black males within their college. PM3 in Phase One was not a part of any mentoring and indicated that he had not seen any detailed information from the administration targeted to support Black males in advising. The findings also reflect that all of the academic advisors in Phase One indicated that advisors were not a part of any culturally responsive training during or before the pandemic PM3 stated that he had never heard of the term culturally responsive advising – mostly cultural awareness and that he felt it was important, but nothing was really happening at his campus. PM2 and PF3 had heard that diversity as whole was being talked about in various forms, but that resources related to COVID were the same for

every student. The research emphasized that the pandemic has had a major impact both health and college persistence (Piotrowski & King, 2020; Phiri et al., 2021). Mitchell et al. (2010) would emphasize in utilizing Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework, that most colleges are still functioning in traditional ways that do not inherently support the shift in demographics. Most institutions are still function in a support predominantly white college mindset that all students are created equal, with equal opportunities for success, with family and home structures that are built to support their education and that administrators generally represent the student body (Back & Keys, 2020; Mitchel et at., 2010). Not to mentioned that facilities or centers have been designed with students of color in mind and what unique resources they may need (Back & Keys, 2020; Allen, 2021).

According to Phase Two SQ9, 77% of the participants indicated that either they did not know or not at all if their college's health center had promoted any information specifically related to Black students – namely Black males knowing that African Americans make up less than 20% of the nations' population but lead it percentage wise in relation to deaths associated with various high risk health factors. This is consistent with Adebayo et al. (2020) review that quality communication is an essential part of a health care encounter. However, health care information – even on college campuses should also be disseminated specifically for those that need it most related to equity (Griffith, 2015). In Phase One PF3 expressed that the information sent by the college was general information for all students related to COVID. Albeit that this information was pertinent it did not, however, address the unique needs of Black males. PM3 based on the findings referenced the importance of diversity training but had not participated in any nor was he aware of the term culturally responsive academic advising. PM3 also indicated that general advising and information was the same for all students and that nothing was unique

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for Black males. PM3 attended college 100% online and was not exposed generally to the challenges that students of color encounter as on-campus undergraduates which may have had an impact on his general knowledge of an on-campus Black male student. In addition, PM3 would not have any pre-exposed knowledge of what Davis and Otto (2016) studied related to the gender gap between Black men and Black women enrolling in colleges. This gender gap had a negative impact on Black men because they tend to have a higher risk of joblessness that poses an ongoing threat to the economic, social and physical health of the wellbeing of the country as a whole (Davis & Otto, 2016). PF3 would further highlight the notion of culturally competent dialogue and initiatives that should be taking place. That the US since the time of the Trump Presidential run, had taken a step backwards since the time of President Barack Obama to a time where racism was becoming bolder even amidst a Black Lives Matter Movement. These statements by PF3 were not expressed by any of the other participants in Phase One related to governmental underlining issues specifically having an impact on Black males in colleges settings. Furthermore, the findings also suggest that urban community colleges are employing more persons of color who share similar experiences to students of color – specifically to Black males in an effort to provide mentors who can provide relatable experiences that lead to engagement of Black male students (Young Jr et al., 2001). All of the participants in Phase Two identified as African American which the study questions were sent at random to at-large advisors within the urban community college district with not prior personal contact.

Based on the findings from Phase Two SQ12 there was split in the responses related to are institutions truly supporting Black males. Some respondents indicated that their institution had recognized the challenges and were taking steps forward to support Black males, whereas others would indicate that the institution is equally supporting all students the same, but also that

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the emphasis was on Latinx students. This is also consistent with statements from PF1, PF3, PM1 and PM2 in relation that Latinx students seemed to more of a focus. PF1 expressed that she respected the idea to support the Latinx community, but also that Black community was getting left behind in the conversation. PM1 would also highlight that the Black community related to education has never had a fair share of support at any level. This is consistent with Hope et al. (2020) regarding generational stress, anxiety and racial identity for Black males and the need to be activist to support the cause of positive cultural influences.

Chapter Summary

There are three main themes that were present in the findings. 1) Culturally Responsive Academic Advising is important to academic advisors, 2) a successful campus climate and culture has to include retention-based programs related to Black males in order to help them thrive, not only during a pandemic, but in non-pandemic daily operations, and 3) administration should essentially promote and require culturally responsive professional development for academic advisors which was not occurring at the time of the study. Based on the findings urban community colleges seem to be on verge of doing great things related to support minority students as several of the participants mention support for Latinx students and women of color. The findings also suggest that the administration was providing detailed information to all campus stakeholders related to health awareness concerning COVID-19 (Yoshikawa et al., 2021). The literature and the findings share a correlation in that campus climate, health disparities, prepared of Black males for college level work and the ability or inability of academic advisors and administrators to provide relevant success measures could determine whether or not Black males persist at urban community colleges (Palmar, 2014; Volpe et al., 2021).

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

As stated in Chapter I, culturally competent advisors line up their advising strategies with the foundational aim of education to pose a greater influence on the future of the education sector (Strayhorn, 2015). Throughout this study elements of *Culturally Responsive Academic Advising* which were highlighted and defined as, an Academic Advisor's ability to recognize a student's cultural background and influences, ethnic identity, nationality, socio-economic status or gender identity during an advising session and being able to promote, connect or provide institutional resources in an effort to support student retention (Allen, 2015; Coney, 2017; Back & Keys, 2020; Allen, 2021). According to Bowes (2017), it is about building warm and welcoming relationships with students of color to support high academic expectations and helping them navigate complex systems within the institution. The purpose of the study was to examine how academic advisors utilized culturally competent advising in their engagement with Black males and if that advising had any impact on Black males' persistence while studying at an urban community college during a global pandemic. Allen and Smith (2008) noted that academic advisors have traditionally been the deliberators concerning school reform related to creating opportunities for change in higher education. Comprehending the essence of academic advisors' thoughts, feelings, motivations, and responses regarding Black males is fundamental to how academic reform is determined (Carnaje, 2016; Bowes, 2017).

This study utilized a mixed-method approach that explored academic advisors' culturally responsive advising of Black males at an urban community college during COVID-19 through general interviews questions and a questionnaire to collect statistical data. The results of this research study will add to the literature with the intent to inform academic advisors who advise Black males attending urban community colleges that culturally competent advising is an important skill that can be utilized to improve retention and graduation rates of Black male collegiate students (Vasquez & Wood, 2014; Carnaje, 2016; Boyd & Mitchell, 2018).

The findings of the study highlighted three critical themes: 1) Culturally Responsive Academic Advising is important to academic advisors, 2) a successful campus climate and culture has to include retention-based programs related to Black males in order to help them thrive, not only during a pandemic, but in non-pandemic daily operations, and 3) administration should essentially promote and require culturally responsive professional development for academic advisors which was not occurring at the time of the study. The literature referenced that minorities were greatly impacted by the pandemic, specifically Black families, due to the already disproportionate rate of African Americans who succumb to disease compared to other ethnic groups (Douglas et al., 2021). The literature further indicated that a global pandemic also had a negative impact on education related to enrollment and persistence at colleges. In relation to those who were in a low-socio economic status or who already had low academic attainment, the impact was tremendous (Campbell et al. 2019; Brown, 2020; Dean & Provost, 2021; Douglas et al., 2021). According to Crawford et al. (2020) even staff and academic advisors at some colleges were already facing temporary pay cuts, furloughs, as well as layoffs. As the long-term effects of the pandemic continued, there were expectations that a number of smaller institutions may need to merge or close, while larger institutions may need to decrease large numbers of

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employees, or even decrease benefits and pay (Crawford et al., 2020). The literature emphasized that the entire higher education framework was impacted by the pandemic, and Black males were most likely to take the hardest hit overall (Davis & Otto, 2016; Abdul-Alim, 2020; Yoshikawa et al., 2021).

Based on the findings from Phase One and Phase Two in the research study the analysis indicated that of all the academic advisors who participated, which was a total of 19, nearly 74% had not participated in any specific professional development related to Black males. All of the academic advisors in Phase One indicated that they felt that Culturally Responsive Academic Advising by definition was important, but they themselves also indicated that within their academic advising center professional development had not been required by the administration related to the topic. All of the academic advisors in Phase One and the majority in Phase Two indicated that Black males at their college were less prepared for college compared to White and Asian males and similarly prepared to Hispanic males. These findings continue to correlate with the literature that culturally responsive advising is a necessity along with other resources that support retention and collegiate success of Black males (Chambers, 2014; Palmar, 2014; Cameron, 2016; Allen, 2021).

RESEARCH DISCUSSION

It is evident that supporting diversity initiatives is not only important, but it is absolutely necessary in today's academic institution. Administrators must stay informed and engaged in various nuances related to success measures that could have a great impact in the life of a Black male student. In hindsight, these measures will also influence a socio-economic shift in that all demographics and social classes could be positively impacted (Bright, 2020). Colleges need academic advisors, but more importantly senior leaders who will not allow the student's

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background to stop them from promoting positivity, pride, and power. Considering the nation's current plight now is a good time to implement such protocols that will cause growth and advancement for the Black male. Not only should there be protocols in place, but leaders that will hold both the Advisor and the student accountable to go after greater. There are opportunities for career development, opportunities for financial security, and even more important opportunities for families to no longer be trapped generational poverty. Until it is a burden on the leadership of each institution, then the Black male population will continue to fall through the cracks of instability, lack of concern, insensitivity, and racism.

The findings within the study have concluded that it is still not clear if urban community colleges are truly equipped to support the urban Black male. The findings suggested that some advisors agreed, and others were optimistic all the while a pandemic has taken the enrollment of community to a decline. Policy informs practice and data driven results help determine where the budget will go in conjunction with the strategic plan which should be taken into account the needs of the students. It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. The problem is the child is present, but the village is not attentive to the need of the child. Therefore, a needs assessment should be taken with the intent that the results will lead to institutions equipping all persons with student and academic affairs with the necessary tool-kit required to support – yes – all students, but specifically Black males.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was limited in that it only analyzed the results of 19 participants within a community college that has over 50,000 students enrolled. Also, in Phase Two all of the participants were African American which did not allow for more diversity of thought to be reflected. In addition, only one urban community college was studied and there was no

comparison to other similar colleges or a comparison to any types of colleges related to culturally responsive academic advising. In addition, no students were interviewed nor was there any retention or graduation data collected during the study. A data analysis of an institution's enrollment and graduation rates of first-time in college Black males at an urban community college could offer a narrative into the overall completion rate that has been impacted by culturally responsive advising. Future research could include more participants overall specifically more diverse participants, more elaborate questions, a college-to-college comparison as well as incentives for participating. In addition, studies related to the impact of Black women in higher education related to COVID-19 as well as the implications of drop-out rates for single mother's who were enrolled in colleges during a pandemic. This is important in relation to prior how the gender gap may have also been impacted by the pandemic in relation to persistence rates of Black women at urban community colleges, PWI, HBCU, private, HSI or online colleges. Additional research based on the findings of this study could also include a study of institutions that promote and host culturally competent trainings for faculty and staff. Results of such a study could influence how and if institutions are including culturally competent or diversity training as a priority goal within their strategic plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Based on the findings of this study it suggested to institutions that culturally competent professional development be included within institutional practices (Vasquez et a., 2020). Recommendations for institutions could include creating a center within the college setting that will solely be dedicated to assisting people of color (job placement, writing/assignments assistance, safe place/zone, and full of reading materials that assist African Americans and

needs). Hiring more qualified Black males in key leadership roles that will focus on the African American population and be seen, valued, and cherished as leaders of the college. Also hiring African Americans as mental health counselors which could encourage more Black students in general to seek counseling. In addition, developing opportunities for administration, faculty, and staff to take annual Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training that will assist in behavior, attitudes, and approaches to people who are different than they are. Taking a moment at every minute to raise DEI issues and how to handle them properly. This will keep the issue before each person who works at the community college and also will show that the school is strategically taking steps to ensure that equity is at the forefront of decision and policy making. Providing an academic curriculum that speaks to the many accomplishments and investments of African Americans; thus, it will spark an interest for the Black males and encourage them to strive for excellence. Finally, providing technical assistance for those who are less fortunate especially during this pandemic.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the recommendations arising from this research study are clear. More protocols and systems should be in place to support the Black males who are at urban community colleges. The presence and influence of a Black Advisor/Mentor are highly needed. Institutions should strive to foster DEI programs that will benefit all students who attend. With all that is available, there is no reason why any Black Student should be left behind or be unaware of the limitless possibilities even during COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed issues and concerns that were already prevalent which had not been addressed by higher education institutions (Yoshikawa et al., 2021). Not reflected in this study are the challenges that also

impact K-12 students which are compounded at the next post-secondary level. This case study emphasized that culturally responsive academic advising along with effective mentoring, institutional reform, and academic policies should be updated continually to support Black male student success. This study has revealed that cultural competency professional development and cultural intelligence equity driven decisions should become standard for institutions related to successful academic advising in having a positive impact on Black male students. The findings suggest that administrators and colleges, if they want to support overall enrollment growth, should provide more opportunities for academic advisors to participate in professional development that will have positive influences on Black male persistence. It is also important that urban community colleges outline measures in the strategic plan that will allow coincide with the mission of the institution dedicated to equity for students pre and post-pandemic. The academic advisors in this study all indicated that they would participate in development, that it was crucial to the success of students, but not all of them had any prior experience with direct opportunities to support Black males. As stated earlier, the pandemic has exposed several institutional and community challenges that impacted students and enrollment at community colleges. Not to mention pre-existing challenges facing the Black community. The findings, however limited to the number of participants, still has expressed a need for more intrusive and culturally based advising practices that could provide an overall holistic approach to supporting Black male students at urban community colleges.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
1010 Campus Drive FLITE 410 Big Rapids, MI 49307
www.ferris.edu/irb

Date: December 2, 2020

To: Susan DeCamillis, EdD

From: Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair

Re: IRB Application *IRB-FY20-21-48 A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ACADEMIC ADVISORS' CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ADVISING OF BLACK MALES AT AN URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE DURING COVID-19*

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ACADEMIC ADVISORS' CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ADVISING OF BLACK MALES AT AN URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE DURING COVID-19(IRB-FY20-21-48) and Approved this project under Federal Regulations Expedited Review Approved 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. Your protocol has been assigned project number IRB-FY20-21-48. Approval mandates that you follow all University policy and procedures, in addition to applicable governmental regulations. Approval applies only to the activities described in the protocol submission; should revisions need to be made, all materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. In addition, the IRB must be made aware of any serious and unexpected and/or unanticipated adverse events as well as complaints and non-compliance issues.

This project has been granted a waiver of consent documentation; signatures of participants need not be collected. Although not documented, informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and participant rights, with the assurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must be provided, even when documentation is waived, and continue throughout the study. As mandated by Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46 (45 CFR 46) the IRB requires submission of annual status reports during the life of the research project and a Final Report Form upon study completion. Thank you for your compliance with these guidelines and best wishes for a successful research endeavor.

Regards,

Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair

Ferris State University Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do academic advisors believe about culturally responsive academic advising and its impact on enrollment, persistence, and success of Black males at an urban community college?

2. What were academic advisors' perceptions of Black males who attend urban community colleges compared to all other students who attend the same institution?

3. What were academic advisors' perceptions regarding urban community college's ability to support Black male students in comparison to other types of collegiate institutions?

4. What were the perceptions of academic advisors regarding how Black males within urban community colleges are treated by senior administration and the institution during COVID-19?

5. Were academic advisors providing more, less, or the same resources for Black males as compared to other students during COVID-19?

6. Were academic advisors encouraged by the administration to participate in mentoring activities centered around Black males?

APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1 - Please select your age range.
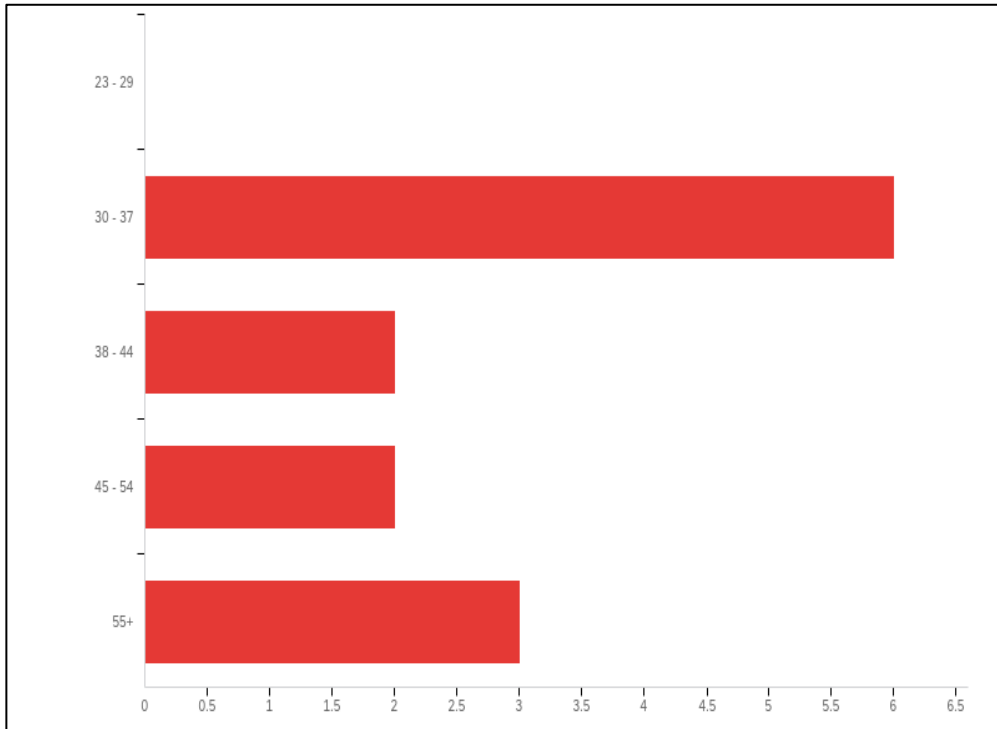
Q2 - Please select the ethnicity and gender that you most identify with.
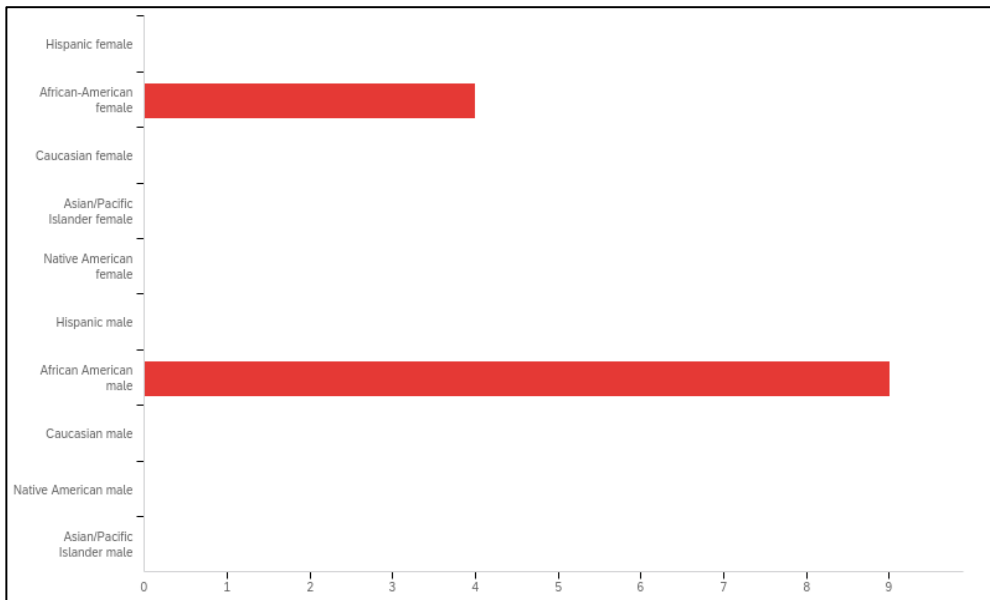
Q3 - How many years of experience do you have in academic advising in higher education?
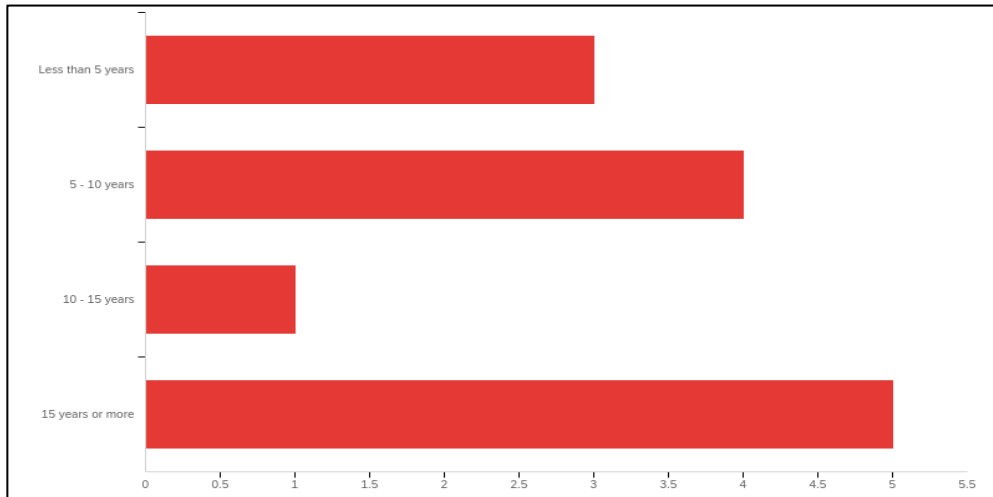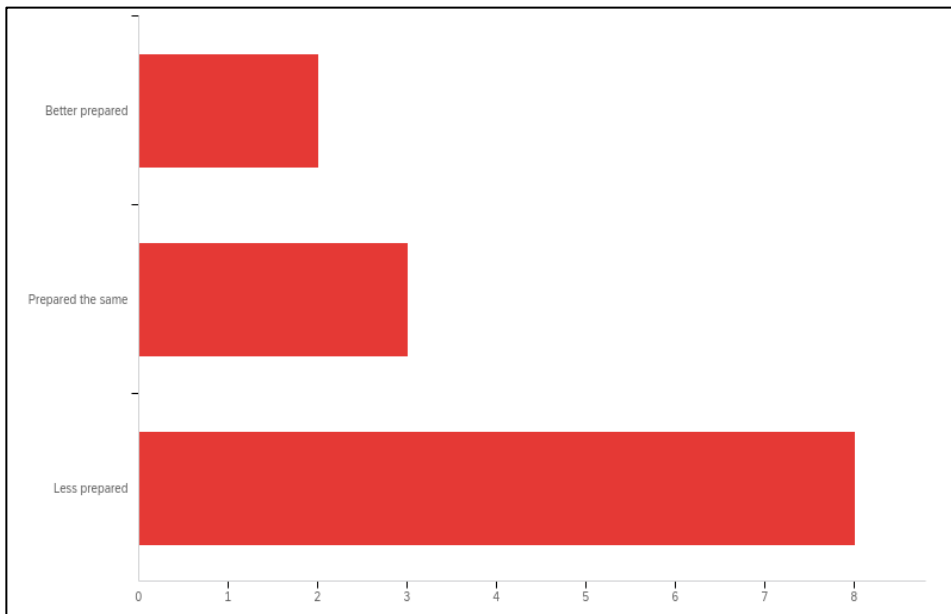

Q4 - Compare and Contrast Question Segment: Based on the African American Males that you have advised at your current institution, in your opinion, how do they compare in college readiness in relation to 'Caucasian Males'?
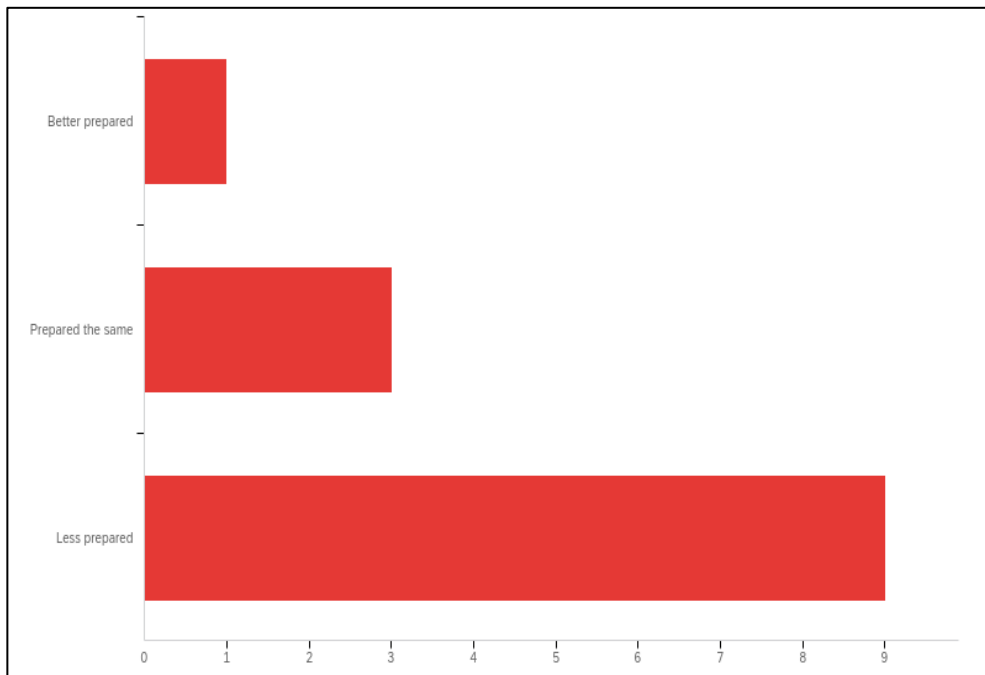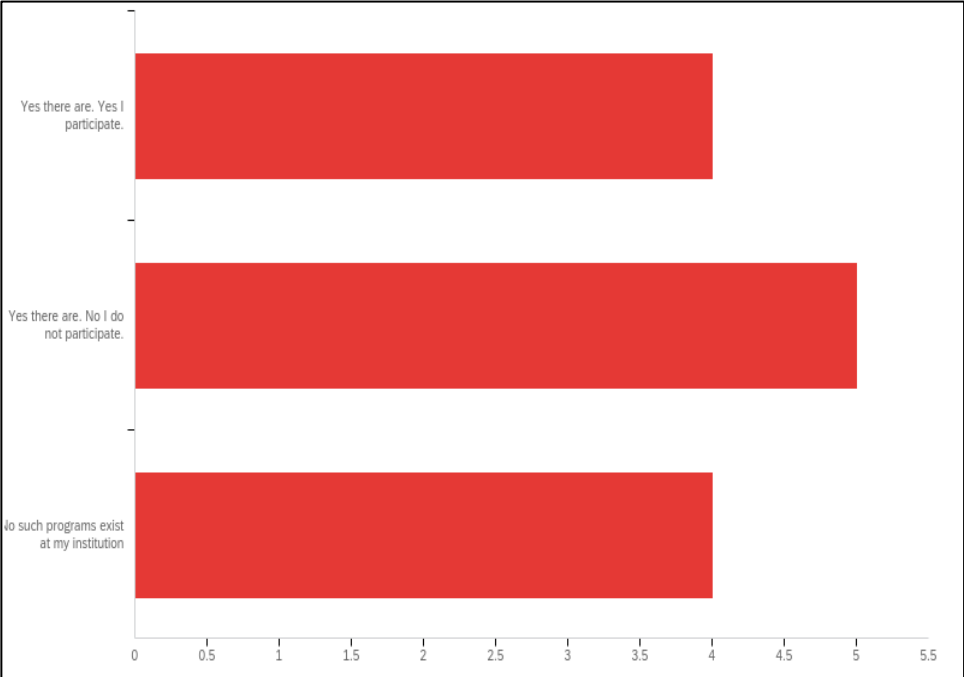
Q5 - How do they compare in college readiness in relation to Hispanic Males?
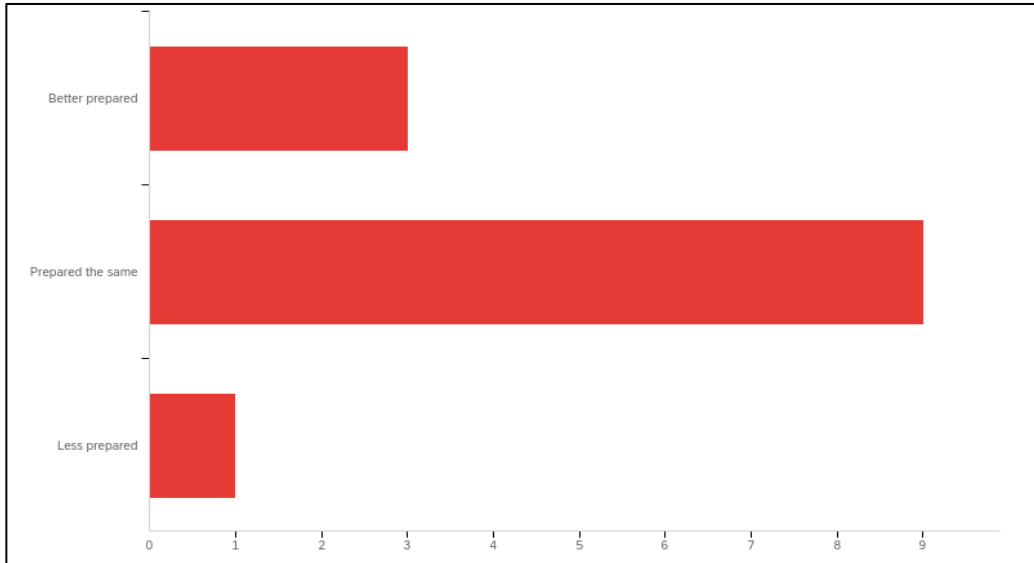
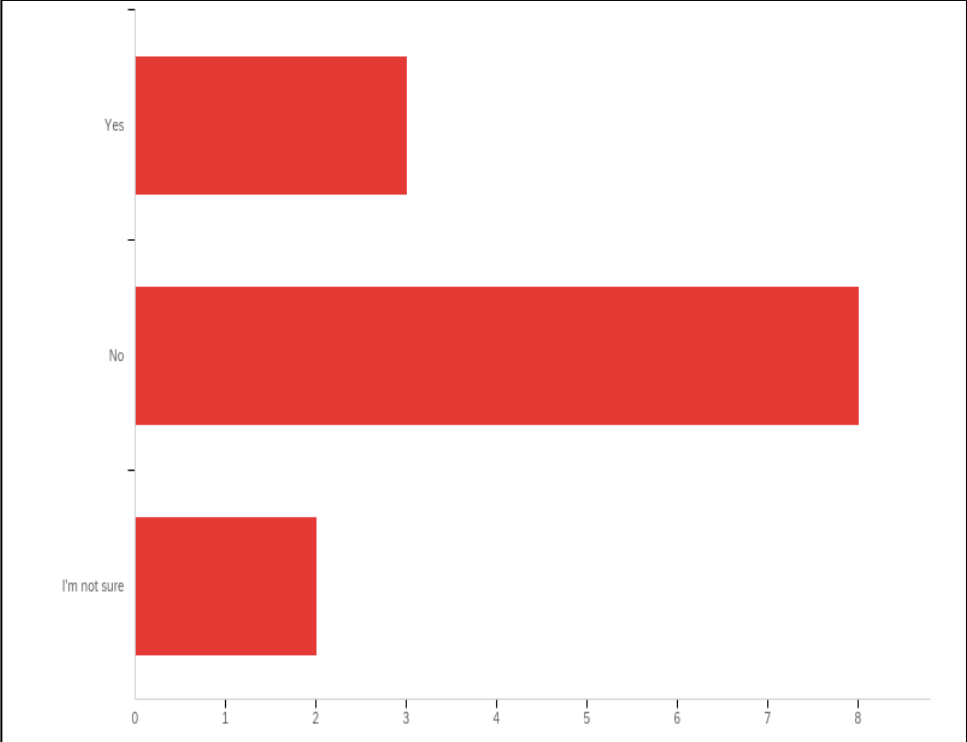Q6 - How do they compare in college readiness in relation to Asian Males?

Q7 - Are there any academic support programs that currently exist that directly target African American males for support at your institution? - If so, do you participate?

Q8 - Do you personally mentor African American males within your current institution?
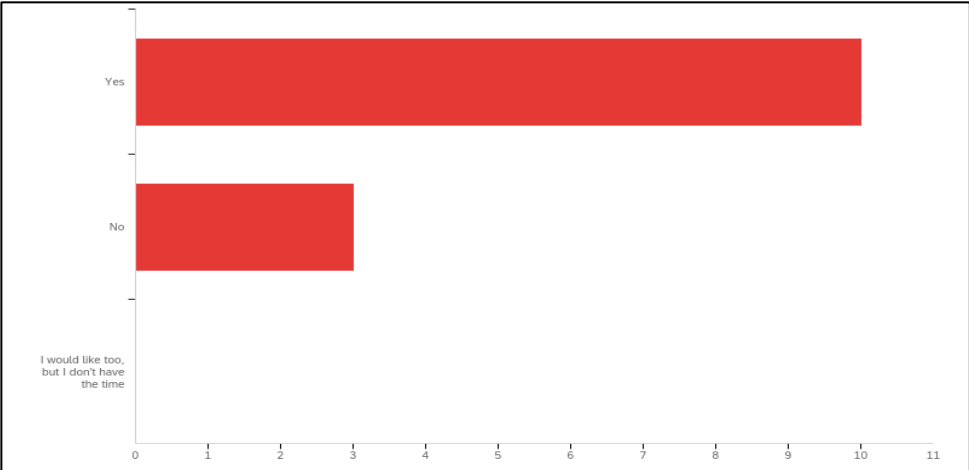
Q9 - With only 13% of African Americans in the U.S., they lead the nation in percentages in relation to the most health-related deaths of any ethnicity, and Black males have the shortest lifespan of any demographic. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 has your institution's Health Center presented any information specifically addressing the support of African Americans/African American males?

Q10: In your opinion, what do you believe is your Administration's view of African-American males enrolled at your institution? -- please elaborate if necessary.

I work for an institution that is considered an access institution, so we are intentional in our recruit plan to focus on african-american males.

I believe that my institution knows and is aware of the drastic difference in our african american males readiness for college. It is a known factor that needs to be addressed in the near future for greater retention rates for our african american males.

The institutions view of AA males is that there must be more of a concerted effort to ensure that men of color have all appropriate resources to include intrusive advising methodologies, key check-in dates at midterm and after the students first year, and ensure that faculty and staff are equipped with competencies to support men of color.

I believe the university recognizes the retention issues in black males and have made a effort to fix the issue through mentor programming and collaborative programming with various office in the division of student affairs.

My institutuion beleives African American males are one of the same. No one is treated above and beyond nor are there any plans to prepare AA males any advancement or career readiness in regards to their future.

While the institution recognizes African-American registration numbers, I personally think that more can be done to encourage African-American males. When I look at programs that emphasize minorities, I think the institution does more to target Hispanic males rather than African-American males.

Q10: In your opinion, what do you believe is your Administration's view of African-American males enrolled at your institution? -- please elaborate if necessary.

My institution focus more on hispanic students than any other race.

The administration has been supportive and wants to better support our African-American student population.

Strongly supportive of African American male students.

No clue

I believe that African American male enrollment in our institution is not as important to the administration team as it needs to be

My institution has a program that targets minority males, however, the focus is primarily on Hispanic males and females.

Q11: What is the biggest challenge - in your opinion - at your institution impacting African-American males? -- please elaborate if necessary.
Roles models at the institution that the students can connect to and supporting resources.
The biggest challenge is the unknown. They are not built and prepared for college so they are unaware of all of the resources available. Tutoring, scholarships, college readiness, jumpstart, etc.
Lack of concern. More concerned about numbers, funds and other irrelevant issues.
The biggest challenge that I regularly perceive is that there aren't enough African-American males in our various departments that our students can relate to. Oftentimes, our African-American males tend to fair better when they can interact with those who have been where they are now. The lack of diversity in my department, for example, makes it difficult for them to make lasting connections with those that can relate to their difficulties.
Not enough mentors
There is a lack of diversity within leadership as a whole and there is a lack of understanding as to what direction the institution needs to go in order to better support African-American males.
Retention and cultural activities
Absence of specific named programs
Increasing African American male student enrollment
Access is the biggest challenge. Access to accurate information, resources, and mentors.