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Engagement Between African American Male Students and the Community College

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Abstract

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Using data from the Community College Survey of Men designed by the Community College Equity Assessment Lab—Minority Male Community College Collaborative at San Diego State University, this study examined factors influencing in- and out-of-classroom engagement of African American male students at community colleges in California. The results suggested positive relationships between multiple predictors and independent variables on ethos factors for African American men. Additionally, the outcomes showed that 4 of the 5 independent variables were significant for African American men (i.e., personal relationships, faculty acknowledgment, belonging, and feeling welcomed). A review of the standardized beta coefficients revealed that the strongest predictor was personal relationships ($\beta = 1.62$), illustrating the importance of personal connections between students and community college educators.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The California Community Colleges system is the largest system of higher education in the United States, with 1.9 million students attending 116 colleges (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], n.d.-a). In Fall 2022, first-time enrolled students totaled 239,542. African American first-time students totaled 12,797; of these, 6,691 were men (CCCCO, n.d.-a). The California Community Colleges system is the entry point to 4-year institutions for many students in the state; yet only 3% of Black students transfer to a 4-year university in 2 years and 35% in 6 years. In all, 63% of Black community college students do not earn a degree, certificate, or transfer in 6 years (Reddy & Siqueiros, 2021). College educators have been willing to try new practices and strategies, but they have frequently focused on the beginning of a student's experience. Additionally, these individual adaptations in teaching strategies have reached a relatively small number of students (Bailey, 2017). This chapter briefly reviews some challenges African American male students face in community college. Additionally, the chapter provides reasoning for the study, outlines the questions driving the research, and describes the theoretical framework that supported the study. Finally, the chapter closes with a description of how the study was conducted and the role of the literature review.

Background

In the United States, there have been some improvements for Black men as they relate to the educational system; however, much work remains to be done. Acknowledging how the intersections of race and gender continue to threaten the success of Black men, beginning in preschool and extending into high school, requires an awareness of their strengths and resilience throughout the life course. This position calls for researchers and practitioners to simultaneously

question the predominant deficit-based narratives that persist in the United States (Wint et al., 2022). Shifting from a deficit-based view can have a profound influence on understanding what influences Black men in postsecondary education. Not only do others' perceptions of Black men shape their schooling experience, but they may severely influence students' chances at a time when educational access is vital to competing in an increasingly global society. This consequence is especially important given how disproportionate numbers of Black men continue to find themselves socially, economically, and politically excluded from the U.S. mainstream (Howard et al., 2012). A variety of factors contribute to the lack of African American men's educational success. According to Lumina and Gallup (2023, as cited by Knox, 2023), "The reasons for this attainment gap are varied, but Black students say the biggest obstacles they face are cost, a lack of extracurricular support, and 'implicit and overt forms of racial discrimination'" (para. 2). These challenges follow Black men into the college environment.

Although community colleges also serve many White first-time freshmen, a larger percentage of Black freshmen rely on community colleges for their first college experience (Bates & Siqueiros, 2019). Among all Black first-time freshmen in 2016, nearly two-thirds (62%) enrolled at a California Community Colleges campus. There is a familiar saying that there are more Black men in prison than in college. This quote is pivotal when considering the African American man's transition to adulthood. Although the context of the quoted statement may be extreme, there remain far too many African American men in prison and not enough in college. According to Nachazel et al. (2016), from 1995–2015, the percentage of 25- to 29-year-olds who had attained an associate degree or higher increased for those who were White (from 38% to 54%), Black (from 22% to 31%), Hispanic (from 13% to 36%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (from 51% to 69%). Additionally, between 1995–2015, the gap between White and Black 25- to 29-

year-olds who had attained an associate degree or higher widened from 16% to 23% (Nachazel et al., 2016). More recent research has indicated the percentage of degree holders has increased across racial and ethnic groups; however, race remains the source of the most significant contrasts in the demographics among degree holders in the United States. Of the Black and Hispanic populations in the United States, 27.6% and 20.9% had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2022, respectively. For both groups, the percentages are about 6% higher than they were 10 years before, though both figures are well below the percentages of the non-Hispanic White and Asian populations with degrees. These groups have also seen a 6% increase in the number of people with degrees, yet the share of White and Asian groups with a bachelor's degree was much higher in 2022, at 41.8% and 59.3%, respectively (Talbott, 2023).

The consequences of low African American enrollment in college include decreased economic, political, social, and cultural capacity to improve the lives of all the world's citizens (Robinson, 2014). Although African American men continue to matriculate, their progress to course completion and degree attainment remains marginal. For example, only 35.2% of Black men who began college as first-time freshmen in 2006 graduated by 2012, and 43.1% of Black women graduated in that same timeframe. Their White male counterparts graduated at a rate nearly 25% higher—59.8% to be exact—and their White female counterparts nearly doubled their graduation rate, at 64.9% (Nachazel & Dziuba, 2014).

Description of the Research Problem

African American men are the lowest performing group in the percentage of postsecondary degrees earned, persistence rates, and average cumulative grade point averages (Bush & Bush, 2005). Harris and Wood (2013) reported African American and Latino men rank at or near the bottom on most indicators of student success. Similar racial and ethnic disparities

among men exist in relation to basic skills and remedial course completion, transfer, and other student success outcomes (Harris & Wood, 2013). Studies have suggested engagement is increasingly seen as an indicator of successful classroom instruction and is increasingly valued as an outcome of school improvement activities. Students are engaged when attracted to their work, persist despite challenges and obstacles, and take visible delight in accomplishing their work (Fletcher, 2007). Although researchers have maintained students have individual responsibility for their collegiate experiences, disparate graduation rates for Black men cannot be attributed to matters of personal responsibility (Wood & Essien-Wood, 2012). Current literature has focused on the relationship between African American student engagement and student satisfaction at both historically Black colleges and universities and predominantly White institutions (Chen et al., 2014). However, structural and environmental factors prevent a diversity of students from achieving success in college. Literature has suggested there is something unique about the experience of Black men because of historical trends of race-based discrimination and flawed cultural assumptions about Black masculinity (Harper, 2012, 2014; Harper et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2013; Wood & Essien-Wood, 2012). Placing the onus on institutions to facilitate the success of Black male students, rather than on students themselves, is a hallmark of antideficit literature—it reifies the analytical framework scholars have used to assess the performance of Black male students (Harper, 2012, 2014; Harper et al., 2009).

These disparities in outcomes suggest an ongoing need to better understand the experiences of men of color in community colleges and the factors hindering and facilitating their success (Harris & Wood, 2013). This present study reviewed the experience of African American male students at various levels in their academic journey. The results provide insight into how African American men perceive their community college experiences and can provide a

model to help increase African American male student engagement in the community college system.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined factors that influence African American male student engagement in community colleges, focusing on out-of-class engagement predictors.

Research Questions

Given the focus on African American male students, the following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. What is the effect, if any, of campus ethos factors (related to faculty) on Black male students' out-of-class engagement with faculty?
2. When controlling for relevant background factors, what is the effect of out-of-class faculty-student engagement on Black male students' intrinsic interest in academic learning?

Significance of the Study

The hurdles influencing Black men's achievement as they navigate the postsecondary educational systems are daunting. More specifically, the likelihood of success (e.g., persistence, achievement, graduation, or transfer) for Black men attending community college is low (Wood & Turner, 2010). Many scholars have contended that although postsecondary educators have made good-faith efforts to improve outcomes for this population, their strategies have been, at best, outdated and, at worst, counterproductive (Harper, 2014; Palmer et al., 2013). Amid the lack of quality engagement, identifying avenues to encourage engagement between Black male students and institutions remains a pivotal need.

The impact of African American men's success has a direct influence on diversity in the campus community. Diversity is essential in the college and university experience because exposure to different people and their perspectives allows students to learn from one another (Purdue Global, 2023). The low number of African American men enrolled in postsecondary education limits the potential of these men to transform their lives and communities; however, contrary to popular attitudes concerning Black male success in higher education, Black men have historically demonstrated a high level of interest in attending college (Kim & Hargrove, 2013).

Positive interpersonal relationships enhance individuals' enthusiasm for learning (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020), which benefits sustainable learning success and self-confidence. The relationships between students and teachers and their perceptions of their teachers seem particularly influential on students' engagement in academic undertakings. Some researchers have focused on student agency and motivation as factors in engagement (Schuetz, 2008). Others have highlighted the ways educators practice and relate to their students (Kuh, 2001; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005) and the roles of institutional structures and cultures (Porter, 2006). Yet others have spotlighted the sociopolitical context in which education and engagement occur (McInnis, 2003; McMahon & Portelli, 2004; Yorke, 2006) and the impact of environmental factors (e.g., family background and economic status) on student success (Law, 2005). It is crucial for institutions to define and adhere to their mission statements and assign responsibilities to myriad departments to ensure college persistence (Barr, 2000; Graham & Gisi, 2000). The impact of low student engagement on retention and graduation rates suggests community college educators could evaluate policies and practices that contribute to or hinder a student culture of engagement (Greene et al., 2008; McClenney, 2007).

This study sought to bridge the gap between African American male students' engagement and the institutions in which they attend. The framework used in the study and gathered data on various engagement factors established how underrepresented students can achieve academic success despite various obstacles. Kim and Hargrove (2013) indicated successful Black men who demonstrate educational resilience reflect several common mechanisms for success.

Theoretical Framework

Academic resilience is defined as academic achievement when such achievement is rare for those facing similar circumstances or in a similar sociocultural context (Gayles, 2005). Resilience refers to a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes despite serious threats to adoption or development. Research on resilience aims to understand the process that accounts for the best outcomes (Masten, 2001). Resilience has been defined as positive developmental outcomes in the face of adversity or stress, being relatively resistant to psychosocial risk experiences, and the development of competence despite chronic stress (Luthar et al., 2000). Defining resilience requires two common factors: (a) the experience of adversity or stress, and (b) the achievement of positive outcomes during or after exposure to adversity. Some researchers have considered resilience as a domain-specific concept. In their longitudinal study, Scales et al. (2006) found higher levels of resiliency traits correlate with higher grade point averages (GPA) among middle and high school students. Students who reported more resiliency characteristics early in the study had higher GPAs 3 years later than those with fewer assets at the start (Scales et al., 2006).

This suggests the existence of different aspects of resilience, such as academic, emotional, and behavioral. Academic resilience receives more attention among the different

aspects (Jowkar et al., 2014). In other words, resilient students sustain high levels of achievement motivation and performance despite stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly and ultimately dropping out of school (Alva, 1991).

When observing an individual's resilient response to a personal challenge, consideration of how protective factors influenced their outcomes is essential. Multiple protective factors can lessen the impact of a few risk factors. For example, strong protection, such as parental support and involvement, could diminish the influence of strong risks, such as having peers who abuse substances (Robertson et al., 2003). The more protective factors in place, the higher the probability of resiliency. The presence of multiple positive factors was used to show how more than one positive influence can diminish negative outcomes ensuring positive results. An example of parental support may enhance the positive effects of academic competence for producing more positive academic outcomes than either factor alone (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Resiliency theory can assist in explaining how people address perceived adversity. For this study, resilience was treated as a means of persistence to seek an education. A more thorough understanding of this framework is described in Chapter 2.

Description of the Study

This study examined the factors influencing student engagement in the community college environment. I was approved to use the Community College Success Measure (CCSM) data set maintained by San Diego State University. I used this data set to examine the factors related to student success and engagement.

The CCSM survey was designed by the Community College Equity Assessment Lab—Minority Male Community College Collaborative at San Diego State University. It is a comprehensive assessment tool for evaluating student success in community colleges, with a

focus on students who have been historically underserved in postsecondary education. Information derived from the CCSM can be used to establish benchmarks for key indicators of student success, monitor the experiences and performance of minority students, and identify issues needing enhanced attention.

Students were asked to participate in an anonymous survey to assess their experiences. Their responses were collected from hardcopy surveys administered to randomly selected course sections during regularly scheduled classes. The gathered data were examined to determine how various factors influence African American male student engagement at a community college.

Chapter Summary

This study contributes to the studies focused on institutional relationships with African American men. In this study, I sought to identify factors influencing student engagement with their academic environment. Results of this study can assist community college educators in understanding the needs and perceptions of the African American male population. According to the extant research, there has been a significant decline in African American male enrollment in higher education. Historically, postsecondary education opportunities have been limited for certain ethnic and racial populations and those of lower socioeconomic status (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). In Chapter 2, the literature review explores various perspectives on retention, engagement, and other student involvement while attending community college.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study emerged from a question raised during a meeting at an urban community college in Sacramento, California, when a dean's curiosity led her to collect data on factors contributing to student success. Although disaggregating data collected from surveys focused on engagement with student services, the results indicated African American men dramatically demonstrated lower achievement rates than all the other ethnic groups. When the dean shared these results, her colleagues concluded students lacked knowledge of resources, did not seek help, neglected to meet with their professors, and lacked campus involvement. I immediately questioned whether engagement between students and college educators was a contributing factor. The literature review provides an overview of the California Community Colleges system, factors contributing to African American men's academic outcomes, and program dynamics. In addition, the literature describes research on student engagement, retention, validation, and resiliency theory.

Community Colleges in the United States

To understand the history of U.S. community colleges, it is important to acknowledge their traditional mission has made them the most broadly democratic segment in higher education (Mellow, 2000). The establishment of community colleges in the United States was based on efforts to make postsecondary education accessible and affordable for any individual. In the context of ever-widening inequality between rich and poor, the importance of a new pathway to economic advancement is difficult to overestimate. The Morrill Act of 1862 expanded access to public higher education, especially in agriculture and what was then termed the mechanical arts (Mellow, 2000). In 1890 the updated Morrill Act granted each state 30,000

acres of federal land per member of its congressional delegation to establish public universities (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Furthermore, the Morrill Act of 1890 extended public education to many African Americans by withholding funds from any state denying admission to land-grant colleges based on the race of the applicant (Mellow, 2000). These institutions were designed to prepare students for careers and workforce development.

Probably the simplest reason for the growth of community colleges was that an increasing number of demands was being placed on educational institutions at every level. As growth developed in U.S. higher education, it became evident that a connection between high schools and universities was needed. Students who sought a traditional liberal arts education could apply for admission to public and private colleges and universities (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). These traditional postsecondary institutions did not address the need to train workers to serve the industries that were emerging in the 1st decade of the 20th century, nor were sufficient seats available for all who sought entry to higher education (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). The pressure to train workers and the growing importance of science and technology prompted the establishment of 2-year colleges that combined liberal education with college-level vocational instruction (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). These institutions became known as junior colleges, which were either connected to local school districts or were branches of universities.

In 1920, another change enhanced the significance of U.S. community colleges. The formation of the American Association of Community Colleges established a place for 2-year college presidents to exchange ideas, formulate policy, and build their leadership skills. By the 1930s, there were more than 200 public and 300 private 2-year colleges across the nation, offering job training and other educational programs for the unemployed during the Great Depression (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005).

Endorsed by the Truman Commission in 1947, community colleges became a viable pathway into higher education, which helped soldiers following World War II use the GI Bill to fund their postsecondary studies. The 1960s saw about 45% of all 18-year-olds enroll in college. The concept of the comprehensive community college was defined and redefined in the 1960s as local sponsors called on the colleges to provide a broad range of programs (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). The development of new programs created three types of degrees: an associate in arts, an associate in science, and an associate in applied sciences with the first two focused on preparation for transfer to 4-year institutions and the third on entry-level employment. The debate over the future of community colleges is rooted in a long-standing and still-active debate over its impact and its origins. Those who would continue or even intensify its current emphasis on nonbaccalaureate education have viewed its impact and its origins in very favorable terms. For them, community college is the "most effective democratizing agent in higher education" (Dougherty, 1994, p. 6). Now, more than 100 years after the first visionary leaders made the "American dream" of universal access to higher education a reality through a nationwide network of 2-year colleges, these colleges play a central role in the lives of millions of people and their communities (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005).

Community Colleges in California

Community colleges enroll nearly half of all undergraduates and represent the fastest-growing sector of public higher education (Templin, 2011). As Templin (2011) noted, "They are the on-ramp to higher education for many Americans and provide economic opportunity for much of immigrant, minority, and first-generation college students" (para. 2). At the time of this writing, the California Community Colleges system is comprised of 73 districts and 116 colleges, making it the largest higher education system in the nation. Over 69% of community

college students are people of diverse ethnic backgrounds and represent some of the state's lowest-income students (CCCCO, n.d.-b). In 1907, the California state legislature authorized high schools to offer postsecondary courses of study to ease the demand on 4-year colleges. This authorization was generally regarded as the beginning of community colleges in California. In 1917, The Ballard Act provided financial support and early regulations for what were then known as junior colleges. The act followed the state funding formula for high schools and provided funding to community colleges on a per-student basis (Witt et al., 1994). California quickly established an extensive junior college system with 31 colleges by 1928, which grew to 57 by 1945 (Wallechinsky, 2016).

Following World War II, demand for vocational programs increased. The greatest concentration of these programs was in California and Texas. Defense efforts provided an increase in scope and new acceptance for junior college programs. With students facing the military draft, junior colleges began offering accelerated degree programs (Witt et al., 1994). Despite increased programs that could influence exemption from the draft through the Selective Service Act of 1940, enrollment continued to decline in colleges and universities; however, California established 10 new colleges during that time; by 1945, the state had opened 57 junior colleges (Witt et al., 1994).

Following World War II, community college student enrollment increased as a result of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 commonly known as the GI Bill. This act provided veterans who had received an honorable discharge and had served 90 days or were injured in the line of duty with funding to support their college education (Witt et al., 1994). Veteran students were entitled to tuition, books, and fees at any approved institution. California blazed ahead of the nation with an additional 18 new public junior colleges in the first 5 years after the GI Bill

passage (Witt et al., 1994). In the late 1950s, California leaders began work on the Master Plan for Higher Education. The plan was approved by the University of California Regents and the State Board of Education on December 18, 1959. It was submitted to the state legislature in February 1960 (University of California Office of the President, 2017). The 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education (also known as the Master Plan) promised every high school graduate who could benefit could attend a public college or university. The Master Plan developed from the pressure to find a way to educate unprecedented numbers of students, and it succeeded expectations (University of California Office of the President, 2007). The four dimensions of the plan's accomplishments were:

- It created a system that combined exceptional quality with broad access for students.
- It transformed a collection of uncoordinated and competing colleges and universities into a coherent system.
- It established a broad framework for higher education that encouraged each of the three public higher education segments to concentrate on creating excellence in its own particular set of responsibilities.
- It acknowledged the vital role of independent colleges and universities, envisioning higher education in California as a single continuum of educational opportunity, from small private colleges to large public universities.

These dimensions differentiated function and access to the three public postsecondary education segments (Wallechinsky, 2016). The Master Plan designated that the primary mission of community colleges was to provide academic and vocational instruction for older and younger students through the first 2 years of undergraduate education. The colleges have since been authorized to provide remedial instruction, English as a second language coursework, and

workforce training (Wallechinsky, 2016). In addition, California Community Colleges campuses were to admit any student capable of benefiting from instruction. The 2-year colleges were overseen by the California Department of Education until 1967; however, the lack of guidance prompted the development of a separate educational system overseen by the Chancellor's Office and Board of Governors. By 1978, a drastic vote had changed the community college landscape.

With the approval of Proposition 13 by California voters in 1978, a significant reduction in local property taxes caused a shift in funding and control of the community colleges to the state. Prior to the passage of Proposition 13, local revenues provided nearly half (47.1%) of the funding for California's public schools (Lombardi, 1979). After Proposition 13, community colleges were forced to rely on the state government for most of their funding. At the same time, the 2-year college system experienced a resurgence in enrollment. From the 1980s into the 1990s, minoritized groups fueled a new wave of U.S. citizens entering colleges. Community colleges served as the gateway to higher education for many new groups of students, which called for the restructuring of missions and goals, shared governance, learning styles, faculty, and staff diversity (Witt et al., 1994). This resurgence was short-lived, as long-term economic growth caused a decline in enrollment.

In the 21st century, the California Community Colleges system has faced new challenges. High unemployment, state budget inadequacies, personal and business bankruptcies, the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic, and growing social unrest reflect the numerous and varied problems in California (CCCCO, n.d.-a). At the same time, these challenges can offer opportunities for California's postsecondary education system, especially community colleges, to contribute to the revitalization of the state. California's colleges and universities are the state's chief assets in solving its economic and social problems (CCCCO, n.d.-a). The given benefits,

open access, low fees, and training make the California Community Colleges system ideal for students looking to further their growth.

African American Male Student Academics

Community colleges are often Black men's initial experience with postsecondary education; for most of these men, community colleges are their final opportunity to obtain a degree beyond a high-school diploma (Bush & Bush, 2005). A way to help African American 2-year college students in their attempt to be successful is for counselors to assist students in identifying their goals (Mason, 1998). This assistance helps students understand the academic and social skills they bring to the college, including their desire to learn, aptitude, gathered knowledge, critical thinking, technology ability, study skills, and time management (Galloway & Swail, 1999). Minoritized students generally, but African American students particularly, are twice as likely to need basic skill courses to prepare for college-level work. A National Association of Scholars study found nearly 1 in 5 African American students reported taking a remedial course as opposed to 1 in 9 White students (Carter, 2006). In addition, taking basic skills courses in both language and math is consistently and positively associated with persistence (Carter, 2006). By taking advantage of remediation courses, students tend to persist longer in reaching their educational goals. In these courses, students are often taught study habits, time management, and the use of resources to earn higher GPAs in subsequent college-level courses. In addition, academically unprepared students who complete remediation obtain greater success in their college-level courses than those students who are academically unprepared who do not complete remediation (Batzer, 1997).

Student Engagement

African American and Hispanic college students typically experience greater academic risk than White students because they are likely to confront institutional and cultural barriers White students do not (Greene et al., 2008). In addition, access to rigorous courses is unevenly distributed. Low-income high school students are less likely to be enrolled in a college preparatory track than medium- or high-income students. Similarly, African American and Latino students are less likely to be enrolled in college preparatory than White students (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). To complicate matters, low-income students do not fare well once enrolled in higher education. In 2002, 6% of students from the lowest income families earned a bachelor's degree by age 24 years—the same percentage as in 1970 (Sacks, 2007). Additionally, research has shown these students also have difficulty making the social adjustment to postsecondary education (Galloway & Swail, 1999).

One way to positively influence student outcomes is to include their family members and significant others in their educational experience (Lewis & Middleton, 2003). This allows the students to transfer what is learned in school to their everyday lives. A sense of belonging and the security of being accepted helps students become comfortable. Having a collective purpose of being student focused, the integration of staff and student relationships can be established; as students become academically and socially integrated with their institution, the more likely they are to persist (Hutto & Fenwick, 2002) while applying more effort to their studies and attendance. The classroom experience, faculty and student interaction, and intellectual growth experiences are powerful predictors of student commitment and persistence (Demaris & Kritsonis, 2006). Swail et al. (2003) indicated student alliance and social participation were powerful predictors of student commitment and persistence. Allowing open dialogue to occur

between the faculty and students supports a student's social integration; such integration suggests the student is establishing an understanding of the institution's social structure.

One aspect that can affect social integration is the racial climate at the institution. The effects of racial climate can create a barrier that may affect the retention of African American students. In negative racial climates, African American students often feel stereotyped and perceived as unintelligent, unmotivated, and incapable of succeeding in the institutional environment (Lynch, 2002). These perceptions can lead to social isolation and a poor college experience for many African American students (Feagin, 1992). Social isolation will leave students on the outside never fully engaging with the institutions, providing no connection to a place where they should feel welcomed.

Research on college student persistence has stressed the integral role of an institution's adherence to their mission statement (Barr, 2000; Graham & Gisi, 2000). This adherence requires cooperation from all campus units. Lobo (2012) suggested the main factors affecting students' postsecondary experiences include a mismatch between student expectations and their experience, course unsuitability, teaching, learning and assessment styles, and personal factors. A holistic approach to student success can alert college educators to potential student concerns and help prevent student departure.

Another point, immediate integration impact, can occur during the orientation process. It is during this foundational period that new students can be informed about how to establish personal contacts with individuals available to support their success (Hutto & Fenwick, 2002). One tool used to encourage student contacts and establish relationships is a mentoring program. Students' cultural (i.e., familial) background, aptitude, personality attributes, and commitment to

institutions impact how students interact with their university through a mentor-bonding experience (Faison, 1996).

Student Retention

A portion of student engagement is related to the sociocultural perspective and the impact of the broader social context on the student experience (Kahu, 2011). Theorists have explored explanations of engagement, alienation, and a subjectively undesirable separation from something outside oneself (Geyer, 2001). These factors may surface when a student is in an unfamiliar area, such as a new academic setting or assimilation to a new environment. Thomas (2002) argued institutional habitus often reflects an inherent social and cultural bias that favors dominant social groups, leading to poor retention of minoritized students.

In his research on student departure, Tinto (1993) asserted although research on student retention exists, there is still much to be learned about the reasons students leave college. Due to the complexity of students' experiences, myriad factors affect student persistence and retention. Failure to have a positive acculturation experience is likely to add stress to the lives of college students, which in turn is likely to affect the potential for retention, persistence, and graduation adversely (Murphy, 2006). Other areas affecting retention are related to individual psychological processes involved in developing academic and social integration (Bean & Eaton, 2000).

Two student characteristics Tinto (1993) discussed include intention and commitment. Intention varies from student to student in that some students do not intend to complete a degree and attend college for skill development or to take a few courses to obtain new knowledge for professional development. Change in student intention has little impact on student departure. Tinto argued the college years represent a growth period when new social and intellectual experiences shape adulthood and career. During this growth period, students may change their

intentions and goals, which can lead to retention or, paradoxically, departure in response to new goals. In addition to intentions, student commitment can influence student departure. Commitment comes in two forms, goal commitment and institutional commitment (Tinto, 1993). Goal commitment is the effort a person applies toward their academic and degree goals. Institutional commitment is the level of effort by members of the organization that support student success. The greater the degree of institutional commitment, the greater the likelihood of student persistence in college (Braxton, 2000)

Attending college involves adjustment at a time of young adult development. Persistence requires individuals to become aware of the many changes they are experiencing and adjust to their new setting (Tinto, 1993). As Rendón (1996) noted:

> Nontraditional students often have to negotiate a new landscape, learn how to step in and out of multiple contexts, engage in double readings of social reality, and move back and forth between their native world and the new world of college at an accelerated pace. Nontraditional students live in multiple realities and lead cyclical lives that demand a high degree of biculturalism. (p. 19)

Additionally, some students may have a difficult time separating from their homes and families. Academic rigor adds to the stress of adjustment and the student's departure (Tinto, 1993).

Bandura (1985, 1997) defined self-efficacy as an individual's perception of his or her ability to carry out the necessary actions to reach a certain outcome. He asserted individuals acquire a perception of their ability to perform a particular task or deal with a particular situation based on experience and observation. As individuals recognize their competence and gain self-confidence, they will demonstrate higher aspirations for persistence, task achievement, and personal goals. It is reasonable to conclude first-generation students, many of whom are from

minoritized groups, will not have experienced or observed postsecondary educational experiences, which, in turn, can influence their self-efficacy.

Ancis et al. (2000) found African Americans and Asians perceived and experienced greater pressure to conform to stereotypes and had less favorable interactions with faculty and staff. For favorable interactions to occur, faculty must be available and interested in interactions with students. Furthermore, institutional conditions must encourage interaction between students and faculty. Those students who have difficulty meeting people and making new friends will likely not seek these encounters and may ultimately withdraw from college (Tinto, 1993). Hispanic and White college students' attrition behavior and satisfaction with campus experiences correlated closely but differed for African Americans and Asian Americans (Bennett & Okinaka, 1990). Research suggests although campus climate and campus satisfaction are important to many ethnic minority students' college retention, campus climate alone will not sustain high graduation and retention rates in college (Arrington, 1994).

Financial planning and a family's view of the value of a postsecondary education can also influence student retention or departure. Students from families who lack financial preparation, particularly underrepresented and disadvantaged families, and who lack understanding of how to finance a college education will more likely depart college than others (Tinto, 1993). Additionally, retention is impacted if the family holds a low value for a college education. As a result, any financial pressure on the student and family can lead to a student's departure (Tinto, 1993). Financial aid was believed to positively affect persistence decisions by maintaining an equilibrium between the cost of attending college and the benefits derived from the attainment of an educational degree (St. John et al., 2000).

According to Tinto (1993), leaving, or departure, is often cited as the individual's failure to meet academic and social expectations of college life regardless of external pressures. Tinto explained environmental theories of student departure examine social, economic, and organizational variables that impact student departure for college and that educational attainment is but one piece of the larger scope of social attainment. He concluded the same pressures shaping social attainment and social success are generally the same pressures shaping departure from college.

A critic of Tinto's (1993) departure theory stated, for students of color to be successful, they need to comply with institutional culture and requirements, and to be integrated fully into the institution, students of color must separate from their social and family communities (Nuñez, 2009). This same critic stated Tinto's theory does not consider students' feelings of discrimination and isolation in postsecondary institutions (Nuñez, 2009). Although Tinto's theory may have important applications, many feel his theory uses a deficit approach to thinking about students of color and does not take into consideration the important role external communities serve (Nuñez, 2009).

Resilience Theory

The concept of resilience is one of the most important research topics in achieving sustainability (Foley et al., 2005). Sustainability is a holistic perspective on providing interventions to address student dropout and increase student retention (Berge & Yi-Ping, 2004). VanBreda (2001) stated resilience theory is a multifaceted field of study addressed by social workers, psychologists, sociologists, educators, and others. In short, resilience theory addresses the strengths people and systems demonstrate that enable them to rise above adversity. Research on resilience has focused on a person's capacity to absorb shocks and still function. However,

another aspect of resilience concerns the capacity for renewal, reorganization, and development (Gunderson & Holling, 2002)

Resilience is a global term describing a process whereby people bounce back from adversity and go on with their lives. It is a dynamic process influenced by protective factors (Dyer & McGuinness, 1996). A protective factor interacts with a stressor to reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes (O'Leary, 1998). Researchers have identified several protective factors, including but not limited to hardiness, self-esteem, social support, optimism, and positive affect (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008). Olsson et al. (2003) argued resilience is overcoming the negative effects of risk exposure, coping successfully with traumatic experiences, and avoiding the negative trajectories associated with those risks (Masten & Powell, 2003). The concept stated by Rutter (1987) proposed resilience is a fluid quality that acts to modify responses to psychosocial risk. Understanding individual responses to adverse life circumstances rests in identifying protective processes, not identifying factors that counter risk. The key requirement of resilience is the ability to identify a risk and protective factor that either enhances a positive outcome or reduces a negative outcome. Resilience allows individuals to recover from disruptions in functioning that result from stress appraisals and to return to the previous level of functioning (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008). The more resources young people have to draw on during stress, the better their chances are of dealing with difficulties more effectively (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003).

Grit Theory

A relatively new theory that requires acknowledgment as it relates to resilience is grit. Grit is defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals. It entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over the years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress (Duckworth et al., 2007). Although research on grit is fairly new,

prospective longitudinal studies have shown grit predicts the completion of challenging goals despite obstacles and setbacks (Duckworth & Gross, 2014). Related research has identified harmonious passion (i.e., autonomous internalization of a passionate activity into one's identity) as a predictor of deliberate practice and, in turn, performance (Vallerand et al., 2014). Grit is related to resilience because part of what it means to be gritty is to be resilient in the face of failure or adversity; however, grit is based on choosing to not give up on a particular task over a long period, whereas resilience deals with failure and overcoming adversity as it happens (Perkins-Gough, 2013).

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the importance of support services, campus climate, and diversity engagement to increase motivation and educational success among racially minoritized students especially African American male students. An emphasis was placed on retention and belonging. Farley and Alba (2002) stated, to retain African American students requires four components: a focus on goal setting; the use of mentors to give a message that students can succeed, deal with learned helplessness, combat stereotyping, enhance self-efficacy; critical feedback combined with support; and attention to not labeling programs, collaborative work among students, and programming embedded in academic departments. These support programs encourage students to seek and foster relationships between study skills, time management, career goals, self-efficacy, and academic success.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The relationship between academic resilience and student engagement influences African American men in higher education. In discussing the methods used in this research, the purpose statement and research questions are revisited. This chapter highlights the data source used, the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM), and why this database was relevant to the study.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The goal of this study was to examine factors influencing African American male student engagement in postsecondary education and, subsequently, academic outcomes using data taken from the CCSM. The study focused on the relationship between student engagement and the five domains from the CCSM (i.e., sense of belonging, degree utility, self-efficacy, intrinsic interest, racial and gender climate) and their influence on academic resilience among African American men in the community college. Additionally, correlation data and regression analysis were used to assess contributing factors to engagement. Two primary questions guided the research:

1. What is the effect, if any, of campus ethos factors (related to faculty) on Black male students' out-of-class engagement with faculty?
2. When controlling for relevant background factors, what is the effect of out-of-class faculty-student engagement on Black male students' intrinsic interest in academic learning?

Directed by these questions, the research called for a comprehensive analysis of the factors contributing to student engagement for African American men in community colleges. Dr. J. Luke Wood, president of California State University, Sacramento, the principal investigator for studies related to the CCSM, granted me access to the data set. San Diego State

University and the academic department allowed me to examine the survey items that contribute to the various factors that influence Black male engagement at the community college.

Data Source

Data in this study were derived from a longitudinal dataset from the CCSM established at San Diego State University from 2011–2017. The purpose of CCSM: 11/2017 was to gather information on African American male students by obtaining knowledge of predictive modeling factors that influence student engagement, focusing on college experience and use of college services. These data contribute to the factors that monitor student performance and identify variables that enhance student retention. The data have been correlated with extrinsic factors affecting academic success. This data set was appropriate because only male students completed this research study survey.

The CCSM was subject to a three-phase, 2-year validation process. The instrument's development was guided by published research on college men (Dancy & Brown, 2012; Harper & Harris, 2010; Harris, 2010; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008) and men of color in the community college (Mason, 1998; Saenz et al., 2010; Strayhorn, 2012; Wood, 2012b). A small field test was conducted in Spring 2012 (n = 10). Field test participants completed the instrument and provided feedback on the flow and intelligibility of the instrument. Face validity was pursued via a panel of lay experts composed of student affairs and community college leaders (n = 6). Lay experts worked in small groups of three to four members to evaluate the instrument. The lay experts provided feedback on the phraseology, terminology, and interpretability of the instrument (Wood et al., 2017).

Instrumentation

The CCSM is an institutional-level needs assessment distributed at 38 colleges in the eight states (e.g., Arizona, Arkansas, California, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Texas) that participated in the Minority Male Community College Collaborative (Wood & Harris, 2013). The instrument was provided online via population sampling to all certificate, degree, and transfer-seeking men. Only male participants received the instruments and answered 30 question blocks with subquestions in each block. The CCSM is the only instrument designed specifically for measuring factors that influence success for minority male community college students. Its scale focuses directly on environmental variables (indicated as extrinsic mediators), noncognitive outcomes, and measures of involvement (indicated as academic immersion). The reports are used to establish benchmarks and identify areas of need (Wood & Harris, 2013).

Target Population

In Fall 2022, approximately 1.3 million students were enrolled in California community colleges. The California Community Colleges system admitted 239,542 first-time students; 101,648 first-time transfer students; 168,273 returning students; and 688,971 continuing students (CCCCO, n.d.-b). The African American student population in the Fall 2022 term included 12,797 first-time students; 7,681 first-time transfer students; 12,560 returning students; and 37,986 continuing students. Of these students, 6,691 African American men were first-time students; 3,238 were first-time transfer students; 4,805 were returning students; and 16,534 were continuing students (CCCCO, n.d.-b). Community college professionals have become increasingly concerned about the success of men of color. Reviewing student outcome data illustrated men of color do not experience success that is on par with their female counterparts and men from more privileged backgrounds (Wood, 2012a). Fewer than 20% of men of color

graduate from community college in 3 years. In 2009, only 26% of men of color who entered the community college intending to transfer did so within 6 years (Wine et al., 2011).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using factor and multiple regression analyses. Multiple regression analytic techniques allow multiple independent variables to predict a continuous outcome. In this study, the data tested the predictive utility of identity domains (i.e., racial and ethnic identity and engagement) on campus climate. Multiple correlation indices were used to examine the total effect of the predictor variables (and controls) on the outcome variables. These multiple correlation indices provided a comprehensive perspective on the predictive utility of the predictor variables on the outcome. A three-stage analytic process allowed for the examination of the relationship between the primary predictors of identity and engagement. First, the dataset was used to extract African American students to establish a set case. I then examined the data for missing data and examined the characteristics of the data set to ensure assumptions of testing were met. Multiple regression of the established domains (i.e., ethnic and racial identity and engagement) on campus climate when controlling for contradicting variables. Comparisons between predictors in the models of campus engagement were also outlined.

In response to Research Question 1 (i.e., What is the effect, if any, of campus ethos factors (related to faculty) on Black male students' out-of-class engagement with faculty?), I used data associated with variables related to exogenous variables (i.e., campus ethos), and endogenous variables (i.e., campus involvement). For Research Question 2 (i.e., When controlling for relevant background factors, what is the effect of out-of-class faculty-student engagement on Black male students' intrinsic interest?), I used data associated with variables

related to exogenous variables (i.e., academic background) and endogenous variables (i.e., identity).

Threats to Validity

An internal threat might have occurred because the survey was completed online and there was no way to confirm that each was responding on his own behalf. Another threat could be a perceived low response rate, which could limit generalizability of the results. To increase the number of responses, I sent email reminders. Additionally, respondents were required to answer a question before continuing to the next one. Another potential threat was participants' understanding of the survey questions. If a question required clarification, there was no facilitator to assist the respondent; consequently, respondents were required to develop their own interpretation of a question and answer based on that interpretation.

Limitations

This study is subject to limitations, as not all student opinions are represented. Some students had various college experiences, which, depending on their academic year, might influence how they approach learning. I had no control over outside factors that may have influenced responses to questions. Finally, I could not access student backgrounds that may have also influenced students' educational decisions.

Chapter Summary

In searching for ways to increase engagement among African American men and higher education, I used quantitative method outlined in this chapter. The results can highlight factors contributing to African American male engagement at a community college while collaborating with various resources. The data may also reveal how faculty roles influence students' educational journey. The examination of these factors provides a perspective of the variables

students face in attempting to achieve their educational goals and explains what community college personnel can do to help retention.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter describes the results from this examination of engagement among Black men in the community college system. The chapter includes a brief description of the research questions and methods used to conduct the quantitative study. Finally, the chapter will close with the results from the analyses.

Analyses

In studying Research Question 1, the first regression analysis examined the effect of campus ethos factors (related to faculty) on Black male students' out-of-class engagement with faculty. In this study, out-of-class engagement referred to the quality of students' engagement with faculty on academic and nonacademic matters on campus, but not in the classroom. According to the analysis, the model accounted for 28.4% of the variance in the outcome (R^2 = .284, adj R^2 = .276). Overall, the model significantly predicted the outcome, F = 35.634, p < .001. Four of the five independent variables had a significant effect on the outcome.

In the model, faculty efforts to enact a welcoming environment for student engagement in the class (i.e., faculty welcomeness to engage) did not have a significant impact on the outcome (t = -1.407, p = .160). This suggests a lack of connection between in-class efforts to create an environment that demonstrates students' engagement is both invited and desired and out-of-class interactions. The remaining four faculty campus ethos variables did impact outside-of-class engagement. The variable with the strongest effect on the outcome was personal relationships. This variable measured the extent to which faculty created personal relationships with students where educators intentionally learned about students' academic, personal, and career interests and experiences (β = .378, p < .001).

The variable with the second strongest effect on the outcome was faculty validation. Faculty validation measured the number of faculty communicating positive messages to students about their aptitudes, abilities, and futures. This suggests, when Black male students receive validation from faculty, they have a greater likelihood of engagement with faculty outside of the classroom (β = .276, p < .001). The variable with the third strongest impact on out-of-class engagement was faculty belonging. Faculty belonging is a perceptional variable, indicating whether students believe that faculty members think they belong in the academic environment. This variable had an inverse relationship with the outcome, indicating when students perceived faculty members believed they belonged, students were less likely to experience engagement with faculty (β = -.210, p < .001). This inverse relationship may be a function of critical time investment. Specifically, faculty members may not have felt the need to engage with students who felt a sense of belonging as much as those who needed the necessary time and attention.

The fourth variable affecting the outcome was faculty welcomeness to engage outside the classroom. This variable is reflective of whether faculty intentionally create an environment outside of the classroom that students perceive as both inviting and desiring their engagement or interactions. This variable had a positive effect on engagement, suggesting that students who perceived that faculty fostered an environment that welcomed engagement outside of the classroom were more likely to engage with faculty outside of class (β = .162, p < .01). Black male students' engagement with faculty outside of class was more likely to occur when students had personal relationships with faculty, received validation from faulty, and when faculty fostered an environment that welcomed out-of-class engagement. The results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Multiple Linear Regression Results Predicting Black Male Students' Out-of-Class Engagement from Student Perceptions of Aspects of Campos Ethos Measured by the CCSM

	Unstandardized coefficients				
Model	B	Std. error	β	t	
(Constant)	1.834	.736		2.491	.013
FBELONGING_SCALE	-.131	.034	-.210	-3.807	< .001
FPERSONAL_SCALE	.181	.025	.378	7.335	< .001
FVALID_SCALE	.204	.034	.276	6.008	< .001
FWELCOMEIN_SCALE	-.045	.032	-.081	-1.407	.160
FWELCOMEOUT_SCALE	.110	.040	.162	2.747	.006

When considering Research Question 2, given the prior analysis demonstrating the predictors of out-of-class engagement, I focused on how this engagement facilitated positive noncognitive outcomes. I was interested in whether out-of-class engagement served as a positive predictor of intrinsic interest. Intrinsic interest in a composite variable reflects the degree to which students have an authentic interest in academic learning. To examine this relationship, I controlled for several background factors, including students' age, total number of financial dependents, annual income, high school grades, total number of credits/units enrolled in (during the academic term), and the total number of credits/units earned.

According to the analysis, the model accounted for only 9.4% of the variance in the outcome (R2 = .094, adj R2 = .080). The model significantly predicted intrinsic interest, F = 6.633, $p < .001$. This indicated a significant effect of the independent variables on the outcome even though the variance (or magnitude) accounted for by the overall model was low. Regarding control variables, only one variable served as a significant predictor of intrinsic interest. The total number of dependents that were financially supported by the student (e.g., children, siblings, parents, grandparents) had a significant effect on intrinsic interest (β =.171, $p < .001$). This effect

may be a function of the fact that students who enrolled in college and pursued their degrees while balancing external commitments did so only when they were authentically interested in what they were learning in the classroom. In contrast, none of the remaining controls affected the outcome, and this included: students' age (β = .063, p = ns), annual income β = -.028, p = ns), high school grades (β = .065, p = ns), total number of credits/units enrolled in (during the academic term; β = -.001, p = ns), and total number of credits/units earned (β = .006, p = ns).

The primary focus of the second analysis was whether outside-of-class engagement had an effect on intrinsic interest for Black men in community colleges. This study found there was a significant positive effect (β = .220, p < .001). Overall, this suggests when Black men are engaged with faculty (outside of class) in discussions that are academic and nonacademic in nature, they are more likely to have an authentic interest in what they are learning in the classroom. The data are presented in Table 2.

Chapter Summary

The study looked to understand the connection between African American male students' independent variables and intrinsic predictors as they relate to outside-of-classroom engagement. The sample for this study included respondents from 17 community colleges in the western, southern, midwestern, and eastern regions of the United States. The regression analyses demonstrated there are positive relationships between multiple predictors and independent and intrinsic predictors as they relate to outside-of-classroom engagement. The regression analyses also demonstrated that there are positive relationships between multiple predictors and independent variables on ethos factors for African American men. Additionally, the outcomes showed 4 of the 5 independent variables were significant for African American men (i.e., personal relationships, faculty acknowledgment, belonging, and feeling welcomed). A review of

the standardized beta coefficients revealed the strongest predictor was personal relationships (β = 1.62), which illustrates the importance of personal connections between students and community college educators.

Table 2

Multiple Linear Regression Results Predicting Black Male Students' Intrinsic Interest in Academic Learning from the Level of Class Engagement with Faculty (Controlling for Age, Number of Dependents, Income, Grade Point Average, Current Number of Units, and Total Units Completed)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	β	t	
	(Constant)	16.360	1.041		15.722	<. 001
	Engagement with Faculty Outside of Class	.251	.053	.220	4.784	< .001
	Please indicate your age.	.176	.145	.063	1.211	.227
	How many individuals depend on you for financial support (e.g., children, siblings, parents, grandparents)?	.490	.144	.171	3.399	< .001
	What is your annual income?	-.043	.072	-.028	-.600	.549
	Please indicate your high school GPA (on a 4.0 scale), regardless of whether you completed high school.	.202	.146	.065	1.387	.166
	Please indicate the total number of credits/units you are enrolled in this academic term (semester, quarter).	-.005	.209	-.001	-.025	.980
	How many total credits/units have you earned (not counting courses you are currently taking)?	.015	.109	.006	.138	.890

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the engagement of African American male students in California community colleges. The study sought to identify variables that were predictors of out-of-class engagement, which can influence academic completion for men of color. The data collected from the research can contribute to or inform campus initiatives used by community colleges, staff, faculty, and administrators to encourage practices and methods to serve the needs of male students of color. Data used in this research were collected from the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM). This national survey includes variables concerning outcomes for historically marginalized men in community colleges. This present study examined the findings that relate to each of the following two research questions:

1. What is the effect, if any, of campus ethos factors (related to faculty) on Black male students' out-of-class engagement with faculty?
2. When controlling for relevant background factors, what is the effect of out-of-class faculty-student engagement on Black male students' intrinsic interest in academic learning?

The relationship between academic resilience and student engagement guided the underlying theoretical research. This study suggests various engagement components influence African American men in higher education.

Summary of Results

Data from the regression analyses found African American male students appreciate interaction with faculty in and outside of the classroom. The involvement of faculty and staff members with African American male students in the classroom and outside the class creates a

positive relationship for African American men in college (Hall, 2017). It can be inferred that African American men are more likely to persist and obtain their academic goals when engagement with faculty is present.

Regarding out-of-class engagement, results from this study indicate African American men who established a relationship with their professors had a higher desire to maintain college engagement. This result was shared by Wood and Turner (2010), who examined the perception of the faculty-student relationship from a qualitative study of 28 Black male students. Most of the men in their study indicated greater interaction with faculty who established a welcoming environment in the classroom and during office hours, encouraging students to ask questions. This positive environment created by faculty can contribute to a higher sense of acceptance. This is especially true for African American male students.

The results point the way to an opportunity for institutions to improve the achievement of African American men by developing an effective way to include this population in the classroom dynamic. As shared, the lack of connection or acceptance may contribute to the engagement in the community college environment. Furthermore, the results contribute to areas of future research and teaching modalities. As outlined in Chapter 2, this research focused on variables influencing engagement outcomes for African American men in California community colleges. This research also highlights the importance of campus climate and awareness to promote equality and achievement for this population of students.

Recommendations for Future Research

The recommendations for more research are based on the findings of this study. This section provides an important perception of out-of-class engagement that can contribute to

academic goal completion. This section describes suggestions for research that understands noncognitive predictors that lead to positive outcomes.

A qualitative study can build upon the quantitative data collected for this study. The outcomes of this study speak to a need for research that explores why African American male students need a sense of welcome. A future study could include interviews, focus groups, observations, and artifacts to create a space for students to share their stories of engagement or disengagement. A phenomenological study would illuminate the lived experiences of African American male students in community colleges.

Although the support of government, businesses, and communities is needed to solve the challenges facing men of color, schools, teachers, counselors, and parents play vital roles in supporting young men of color (Lee & Ransom, 2011). Future research could explore the effect of engagement, whether positive or negative, at various faculty–student meetings. This type of research could contribute to how faculty influences persistence, resource usage, area of study, and course completion. Additionally, research can examine teaching styles, classroom dynamics, and grading scales that cultivate the engagement of African American men. Using an antideficit approach could change the narrative of African American men's ability to achieve academic success. The results could contribute to workshops or training that allow for development in the area of inclusion for certain populations of students. Another suggestion would be to target professional development activities and course materials to encourage the engagement of African American men.

Finally, future research could examine educational practices that lead to positive student engagement. For example, research could consider the resources minority students seek first or the tipping points that contribute to goal access and academic completion. Furthermore, a mixed-

method approach could uncover other factors that may influence how a student has prepared for college (e.g., family dynamics, perception of college expectations, challenges related to education).

Recommendations for Practice

The results of this study highlight some of the challenges experienced by African American male students in the community college system. The results can contribute to innovative strategies that will aid in the academic success of African American male students. During their matriculation, respondents indicated they cultivated agency among themselves as a key tool to their success. Although each student faced challenges in and out of the classroom, like most college students, the navigation of subtle and overt discrimination based on the intersection of race and gender created a unique experience (McElderry, 2022). Additionally, McElderry (2022) suggested institutional leaders create a biased reporting system that holds faculty, staff, and students accountable for their discriminatory actions toward members of the community and creates an unwelcoming campus environment. Implementing this system could demonstrate to the campus community that there is zero tolerance for discrimination on campus and encourage the community to be a good steward of their actions.

Therefore, a shared practice is necessary for college constituents to improve the engagement of Black/African American students. Outlined next are suggestions to support these efforts:

1. Develop programs that align classroom learning with out-of-class activities. This allows students to use what they learned in practice. Additionally, students can validate their understanding and collaborate with Professors and other campus staff

and administrators. Thus, men of color are considered part of the college culture and become experts in the subject matter.

2. Develop a practice to evaluate the campus climate and allow African American men to contribute to questions and workshops associated with the procedure. This will allow the institution to organize around how race and gender are fostered to improve student success. The college will have to create space for the student's voice, accept areas of concern, and establish practice methods to implement change where necessary.
3. Implement mentoring procedures that are part of the college experience. Create an opt-out procedure upon the student's arrival. It starts with recruitment activities and a seamless transition to campus mentors. Finally, the mentors could represent the students in spaces where they may need assistance (e.g., financial aid assistance, student conduct concerns, other resource services).
4. Educational assistance should be a high priority for men of color. The planning should incorporate support services and check-in timelines to ensure students complete their course and obtain their degree. The planning assistance should also have intervention methods to address academic challenges or other early alerts.

Conclusion

This research stemmed from my concerns about a lack of African American men's engagement with faculty outside the classroom. This study used an academic resiliency framework to explore the effects of thriving in an environment that does not include men of color. The results identified variables that contribute to African American men's success. When students feel connected and able to engage, their rate of success will improve. The willingness to

become a part of the campus community is demonstrated when the campus is welcoming and provides resources to accept the student in totality.

As campus leaders, it is critical to acknowledge and properly engage in practice methods that address deficit gaps that contribute to the lack of success of marginalized student populations. This research highlights the need to review common practice methods and policies in community colleges with the goal of creating inclusive approaches that support student success. My desire for this study was to create awareness and create an antideficit approach to improving the way community colleges accept Black and African American male students. A holistic and intersectional approach to student success and engagement can create better persistence and course completion that leads to degree attainment.

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