

A DREAM ENVISIONED: AFRICAN AMERICANS' STRUGGLES AND
EXPERIENCES TOWARD SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN HEALTH
RELATED AND NON-HEALTH RELATED DISCIPLINES

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Abstract

The way in which African Americans perceive their experiences during post-secondary education can have a profound effect on their careers and life choices. This study used qualitative methods to examine how 21 African American males and females perceived their post-secondary educational experiences.

Explored through semi-structured interviews and surveys were the interrelationships between how these experiences influenced academic and vocational career choices. Using qualitative methodology, were identified eight themes relating to these professionals experiences in health related and non-health related disciplines in post-secondary education.

The themes identified were (a) racism and discrimination, (b) minority faculty mentors, (c) spirituality, (d) careers, (e) support systems, (f) attitudes and self-esteem, (g) specific feelings and (h) isolation and segregation.

Recommendations derived from the findings included the 21 African American participants embracing their experiences, which provided insight and validation for other African American students pursuing post-secondary education. Findings supported Asante's (2003) Afrocentric approach, Bandura's (1986) Self-Efficacy Theory, and Patterson's (2006) Enlighten Black Womanist model, which described the cultural and gender development of African Americans as they matriculate through the post-secondary process.

February 2, 2009

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First, I would like to acknowledge and thank God for allowing and giving me the vision, faith, strength, and abilities so that I could pursue my educational journey! To my mother: Barbara J. Sims, for giving me my religious foundation, love and encouragement. To my father: Joseph L. Harper, for his authoritative presence in my life stressing the importance of governing yourself accordingly. To my stepfather: James V. Sims, for never letting me forget that by believing in my abilities and myself anything is possible. To my children: Dontae A. Sallis and Shawntaia M. Sallis, for being my inspiration to always strive to be the best that I can be and never sell myself short. To my Grandson: Taevion A. Sallis, for being my motivation, determination and hope for the future. To my sisters and brothers: Shirley D. Frazier, Margie J. Harper, Shasta Holland, Donald J. Harper, Anthony J. Harper, Michael L. Harper and David Sims, for pushing me to always want to do better. To my special daughters (nieces): Beverley M. Harper, Tatyana J. Harper and Chyna R. Harper, for always keeping me on my toes and thinking outside the box. To my Godmother: Maeodis L. Moss, for her unwavering love, commitment and for instilling in me my drive and determination. To my secondary mothers: Amelia Scott and Virginia Tibbs, for always being someone genuine, warm and who cares, always present to lend an ear, shoulder or much needed advice. To my Godfather: Harold Moss, for giving me his wisdom and the ability to see that there's always two sides to a story. To my special sisters: Karen Tibbs-Nnawezezi, Shantelle Smith, Rubie D. Heard-Prachar, Marie Brown, Lena Thompson, Lisa Lewis-Crocket, Towanda Marks, Debra Paris, Susie Wilson, Pamela Copeland, Rev. Paulette Jones-Imaan, Annette Green, Yolanda White, Sherry Douglas, Joy Brown, Carmen Gunter and Gayla Chambers- for forming a unbreakable bond of love, understanding, friendship and kindred spirits. To my

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memories of Maeodis Louise Moss may your belief in my abilities to forever divide and conquer my deepest fears and to rise above any challenge presented to me, will always be cherished and a reflection of your belief will be present while pursuing my endeavors. To Karen Lynn Tibbs-Nnawezezi your helping me connect and tap into an awareness that true physical, mental and spiritual growth is accomplished by increasing your intellectual abilities fueled by educating yourself. To Roy Davenport, for your faith and belief in me and most of all your genuine friendship. These memories will have an eternal place in my heart. Thank you all for instilling in me the desire and drive to pursue my vision! Thank you all for your wisdom and knowledge so that I could make informed decisions! Thank you most of all for your continued love and support! God Bless You! You are already missed!

The following poem amplifies the voices of the 21 participants:

Bridging the higher educational gap!

Hear our voices share our choices!

Bridging the higher educational gap!

Are our voices and experiences enough to put us on the map?

Bridging the higher educational gap!

When addressing cultural diversity issues among African Americans;

Is someone listening or taking a nap?

Bridging the higher educational gap!

Experiences that influence our pursuit of health related and non- health related disciplines in higher education!

Bridging the higher educational gap!

Experiences that influence our choices to stop or finish the race to graduation!

Bridging the higher educational gap!

Are we making a difference toward placement on the map?

Bridging the higher educational gap!

Is anyone still listening or still taking a nap?

Bridging the higher educational gap! (Hallie R. Harper, 2008).

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....v

DEDICATION.....vii

List of Tables.....xii

List of Figures.....xiii

List of Appendix.....xiv

I Have a Dream Speech: Martin Luther King Jr.....15

Statement by George W. Bush about Martin Luther King Jr.....18

CHAPTERS

1: INTRODUCTION OF STUDY.....19

 The Problem.....20

 Purpose of Study.....22

 Significance of the Study.....22

 The Questions.....22

 Conceptual Framework.....24

 Overview of Remaining Chapters.....29

2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....30

 Introduction.....30

 Holding Today's Educational Institutions Accountable for Training

 Diverse Educators.....31

Challenges and Barriers to Attaining a Changed Curriculum.....	42
Bridging the Gap of Multicultural Populations in Higher Education.....	43
A More Diverse Curriculum at Work.....	50
Putting Students First.....	54
Enrollment in Higher Education.....	55
Programs Promoting Diversity.....	57
Recruitment in Higher Education for Ethnic/Multicultural Populations...	58
Retention in Higher Education for Ethnic/Multicultural Populations.....	59
The African American Male Experience.....	66
The African American Female Experience.....	68
Related Research.....	74
Summary.....	77
3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	81
Introduction.....	81
Introduction of Participants.....	82
Ethical Considerations.....	83
Design & Methodology.....	83
Data Collection.....	84

Data Quality Methods.....	85
Summary	85
4: FINDINGS AND RESULTS.....	87
Introduction.....	87
Identification of Participants' Survey	87
Summary of Participants' Survey.....	95
Identification Participants' Themes.....	96
Summary of Participants' Themes.....	123
5: DICUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	125
Summary of Findings.....	129
Research Questions Revisited.....	132
Implications for Professions.....	138
Recommendations for Future Research.....	138
Summary	139
African American Poetry.....	140
References.....	142
Author Note.....	181

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. How far students expected to go in school: Wimberly, 2002.....	49
2. How far in school students were two years beyond high school: Wimberly, 2002.....	50
3. Effective Strategies for Promoting Diversity through Orientation Strategy:	62
4. Other Possible Strategies for Promoting Diversity through Orientation Strategy.....	63
5. Study of Participants by, Ethnicity, Degree, and Gender.....	81

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

1. Bandura’s Social Learning Theory.....26

2. Asante’s Social Change Theory.....26

3. Banks Goals for Multicultural Curriculum.....53

4. A Model of Saha of potential educational benefits for Enrollment Diversity:
.....61

5. African American High School Students’ Perception of Barriers to African
American Participation in Higher Education.....66

6. African American High School Students’ Suggestions for Program/Models
To Increase African American Participation in Higher Education66

7. Demographic Data of Participants.....87

8. Influence Scale.....91

9. Identification and Summary of Participants: Themes and Subthemes.....96

10. Model of Enlightened African American.....128

LIST OF APPENDIX

Appendix

A. Ages of Participants Male.....159

A. Ages of Participants Females.....159

B. Personal Status of Participants.....160

C. Levels of Education Males.....161

D. Levels of Education Females.....162

E. Factors that Influence Higher Learning.....163

F. Financial Sources.....164

G. People with the most Influence for Higher Education.....165

H. Participants and their Genders.....166

I. IRB Approval.....167

J. Qualitative Consent Form.....168

K. Interview Protocol.....171

L. Participant Survey.....174

I HAVE A DREAM

By: Martin Luther King, Jr.

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check — a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The

whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. They have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

As we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied, as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating "For Whites Only". We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification; one day right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

The U.S. Constitution Online;

Statement by the President on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. / George W. Bush

“Forty years ago today, America was robbed of one of history’s most consequential advocates for equality and civil rights. On this day we mourn the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and we celebrate his powerful and eloquent message of justice and hope. Dr. King was a man of courage and vision. He understood that love and compassion will always triumph over bitterness and hatred. His words and deeds inspired Americans of all races to confront prejudice and to work to ensure that our country is a land of opportunity for all its men and women. We have made progress on Dr. King’s dream, yet the struggle is not over. Ensuring freedom and equality for all Americans remain one of our most important responsibilities. As we reflect upon Dr. King’s life and legacy, we must recommit ourselves to following his lasting example of service to others” (www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080404-1.html).

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Literature exists to support the need for more African Americans in higher education. However, little exists to document the outcomes of those who do pursue higher education and the effects of their educational experiences on their personal and professional lives. Perhaps to understand the perils of the African American man and woman, society must revisit history.

If blacks traced back through their family histories, most would find a rich heritage that might include not only African but also Native American, Asian, or European ancestry. Today that diversity shows up in the variety of skin color, hair texture, facial features and body types in families. Sisters and brothers within the same family may appear unrelated because of these differences. How parents feel and respond to these differences, have a profound effect on how individuals see and feel about themselves. The very building blocks of who we are to become are laid down in our families (Hopson & Hopson, 1990).

Martin Luther King, Jr's, *I Have a Dream Speech* references not being judged by the color of one's skin but by one's character. It is interesting that the very institutions and classrooms in which children learn about equality, racism, prejudices, and discrimination possibly steeped in ideology create experiences for African American men and women may be perceived as just that (Shah, P. 2007).

African American students most often benefit and learn more from educators who have similar ethnic backgrounds than from educators with different backgrounds (Brunce, 1996; Bartee, 2003). Minority teachers have life experiences which help them

understand and relate to their students, unfortunately; there is a decline in the number of African Americans especially men choosing to become educators (Brunce, 1996; Cole, 1986, Haberman, 1987; Bartee 2003).

The under representation of African American men and women in the education profession continues to be a great concern for educators, researchers and policy makers (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Dilworth, 1990; Gordon, 1994; Haberman, 1996; King, 1993 & Bartee 2003). Perhaps the answer lies within the content of the African Americans experiences pursuing higher education.

The Problem

African American experiences in higher education continue to be an issue of great concern for many focusing on factors that contribute to many different outcomes of African Americans. Unfortunately, without corroborated efforts on the parts of educators, researchers and policy makers to create diversified environments conducive to learning, it will remain an ever-widening gap in the understanding of African Americans.

Although enrollments for African American students have increased, the number of African American educators has decreased (Dilworth, 1990; Bartee 2003). Therefore, making faculty mentors and diversified learning environments crucial to the learning outcomes of African American students. It is important that society understands the educational experiences of African Americans to foster greater academic success and its effect on their personal and professional lives.

America needs more African American graduate students, declared Julianne Malveaux, *Black Issues in Higher Education* (1996, p 44). “Faculty and students would agree, that by increasing the number of African Americans with graduate degrees is a

worthy goal; however, there remains relatively little known about the experiences of African American students in the past and currently in graduate schools". Understanding the obstacles and challenges faced by these students would certainly help to increase the number of African Americans entering graduate schools in the future (Schwartz, Bower, Rice & Washington, 2003).

The recruitment of more African American students into graduate schools, as Malveaux (1996) suggested, is not enough. The real goal should be aimed at increasing the number of African Americans who complete graduate degrees. Student success in higher education is determined by an earned degree, not just admission. Therefore, increasing the number of African Americans in graduate schools is only a partial goal. More African Americans need to complete graduate degrees instead of just being admitted into graduate schools to be truly successful.

To achieve the goal of increasing the number of African Americans with graduate degrees, academia must have a better understanding of the environment graduate education presents to African American students. Better information and increased understanding of the experiences of current and past African American students are critical first steps towards providing better assistance and support to recruit and retain increased numbers of African American graduate students in the future. A valid assumption is that any positive changes in the graduate school environment that benefits African American students will also improve graduate experiences for other students, regardless of race (Schwartz, Bower, Rice & Washington, 2003).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe and explore the experiences of African American professionals when they were college students, and the impact these experiences have had on their career and life choices.

Significance of the Study

As the persistence of African American students contribute to a diverse campus, the ways in which they navigate the culture of higher education is critical for those wanting to understand how to increase the likelihood of success for all students of higher education. Meaning, if African Americans contribute to diversity, and diversity contributes to student success, the success of African Americans should be an important factor for everyone in higher education working toward the success of all students (Patterson, 2006).

“Due to a negative stigma that has been established about African Americans, many live their entire lives trying to refute humiliating, degrading, and offensive racial images and stereotypes” (Yeakey & Bennett, 1990, p 12). In short, the study of African American experiences in higher education is important in its own right but also helps address larger questions of the experiences of all African Americans in the educational system. It is also important to find a solution to the problem of underrepresentation of African American in higher education and to prevent African Americans from turning away from higher education in health related and non-health related disciplines.

Research Questions

Given the implications of factors, which contributed to the experiences the African American students had in higher education, the study investigated these factors

and how they were perceived by the African American students and the impact these perceived experiences had on their lives during higher education. The following research questions were asked to further understand these factors and experiences African Americans had during higher education.

1. How do African American professionals perceive their higher education experiences in health related and non- health related disciplines?
2. What are the educational experiences that influence academic and vocational career choices of African Americans?

An attempt was made to determine the various experiences African Americans have when pursuing higher education in health related and non- health related disciplines, by examining data collected by interviews, detailing lived and shared experiences among this cultural group. African Americans are an important group in which to conduct a study.

This study proposed to further understand African Americans experiences in higher education, which builds on the base of previous exploratory, clinical, and qualitative work, needed to answer some of these unanswered questions.

- How do the experiences of African Americans in higher education differ from non-African Americans in today's educational institutions?
- Are African American experiences, influenced by different mechanisms, such as their culture, background and beliefs, than non-African Americans?
- Are higher education institutions perceived as being effective by African Americans in promoting fair and equal opportunities for African Americans pursuing higher education in health related and non- health related disciplines?

· Are higher education institutions perceived as being effective by African Americans in preventing unfair and unequal opportunities for African Americans pursuing higher education in health related and non- health related disciplines?

In short, the study of African American experiences in higher education is important in its own right, but also helps address larger questions of the experiences of all African Americans in the educational system. It is also important to find a solution to the problem to prevent African Americans from turning away from higher education in health related and non-health related disciplines.

Conceptual Framework

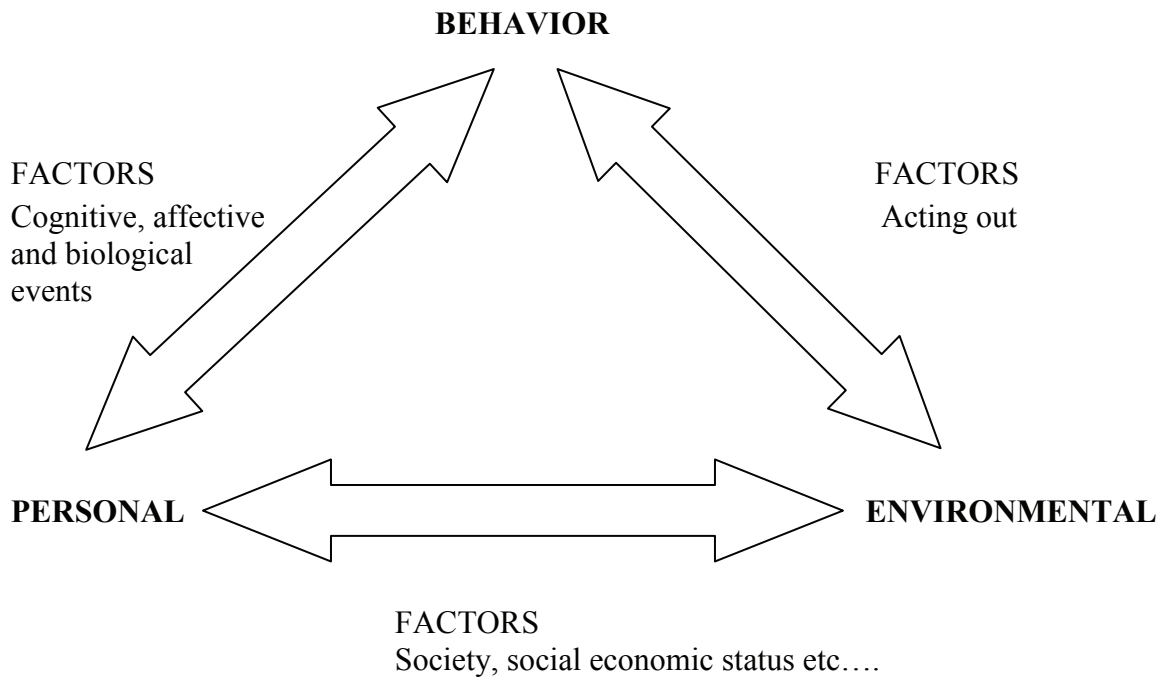
The conceptual framework for this study was based on Bandura's (1986) Social Learning Theory. The research conceptualized one theory with several parts, particularly Self-Efficacy Theory as well as Asante's (2003) The Social Change Theory. Research demonstrated a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance. Teachers with a high degree of self-efficacy or confidence in their teaching abilities created more opportunities for their students to achieve at higher levels. Self-efficacy influenced students' academic motivation, level of efforts, learning, achievement and their persistence in meaningful educational experiences (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Multon, Brown & Lent, 1991; Zimmerman, 1995; Schultz & Schultz, 2001).

Teachers have the challenge of improving academic learning and confidence of students in their charge. Using Social Learning Theory and Social Change Theory as a framework, teachers can work to improve their students' emotional states and to correct their faulty self-beliefs and habits of thinking (personal factors), improve their academic skill and self-regulatory practices (behavior), and alter the school and classroom

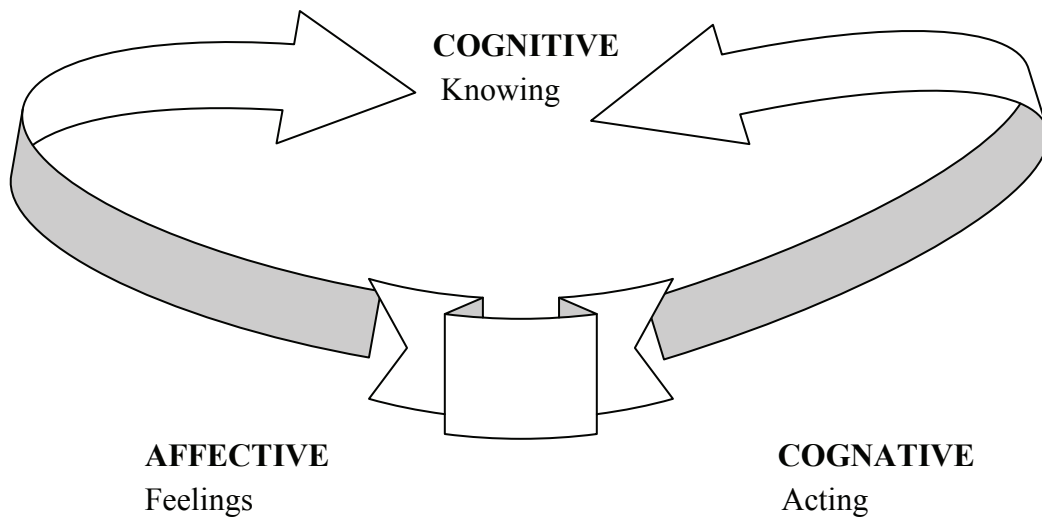
structures that may work to undermine student success (environmental factors) (Pajares, 1996).

Asante's (2003) Social Change Theory consists of three main components. In the study of African Americans, it is crucial to understand these three principals of Afrocentricity. Feelings that are affective allows for insight into how African Americans like or dislike a certain experience they have had, knowing (cognitive) is how African Americans perceive or conceptualize their experiences, and acting, which is (cognitive and behaviors) behaviors African Americans present as a result of these experiences. Bandura's (1986) conception of triadic reciprocity: Social Learning Theory, model of the relations between the three determinants; personal factors are cognitive, affective and biological events, behavior factors consist of acting out, and environmental factors, are society and social economic status (Pajares, 1996).

Bandura's Figure 1: Social Learning Theory



Asante's Figure 2: The Social Change Theory



While similarities exist between Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Asante's Social Change Theory, they differ in their viewpoints and perspectives. Bandura's approach was Eurocentric and Asante's approach was Afrocentric. The experiences of African Americans in academia have been understood from the perspective of *white* Americans and *males* as the norms in academia in which all other experiences are evaluated and studied (Gardner, 2005; Ward & Bensimon, 2003, Patterson, 2006).

The Social Change Theory/Afrocentric research model by Asante (2003) *problematized* these assumptions by honoring African Americans experiences as *raced* and *gendered* human beings. Therefore, recognizing and validating human existence from a cultural perspective made this theory another appropriate lens in which to view and guide this study (Patterson, 2006).

The literature reports both the Afrocentric and Eurocentric theories that capture the holistic approach of diversifying the African American culture and non-African American culture within a traditional academia institution, by exploring the experiences of African Americans. This study amplified the voices of 21 African American men and women, who shared their lived experiences as students pursuing higher education. This study continued to challenge the higher learning paradigm based on the significant relationships presented in a pilot study, concluding these experiences have a profound effect on African American choices to continue their higher education in health related or non-health related disciplines. This study closely examined African American perceptions of the current educational systems, defined these systems, and clarified these systems to include a multicultural /ethnic point of view. The study created an environment of understanding to develop and bring about an awareness of what needed to

be done. By re-positioning or re-defining this hierarchal paradigm, user-friendly strategies must include a more diverse educational system and environment for all students of color.

The lack of a more diversified student body, faculty, or curriculum, and the examination of educational experiences of 21 African American men and women, shared by Patterson (2006) was a rare opportunity to put their needs both academic and personal at the center of policy consideration. Those individuals responsible for recruiting, enrolling, orienting on programs promoting diversity, mentoring and retaining African American students might find the conclusion of this study helpful. This study may encourage those concerned with equity and diversity in education to tune into the marginalized voices of African American students within their sphere of influence.

The results of this study could be significant to researchers, practitioners and theorists in higher education. Patterson (2006) stated that the themes derived from studies such as this may lead future researchers to develop theories about the persistence, or lack thereof, for African Americans in higher education. Theorist and practitioners may find a greater understanding about the needs of this population represented and develop models, which acknowledge the impact of both gender and race on the survival in higher education. Theorist may use the findings to help resolve arguments that arise by examining the critical themes in this study. It is a shared goal with Patterson (2006) that African American students might find within this study a useful conceptual roadmap that prepares them, and those who will support them, to better navigate their own experiences with higher education.

Focusing on the lived experiences of African American students for this study fits both the Social Learning Theory model and most importantly the Social Change Theory (Afrocentric model) because it situates knowledge within the community, as opposed to outside of it, and relies on the accounts of participants to illuminate their own experiences from an insider's perspective (Reviere, 2001; Patterson, 2006).

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth review of literature relevant to this study. It offers background information about (a) holding today's educational institutions accountable for training diverse educators; (b) bridging the gap of multicultural populations in higher education; (c) a more diverse curriculum at work; (d) putting students first; (e) enrollment in higher education; (f) programs promoting diversity; (g) recruitment in higher education for ethnic/multicultural populations; (h) retention in higher education for ethnic/multicultural populations. (i) the African American male experience; and (j) the African American female experience. The research design and mythology used for implementing this study are presented in Chapter 3. The interview questions, survey results and findings that emerged from analysis of data will be presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will consist of discussions of the study's findings, conclusions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

The review of literature charts the very important roadmap to success or continued failure for African Americans obtaining post-secondary degrees. The hierarchical paradigm in place throughout the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty first century continues to show minimal progress if current institutions remain unaccountable for educating diverse educators. The gap continues to widen for multicultural populations pursuing higher education because of failure to develop and understand a more diverse curriculum. With more focus put on student enrollment, recruitment, and retention, programs that promote diversity remain the same or unchanged and do not fit within the push to diversify the educational system.

Many great leaders and educators have triumphed in providing a guide to paving the way for African Americans through perseverance in their pursuit of equality and education for all humanity. Leaders and educators such as; Frederick Douglas, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, W.E.B. Dubois, Ida B. Wells-Barnet, Mary White Ovington, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Thurgood Marshal, Mary McLeod Bethune, Marva Collins, Lisa Delpit, Charlotte Forten, Mary Jane Patterson, E.V. Wilkins, Charles Drew, Shirley Chisholm, Marcus Garvey, Colin Powel, Clarence Thomas, Carol Mosley Braun, Dr. M. Jocelyn Elders, Louis Farrakhan, Condoleezza Rice, Oprah Winfrey and President Barack Obama. (www.Biography.com/Black History). These leaders and educators have made great strides in diversifying today's society and educational system. The review begins

highlighting the roadmaps to success or failure for African Americans pursuing post-secondary education in the following literature.

Holding Today's Educational Institutions Accountable for Educating Diverse Educators

Many things must change before cultural awareness/diversity is mainstreamed throughout the educational system. Cultural diversity in this study refers to the differences in elements of culture between and among ethnic, racial or religious groups that live together in one society. Cultural awareness refers to an understanding and respecting the history, values, customs, and language of people from different backgrounds (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diversity). According to Hill, Saffell and Basehart (1992) the educational system must change fundamentally. Enabling changes in state laws and state and federal funding programs are necessary. As expressed by Hill, Saffel and Basehart (1992), this means that institutions, the school boards, administrators, superintendents and faculty, must all change their patterns of operation and work collaboratively to bring about change within their institutions.

However, these changes are not likely to occur solely through the initiatives of the school boards, administrators, superintendents and faculties, because the changes needed are likely to be uncomfortable. This paper will separate each division of the institution and examine how each can contribute to the implementation of diversity curricula.

Hill, Saffel and Basehart (1992) believed a solution to the problem of educational institutions rests on overcoming tendencies that are inherent in the structure of larger institutional systems. These tendencies are those, which must free institutions from micromanagement by school board and other political bodies. These tendencies must remedy the inequities of funding and faculty allocations that exist within most districts.

Tendencies must allow development of schools with specific approaches to education to help educators feel responsible for what they produce. Finally, by being held accountable, they must force school boards and superintendents to act when they discover that schools are consistently failing its students.

The American Council on Education and the Education Commission of the States warned that the U.S. must renew its commitment to the advancement of minority groups or the future prosperity of the country's educational system will be jeopardized. Pahnos (1992) pointed out that innovative strategy, particularly in health education and prevention, had focused primarily on white majority target groups. For multicultural education, these programs did not fulfill cultural relevance and applicability for minority or ethnic groups. Many attempts have been made to reach specific target groups; however, numerous ethnic differences remained unexamined (Pahnos, 1992).

Pahnos (1992) concluded with these suggestions: Change must begin with educators. Few teachers receive training in teaching about ethnic and minority issues or may have only taken a course or two. Many educators are willing to incorporate multicultural issues in their teaching; however, they probably have not been educated to teach diverse populations.

Finally, Pahnos (1992) believed administrative changes should occur in policies and educational requirements. Educators should develop, re-examine, renew their educational philosophies and all education programs that stress communication, must be sensitive to channels within which that communication most likely occurs.

The organizational development of learning results from these changes and the collective energies and intentions of these individuals. These changes are necessary for

the development of a more diverse curriculum to be mainstreamed throughout higher learning institutions (Anastasia and Xenia, 2005).

Traditionally, there have been three basic faculty types in higher education; tenure and tenure-eligible (e.g., core faculty); adjunct (e.g., non-core faculty hired on an as-needed and part-time basis); and contract (e.g., core faculty such as visiting, research and clinical). These three types differ in qualifications required and professional duties assigned. To achieve tenure status, faculty members are required to have a terminal degree, generate scholarly publications, and perform administrative tasks for the institution; however, teaching may or may not be considered a primary duty.

In contrast, service duties and scholarship have not been key components of noncore and contract faculty members' job descriptions. Noncore and contract faculty members were hired specifically to teach. Noncore faculty members were recruited for expediency rather than academic or professional expertise. Contract faculty members were working professionals with the expertise in a specific field and sometimes contributed to faculty development (Gappa, 2000; Garii & Petersen, 2006).

Garii and Petersen (2006) continued to explain that the increased use of non-permanent and non-tenured faculty members in educational institutions raised questions on just how educational institutions defined their leadership roles, expertise, and educational goals. The increased reliance on non-traditional faculty members, occurring in conjunction with redefining hiring practices at colleges and universities (Chronister & Baldwin, 1999), suggested that the role of all faculty members has become less clear. "Traditional lines between specific job roles and academic responsibilities are blurred; job retention policies are less stable" (p. 217).

Foreseeable problems to educating faculty on implementing cultural awareness/diversity within a higher learning institution might be, according to Garii and Petersen (2006), the increasing reliance on faculty members with limited and often undefined commitments to educational institutions leading to different and often incompatible expectations of the faculty role. Their institutional delivery rests on their own beliefs and definitions and may inadvertently undermine official efforts of the institution.

Although noncore faculty members offer specific expertise and clinical experience, their lack of an explicit connection with an institution, whether its institution-sanctioned or self-imposed, may affect their full understanding of the values, needs and the institutional expectations of individual courses within the institutions' programs. With communication inconsistent, administrative services less available and less accessible to noncore faculty members, students in noncore faculty members' classes may suffer disconnect with the institution (Gerii & Peterson, 2006).

In 1999, blacks, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, comprised 5% of all full-time instructional faculty compared to 3% Hispanics and 6% Asian/Pacific Islanders in degree granting institutions. The black full-time faculty was one-half the proportions of black students enrolled in colleges and universities. Black faculty members represented 7% assistant professors and instructors, 3% professors and 5% associate professors (Hoffman, Liagas & Snyder, 2003).

Mattice (1995) stated that by focusing on climate studies of the differential experiences of faculty, administrators and support staff, studies showed 63% of support staff had no experience with diversity activity (diversity training or discussions), 54% of

faculty and 17% of administration also had no experience with diversity activity. Support staff felt ignored in work environments and reported needing more training and development opportunities specifically regarding diversity (Mattice, 1995).

Ryan (2006) believed the entrenched social inequities responsible for a crisis of access and equity in education are historically rooted in broad social and institutional issues that influence the practices of school boards and faculty. They play a significant role in shaping teacher beliefs, teacher attitudes, and teacher expectations of students of color and how they should be taught.

Much of the literature addressing challenges of preparing teachers for teaching students of color has increasingly focused on culturally relevant teaching. Culturally relevant teachers treat students as competent and provide instructional materials so students can use what they know to access what they need to know (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Ryan (2006) concluded that the complex and substantive demand of culturally relevant teaching posed urgent challenges to teacher preparation programs in both K-12 and college, especially because demographic reality is one of an increasingly diverse student population and leading toward a more diverse teaching population.

Rather than rely only on a formal, analytical and technical process detailing the sequence of steps that will move an organization to a preferred future, leaders and educators can arrive at solutions another way; through insight improvisation and intuition (Hamel, 1996, Chait, Ryan and Taylor, 2005).

As the school population in the United States continues to diversify, those transformative leaders within educational institutions must challenge themselves to adjust

and recreate the teaching and learning experiences to reflect and incorporate this increasing diversity (Hubber-Warring, Mitchell, Alagic, & Gibson, 2005). The need for diversified faculty to reflect and incorporate the increasing diversity is not new to educational administration programs alone. It is a nationwide challenge that permeates throughout all levels of professorship in educational institutions (Bjork & Thompson, 1989,; Clemson, 1998; Colby & Foote, 1995; & Garibaldi, 1992).

For organizations and institutions to be successful in the future, executives, managers, and leaders at every level must become leaders that are more effective. The first step of transforming is to prepare and present a compelling vision for the future as a guide to change. The vision for the future serves as a basis for reviewing and revitalizing institutions and organizations. Without defined mission, values, goals and principals, it is impossible for institutions to be effective at achieving collective goals (Marszalek-Gaucher & Coffey, 1991).

Leaming (2007) believed strong interpersonal skills are needed to bring about change. He stated the times when chairpersons could serve simply as caretakers are gone and chairpersons must be agents of change. As chairpersons, their vision should be on where they would like to see their departments in the next several years. It would be important that chairpersons share their ideas with faculty members and implement what is necessary to persuade faculty that the vision is also theirs. The goal should be to get faculty members to share ownership in the departments' future.

Leaming (2007) went on to state that department chairpersons in the years ahead must be more attuned to budget and financial management than ever before, not only to see their programs improve, but in some instances survive. As chairpersons, studying the

fiscal context of higher education and recognizing the increased competition for funds are crucial.

Leaming (2007) concluded that retaining quality faculty members must be a priority for any chairperson. Retaining productive faculty members requires a continuous effort. Despite the best retention and mentoring strategies, faculty members can prove to be a bad fit for departments for a number of reasons. Educational institutions wanting to increase cultural awareness/diversity must look closely at the following considerations:

- take a closer look at, recruiting and retaining minority faculty.
- collaborate with other institutions to heighten their awareness and understanding of their current instructional methods.

Although much literature referenced the need for cultural/diversity education, it does little to offer suggestions for educators who daily face ethnic diversity. If non-diverse institutions collaborated with historically black college/universities to cross-train in diversity capitalizing on ethnic values, traditions and cultural beliefs of multicultural populations, this would be beneficial toward improving the relationships with diverse populations (Ryan, 2006).

Spellman College, the oldest historically black college for women for 125 years, builds on its legacy of becoming more competitive as a leading liberal arts college.

Spellman launched a five-part initiative that promotes ALIVE:

A: Academic Excellence through recruitment of faculty committed to teaching.

L: Leadership Development of women of color.

I: Improving their environment by working with the community and neighborhoods.

V: Visibility of their achievements, so that the accomplishments of the faculty, staff and students are apparent to everyone.

E: Exemplary customer service, creating a sense of hospitality, generosity, and spirit to anyone who passes through their doors (www.spelman.edu).

College of Saint Mary, a Catholic college since 1923, builds on educating women from diverse backgrounds and is committed to the works, values, and aspirations of the Sisters of Mercy. In this environment, leadership is fostered. The college pays particular attention to equity for women in the worlds of work, community, and public policy, expanding their knowledge, and assisting women to gain confidence in their skills and natural strengths in leadership positions (www.csm.edu).

Most studies of women's colleges have been historical in focus, which includes the histories of particular institutions, especially the seven sisters, historically black colleges for women, and catholic colleges. Diversity issues at women's colleges are an area that has not been studied or undertaken by educational researchers. Diversity is broadly defined and moves beyond an examination of access, which involves the numbers of new students' and faculty populations at women colleges over two decades (Guy-Sheftall, 1999).

The majority of women's colleges except for Spellman remain largely white. Data to enable the assessment of more difficult challenges of faculty/administrator diversity are missing. Finally, it is important to look at diversity efforts at a historically black college for women, despite the assumption that such efforts would be unnecessary because the entire student body is already a racial minority (Guy-Sheftall, 1999).

Guy-Sheftall (1999) believed that although women colleges have come a long way in understanding diversity, the work for continued diversity is far from over. Research revealed a need for more information on whether “chilly” climates for faculty and students of color still exist and whether there are distinct diversity issues at women’s colleges because of the institutions’ special missions, unique histories, sociocultural realities, and nature of their student bodies and faculties. The changing demographics at women’s colleges highlighted a need to devise inclusive curriculum, which are especially suited for women colleges.

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCU’s) have a legacy of providing opportunity for access to education when other venues were closed. Morehouse College, like Spellman, is a private historically Black liberal arts college for men. Founded in 1867 and located in Atlanta, Georgia it is the nation’s largest liberal arts college for men. Its mission is to develop men with disciplined minds who will lead lives of leadership and service.

Historically black colleges and universities have served an important role in promoting access to higher education for African Americans, in addition reverse exposure for whites to learn at an HBCU is on the increase. However, historically black colleges and universities are far from equal in terms of infrastructure, operating budgets and resources. These inequities continue to persist (Anderson, 1988; Brown & Davis, 2001; Brown, Donahoo, & Bertrand, 2001; Drewry & Doerman, 2004, Palmer & Gasman, 2008).

Historically black colleges and universities, despite their lack of resources, have a rich legacy of producing charismatic leaders, such as, W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther

King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, Ella Baker, Barbara Jordan, and Stokely Carmichael, who advocated for societal change for all and served as positive role models to many African Americans. Through legislative and programmatic initiatives, access to historically white institutions for African Americans has been made possible. While black enrollment has increased in historically white institutions, the issue is retention and successful completion and acquisition of the degree (Palmer & Gasman, 2008).

The value of HBCU's has been significant. They award nearly one-fifth of all bachelor degrees, and 20% of all professional degrees to African Americans (Hoffman, Liagas, & Snyder, 2003; Palmer & Gasman, 2008). The significance of these degrees are profound, given they represent only 3% of the nation's institutions of higher learning (Allen, 1992, Palmer & Gasmen, 2008). Historically, black institutions continue to provide environments of support, nurturing, and family atmospheres, which promote growth despite their declining numbers and limited resources.

Planning and implementing institutional change at a minimum should implement a multicultural approach to teaching, to engage students in dialogue concerning culturally based differences and the role they play within the educational system (Nielsen & Stambaugh, 1998). Nielsen & Stambaugh (1998) believed that taking a multicultural approach to teaching means going beyond facilitating a dialogue about culturally based differences to creating opportunities for students to find value in cultural diversity. Most college students entered higher education programs with pragmatic goals. When asked why they chose to enroll in specific courses, students rarely if ever stated they wanted to know more about cultural diversity, much less how to celebrate it. Students were more interested or focused on immediate employment or career goals.

Pope (1995) wrote that multicultural development within organizations involves systematic planned change efforts. Colleges and universities have generally failed at being successful in responding to structural (e.g., interacting with racially/ethnically diverse groups in colleges and universities) or proportional (e.g., the forming of relationships between the diversity of faculty/student bodies within colleges and universities) diversity (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Petersen, & Allen, 1999). Pope (1995) stated that there has only been a sporadic effort at systemic change within higher education.

Hurtado, et. al. (1999) concluded that interactions among diverse groups would have positive effects on outcomes when:

- the groups are of equal status.
- there are common goals and inter-group cooperation.
- institutional leaders support group equality.
- there are extended opportunities for group members to get to know each other.

Havranek and Brodwin (1998) believed that designing a new paradigm involved models which institutions operate. This involved rediscovering the fundamental nature and purpose of services provided by institutions. They believed this would create a more *personalistic* reform movement in education, which puts students as first priority in the education process.

The type of change required for institutions to implement a student-focused diverse organization is global. Changes to facilitate the modifications needed to provide a student-focused management require total administrative structure realignment. Both academic and service departments would be restructured to be part of learning teams

instead of separate departments. Learning teams would consist of diverse students with similar academic programs, a core of diverse staff from various disciplines devoted to teaching this group, administration, support services, and service department representatives (Havranek & Brodwin, 1998).

The U.S. Supreme Courts, The Education Commission of the States, and The American Council on Education (2007) placed many policies in effect focused around diversity in education. The justifications given for implementing affirmative action policies vary according to the Education Commission of the States. These include:

- Affirmative action policies help remedy negative effects of past and present discrimination on groups in question.
- When affirmative action policies are utilized to ensure the creation of student bodies and faculty, many benefits are inherent to society.
- Finally, racially based affirmative action policies are no different from other policies used for many years by higher learning institutions to favor specific applicant groups (Commission of the States, 2007).

Challenges and Barriers to Attaining a Changed Curriculum

Higher education plays an increasingly important role in helping individuals attain social and economic status. Higher education administrators face the tremendous task of substantially improving learning environments while reducing administrative overhead. They strive to deliver on student demand for flexible and innovative learning experiences. With so many demands and so much riding on diversifying the educational system, administrators and educators are challenged and need solutions to providing students an environment for learning to occur (Microsoft Dynamics, 2007).

In a speech delivered to college presidents, Sara Martinez the Under Secretary of Education defended the Bush administration plan to end the Supplemental Educational Opportunities Grant and called upon colleges to help the department remake the federal student-aid system. The important message delivered to colleges, and council members, implied more faculty/administrators' focus should be placed on broader goals, which increase access and not spend time protecting programs that departments regard as inefficient. The supplemental programs were too expensive to operate and do not have the ability to reach all students. Furthermore, shifting demographic patterns makes it imperative that colleges and universities increase access to higher education for underrepresented groups, Freeman Hrabowski III, president of the University of Maryland-Baltimore stated in a council meeting (Byrne & Field, 2007).

Many factors have contributed to the wide spread mania for assessment and accountability in higher education. Current assessment tools lack sufficient research into their reliability and validity. Fallout was reflected in the pursuit of prestige in a reduction of flagship universities who are committed to low-income and minority students. This suggested that most flagship universities have walked away from low-income students and students of color. Haycock; director of education trust, believed this to be true (Byrne & Field, 2007).

More studies are needed regarding the recruitment and retention of multicultural populations into higher education. Available research programs that can be assessed and measured as effective remain limited.

Bridging the Gap of Multicultural Populations in Higher Education

Being an educational leader responding to challenges of improving schools means creating an environment where students from diverse backgrounds have an equal opportunity for educational success, community responsibility and economic self-sufficiency. School improvements must focus on fair and equal access of diverse student populations not limited to what students know and are able to do (Lufkin, 2006).

Lufkin (2006) believed that to achieve the goals of standard based education reform, attention must be focused on all aspects of the educational system. Curricula changes are necessary to achieve these goals. According to The National Alliance for Partnership in Equity (NAPE) 10 essential system building standards are identified. The 10 Standards are:

1. Educational environments are created that honor diversity and respect the individual.
2. Educational leaders assure equity in governance.
3. Pre-service and in-service education equips faculty, administrators, and staff with the skills needed to teach and work with diverse populations and communities.
4. Fair and impartial teaching practices are incorporated into classrooms to facilitate the academic achievements of all students.
5. Fair and impartial assessment practices are incorporated into classrooms and testing programs.
6. Curricula and personnel are evaluated to ensure that issues of equity and diversity are consistently addressed.
7. Data on student achievement and programs are collected and evaluated to ensure that all groups benefit from educational practices and policies.

8. The entire learning curriculum is available to all students through comprehensive, individualized planning and course selection.
9. Financial resources, facilities, and staffing are allocated in ways that provide opportunity and success for all students.
10. Parents/caregivers, community organizations, business/industry, and schools work together as partners to promote academic achievement and inclusive learning environments.

These standards serve as building blocks to improve institutions' abilities to respond to the needs of a diverse student body and create an atmosphere that supports the success of all students (Lufkin, 2006).

Educational administration programs are challenged with recruiting a diverse faculty to educate future administrators and educational leaders. Administrative preparation programs must ensure that administrators and educational leaders are sufficiently prepared to work in ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse settings. No longer can institutions afford to prepare school leaders and principals who reflect a limited knowledge base of an ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse student population (Quezada & Louque, 2004).

Programs, which produce culturally proficient educators, are the most needed and important for the multi-ethnic, multilingual, 21st century population (Lindsey, Nuri-Roberts, & Terrell, 1999, Quezada & Louque, 2004). This was demonstrated by how educational administration programs recruit, mentor, support, evaluate their faculty of color, and by the presence of faculty of color influences on the campuses and students. The presence of educational administrative faculty of color can attract more students of

color to administrative programs. The two are intricately woven together (Alger, 1998). Students believe that if faculty members of color are present, the program is demonstrating some level of commitment to equity and diversity issues. Furthermore, these students can benefit by seeing education as a viable option when considering it as a profession (Quezada & Louque, 2004).

Many factors contribute to why there are few faculty of color in educational institutions. First, many prefer to attend graduate schools of law, medical, business, and others, which have much better salaries and incentives. Secondly, there exists a lack of communication regarding the need for faculty of color. Thirdly, institutions favored candidates with backgrounds and interest similar to the administrators and faculty of their institutions (Quezada & Louque, 2004). Therefore, when it came to hiring the trend went toward hiring people who look like the majority of faculty. Other barriers included: feelings of isolation, which is the most common; token hiring, not being hired for what a person knows but because there is a need to diversify the faculty; ethnic and racial bias in the recruitment and hiring process; and occupational stress, from seeing that contributions were not seen as legitimate (Quezada & Louque, 2004). The most significant barriers identified were policies and practices that restricted opportunities and rewards available to women and people of color (Morrison, 1992).

Many components must be in place when recruiting faculty of color. They should include but are not limited to:

- re-structure career paths leading to teaching in higher education
- develop mentoring programs with administrators of color who are teaching courses based on expertise

- develop recruitment and marketing campaigns to attract more administrators of color into teaching faculty
- campaigns should target universities that have a high concentration of students and teachers of color
- improve the environment for faculty of color; provide financial incentives to departments who are successful in their recruitments of persons of color; acknowledge the concern about diversity and its lack thereof in institutions
- develop a culturally responsive curriculum
- utilize professionals and personal networks to provide leads on potential candidates (Quezada & Louque, 2004).

Once institutions have recruited faculty of color various components must be in place to retain them. They should include: assistance and all around support; diversity and scheduling activities that support issues of diversity and involve all faculty in diversity and equity training; mentoring-formal and informal; clear policies and procedures and create a critical mass of genuinely diverse faculty (Quezada & Louque, 2004).

It has been argued that affirmative action, as a mechanism intervening to produce change in the academic labor force, tends to work against the presumed advantages and efficiencies of the market. It was felt that affirmative action raised the cost for management, and believed that this was one of the reasons it has met resistance and has been implemented in a half-hearted or ineffective fashion (Exum, Menges, Watkins & Berglund, 1984).

Exum, et. al. (1984) believed it increased recruitment costs because it applied different measures for recruitment activities; it introduced additional or alternate criteria for evaluating workers, and finally, it increased the faculty and administrative time and resources. This is especially important in the case of recruiting women minority faculty due to the smaller numbers in the faculty pool (Exum, et al, 1984).

Roach (2005) believed race-conscious affirmative action in higher education has shifted from programs that helped under-represented minorities gain admission to and complete graduate school. With modified eligibility requirements, opening their participation to all students in an effort to avoid legal challenges, several programs, which support graduate school diversity efforts, have taken steps to avoid attacks by anti-affirmative action groups.

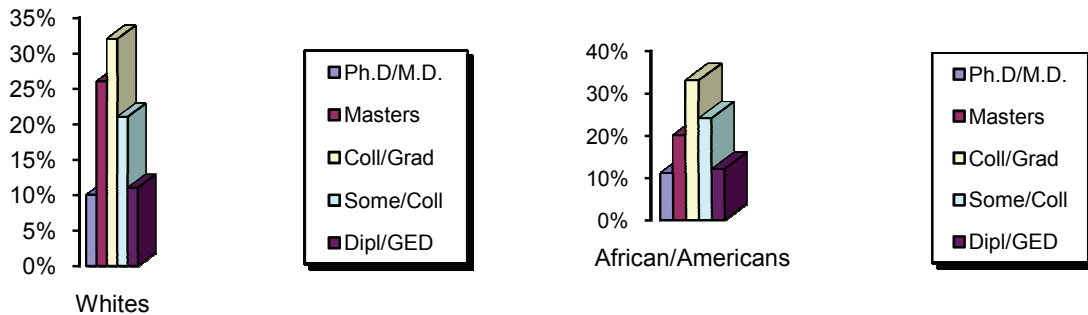
Programs such as the Ford Foundation, the Mellon Foundation and the Association of American Medical Colleges have undergone significant modifications. To many, such changes have raised the concern that these programs now face a dilution of their original goals and aims, which is to boost the number of under-represented minorities in specific academic and professional areas. "If there's a need for affirmative action in higher education, it's clearly at the graduate level," stated Dr. Ansley Abraham, the director of the Southern Regional Education Board's State Doctoral Scholars Program. "We need concerted efforts to steer and assist minority students in those directions. We have to have very intense and focused efforts." (Roach, 2005, p 24)

Birch (2004) believed the most important aspect of cultural diversity is the faculty. Department chairs must stay informed about faculty perceptions of the

institutional culture, teaching, research, opinions, and educational professional activities. It is also important for chairs to interact with administrators and key leaders.

School relationships often play significant roles in helping students make the transitions into higher education. Students form relationships with their peers, teachers, counselors, principals, and other school staff who work together for the common goal of teaching and learning. Having exposure to diversity helps students' with interpersonal skills, employment opportunities, understanding and tolerance. In universities or colleges, students can develop relationships that contribute to their academic development and lifelong learning orientation (Wimberly, 2002). Table 1 reflects how far African American students were expected to go in high school and college compared to white students. Table 2 charts the progress of African American and white students after two years beyond high school.

Table 1: Reflects how far White and African American students were expected to go in high school and college (Wimberly, 2002, p. 9).



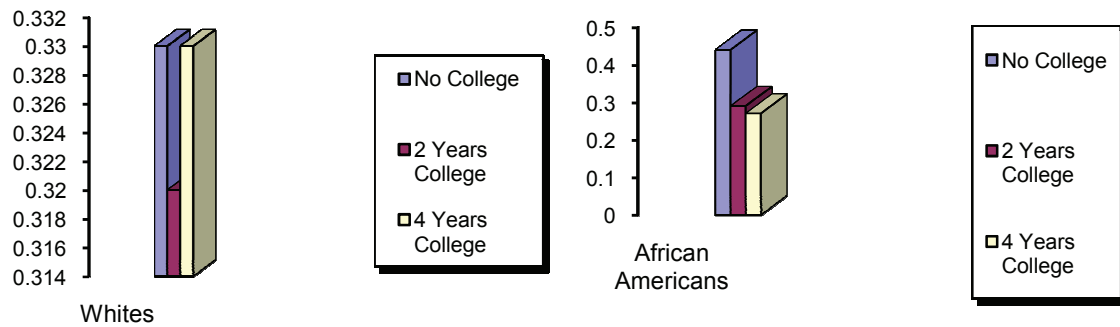


Table 2: Reflects how far in school, White and African American students were two years beyond high school (Wimberly, 2002, p.10).

A More Diverse Curriculum at Work

While there have been many research efforts undertaken to advocate the use of multi-cultural curriculum in the classroom, there is little written about how teachers, pre-service and in-service, are actually being taught how to use this curriculum in their classrooms. While many educators were offered the opportunity to design a multi-cultural curriculum course, very few undertook the challenge, and today there are few models on which to build (Hinton, 2006).

Hinton (2006) believed the first step to learning to teach multi-cultural materials into the curriculum is faculty from both K-12 and college teaching in all disciplines. Faculty should start by asking students what they already know about multi-cultural literature and what students hope to learn. Students need to be able to make sense of the term multi-cultural literature. Once able to do this then many windows of opportunity for learning are available.

Multicultural literature can serve as a viable tool for addressing diverse issues in the classroom. It becomes a primary vehicle for faculty to generate dialogues (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995; Lowery & Sabis-Burns, 2007). It is critical for educators to be aware of

barriers when introducing multi-cultural literature into their classrooms; however, educators cannot be expected to present information they themselves know little or nothing about. If educators are expected to teach students about diversity using multi-cultural literature, they need to be exposed to it themselves (Lowery & Sabis-Burns, 2007).

Banks (1991) believed that teachers were the most important variable in the multicultural curriculum. Their attitude toward ethnic content and cultures are crucial. Many teachers, especially mainstream American teachers, may fear teaching ethnic content, particularly if their classes include students of color. These problems are compounded if students of color express or show negative attitudes toward learning about their cultural heritage from non-minority teachers. Teachers should clarify their attitudes toward people of color before attempting to teach about them. Teachers, who have negative attitudes toward people of color, may do more harm than good when trying to teach ethnic content. Research suggested that teacher attitudes are revealed to students even when teachers are unaware of their negative feelings.

Banks (1991) believed that once teachers are keenly aware of personal racial attitudes and are satisfied that they are positive toward people of color, that teachers should defend their right and responsibility to teach ethnic content. Ethnic or multicultural content should not be studied only by ethnic and minorities or limited to specialized courses. Rather multicultural and ethnic studies should be viewed as a process of curriculum reform and transformation that will result in the creation of new curriculum based on new perspectives and new assumptions. It is intended to give students a new

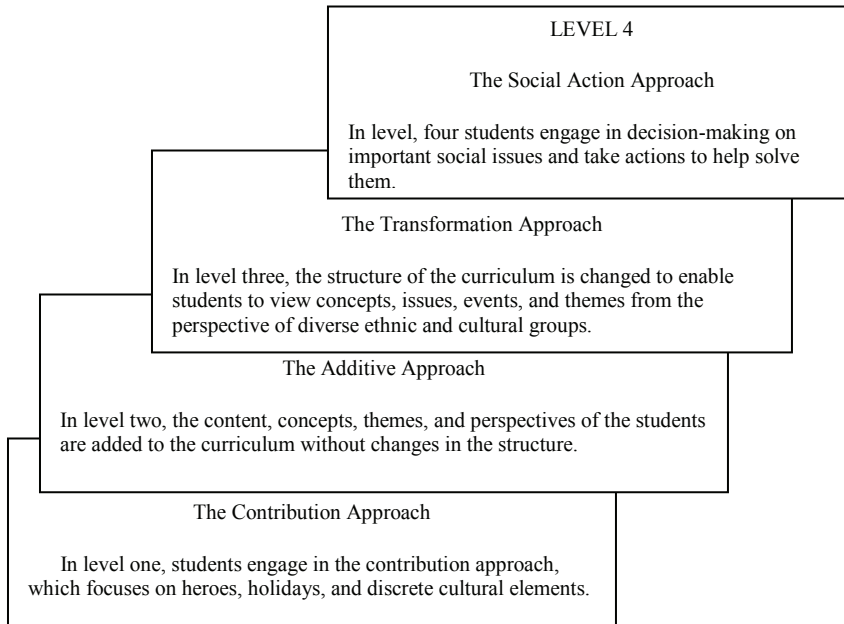
awareness of multicultural experiences and a new concept of what it means to be multicultural.

Banks (1991) stated that a major reason the curriculum in U.S. schools, college, and universities remain Anglo-centric, Eurocentric and male dominated is the norm on which the mainstream curriculum is based is rarely made explicit. Several identifiable approaches to integration of ethnic and multicultural content into the curriculum have evolved since the 1960's. One such approach involved introducing ethnic leaders into the curriculum (Model A Approach). This mainstream approach remains unchanged in terms of its basic structure, goals, and salient characteristics. This is the easiest approach for teachers to use; however, it has many serious limitations. It leaves students without a comprehensive view of the role of ethnic and cultural groups.

Banks (1991) contends the goals of multicultural curriculum are as follows: 1) it should help students develop the ability to make reflective decisions on issues related to ethnicity, and take personal, social and civic actions to solve the ethnic problems in our society today; 2) It should help students view historical and contemporary events from diverse ethnic perspectives; 3) It should help students develop cross-cultural competencies and the ability to function within a range of cultures; 4) It should provide students with cultural and ethnic alternatives; 5) It should enable students to understand their own culture and non-ethnic students better able to understand other cultures ; 6) it should help students expand their conceptions of what it means to be human, and accept the fact that ethnic minority cultures are functional and valid, and finally 7) it is to help students master the skills of reading, writing and computational skills (Banks, 1991, pp.

25-27). Figure 3 demonstrates Banks (1991) steps to introduce multicultural literature into the curricula.

Figure 3: Reflects Bank's multicultural literature implemented steps



Mainstreaming ethnic and multicultural literature into the curriculum is of the utmost importance; however, with the declining number of African American teachers leaving or choosing not to enter the teaching profession; it has become an increasing concern among education policy makers. Numerous articles commented on the possible causes and solutions, but it remains a troublesome development in light of the growing multicultural population within the educational system (Perkins & Warren, 1989).

When educators gain awareness that multicultural literature may be used as a stimulus for creating classrooms where all students are valued, students can celebrate their own cultures and explore the uniqueness of others. The impact of a thoughtful educator can be profound, as educators, become more aware of their own beliefs, attitudes, and practices relating to diversity in the classroom. The students they teach will benefit. This may be an important step toward reaching the goal of retaining more

minority faculty and assisting students in obtaining their post secondary degrees (Colby & Lyon, 2004).

Orque (1979) and Orque, Block & Monroy (1983) proposed an integrated approach to how such curricula can be introduced, implemented, and evaluated in a holistic baccalaureate-nursing program. The role of nursing faculty in the purposeful identification of cultural content and in the implementation and evaluation of teaching strategies to assist students in the area of cultural health care delivery cannot be overemphasized to develop knowledge and skills. Often because of the lack of time, nursing faculty assumed that students had learned the basic cultural components in the curriculum and not explored this further with them. The authors believed that if nursing faculty truly valued experiential teaching as a method for raising cultural consciousness of students, students' mastery of cultural components should never be assumed.

In the area of cultural health care delivery, nursing instructors had two principal functions as proposed by Peplau (1957) and Orque, Bloch & Monroy (1983), critical auditor and facilitator. As critical auditor, the nursing instructor listens intelligently to students' descriptions of their experiences with ethnic minority patients. The faculty member can encourage students' learning by recognizing concepts that can be generalized from students' experiences. As facilitators, nursing instructors can stimulate students' interests in cultural healthcare delivery by making appropriate suggestions about resources they may explore. If faculty members are not familiar with a particular ethnic group's culture, they should refer students to people who are.

Putting Students First

Diversity clearly is an important topic in higher-learning institutions. It is essential to describe diversity and what it means. According to the Merriam-Webster's online Dictionary (2009) diversity means being diverse, this is, different or varied. Another definition according to the University of Oregon, College of Education; Diversity Affairs Committee (2007), the concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means an understanding that each individual is unique and recognized by individual differences. These differences can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, socioeconomic status, political beliefs, religious beliefs and other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, nurturing, and positive environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond the simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

The more people talk about diversity, the clearer it is how many people disagree about it even those actively working to include the widest bandwidth of individual and identity group differences in educational institutions and organizations. These disagreements on diversity prevent potential educational institutions and organizations from joining forces to bring about the societal, organizational and educational changes they all want (NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, 1999).

Literature was reviewed in four areas relevant to ethnic/multicultural populations in higher education: 1) enrollment in higher education; 2) programs promoting diversity; 3) recruitment in higher education for ethnic/multicultural populations; and 4) retention in higher education for ethnic/multicultural populations.

Enrollment in Higher Education

Two government reports claimed major gains in minority enrollment in higher education (Renner, 2005, College Enrollment Grows More Diverse,” The Chronicle, June 17). Although there are more minority students than a decade ago, there are also more white students than a decade ago. However, Renner (2005) reported this is false; rather, majority students have made gains. The reporting by the Chronicle of these enrollment statistics contributed to the national denial of the urgent need to publicly address racial inequality in access to higher education.

Renner (2005) believed it is important to break down racial enrollment figures by institutional characteristics. To do this revealed massive geographic and institutional racial segregation in higher education. Renner (2005) stated, “Why are we so obsessed with deceiving ourselves that all is well?” (p1).

Saha (2003) reported that in a study done by Professor Stanley Rothman and colleagues, they found that greater diversity among students was associated with lower ratings of educational quality and greater racial tension among students. They concluded that the widely accepted benefits of campus diversity does not stand up to empirical testing.

Saha (2003) asked does enrollment diversity improve university education. The author noted the benefits of diversity are thought to arise from interracial interaction, dialogue, even conflict sometimes, if they occur in settings that promote mutual respect, can lead to true integration and improved cross-cultural understanding. These interracial experiences and worldviews of students produced what was hypothesized as educational and societal benefits claimed for diversity.

Saha (2003) believed Professor Rothman and colleagues' study, which was funded by anti-affirmative action interests, effectively biased against finding an educational benefit from student body diversity in a study using overly simplistic analysis using imprecise variables. The author continued with stating that the study's findings were released at precisely the same time the United States Supreme Court was preparing to consider the fate of affirmative action in higher education.

Saha (2003) concluded with believing Rothman and colleagues study showed further proof of the negative image of public opinion research as a soft science, in which researchers can construct faulty studies and manipulate data to promote specific political agendas.

Programs Promoting Diversity

Diversity is handled in numerous ways by different institutions as a conceptual problem. Many build multicultural programs into their curriculum; some offer specific programs on multi-ethnicity, while others rely on high minority student enrollments to present themselves in meaningful ways in courses and student life (Boening & Miller, 2005).

Schmidt (2006) believed many of the programs have shifted their focus from increasing minority access to education to serving the broader and more abstract goal of promoting diversity. Having an increase in white and Asian-American students without expanding the overall size, many have managed to serve a smaller number of students from the minority group that they previously sought to help. This development dismayed minority advocates and people engaged in efforts to diversify certain professional fields.

Schmidt (2006) concluded that in many cases, colleges have even overhauled their own administrative structures to avoid the appearance of providing certain services solely to minority groups by renaming their various minority offices as diversity or multicultural offices to reflect a full range of students served. At least in name, minority programs are quickly disappearing from college campuses. Colleges and universities are dropping the word minority from the titles of their scholarships, fellowships, recruitment orientation, and academic enrichment programs and opening them to populations previously excluded. However, universities stated their overall goal is to help black, Hispanic, and American Indian students to succeed in higher education (Schmidt, 2004).

William H. Gray III, the department president of the United Negro College Fund, called the challenges to the legality of such programs “a blatant attempt to narrow the doorway of access for minorities.” He stated he worries that financially needy minority students will lose access to scholarships now that white students can compete for them, and “without this financial help, they probably will not go to some of the most prestigious and elite universities.” (Schmidt, 2004, pg.2).

Recruitment in Higher Education for Ethnic/multicultural Populations

Many colleges and universities desire racial diversity, yet very few make considerable progress in this regard. It is interesting to note what makes some institutions more successful than others at diversifying their institutions to ethnic/multicultural populations. Colleges reflect a curriculum of racial diversity, quality ongoing programming focused on racial diversity, training on affirmative action for employees, monitor searches as to what works and does not, helpful recruitment and hiring teams, and offer rewards and sanctions. However to enhance student diversity, colleges and

universities should develop meaningful relationships with many organizations of color and offer substantial financial aid to and academic support programs for students of color (Davis, 2002).

Researchers and policy makers rarely included individuals who are the focus of their studies in the development of solutions to their problems. However, they were asked their opinions about their situations, but were seldom asked to participate in development of programs or models that would improve their lives. The very individuals who were affected the most were not given a voice in the dialogue, as if they had no stake in the important decisions that determined the course of the policies that affected their lives (Freeman, 1997).

Many problems developed in studies that focused on the process of trying to increase ethnic/multicultural participation in higher education. Participants are rarely, if ever, asked for their perceptions of the problems, but most importantly, their ideas about possible solutions. Many questions remain unanswered such as when should secondary schools start the process of preparing under-represented groups for higher education, or at what age does the process of higher education begin and who is responsible (Freeman, 1997).

Freeman (1997) concluded with stating it is clear those models for recruitment are not working and that some student ideas are solid ones. However, researchers too often were unfamiliar with the historical and structural differences of the cultures and continued to define the problems and design. This resulted in the development of solutions based on models that were applicable to the majority populations.

Retention in Higher Education for Ethnic/Multicultural Populations

When asked about the value of cultural centers on college campuses, many quickly gave a number of responses. The most direct answers were: they helped retain students of color through graduation; they helped ensure a diversity of ideas; and helped to sustain the integrity of the academic experience. However, despite their value, there was widespread debate over the future of cultural centers on predominately-white college campuses. The questions asked in an increasingly racially diverse nation are: Whom should cultural centers serve? Moreover, how? What should they be called? Add in culture and cost, and the next question to arise is should cultural centers exist for every sizeable ethnic group on campus. (Hefner, 2002).

Economic demands and competition have sparked the recent influx of new or renovated cultural centers. At white colleges and universities, cultural centers are a critical part of recruiting and retaining students of color. It actually costs less to retain a student than it does to recruit a student, according to Dr. William B. Harvey, vice president and director of American Council on Education's Office of Minorities in Higher Education. He continued by stating it is to the institutions' advantage to try to retain students because once students leave, the university has a real diminution (Hefner, 2002).

Kezar & Eckel (2007) reported that institutions should do five things to create systems for learning that are essential to helping underrepresented students succeed. They need to:

- Develop systems to collect and analyze data.
- Learn by listening directly to their students.
- Put their learning to constructive use.

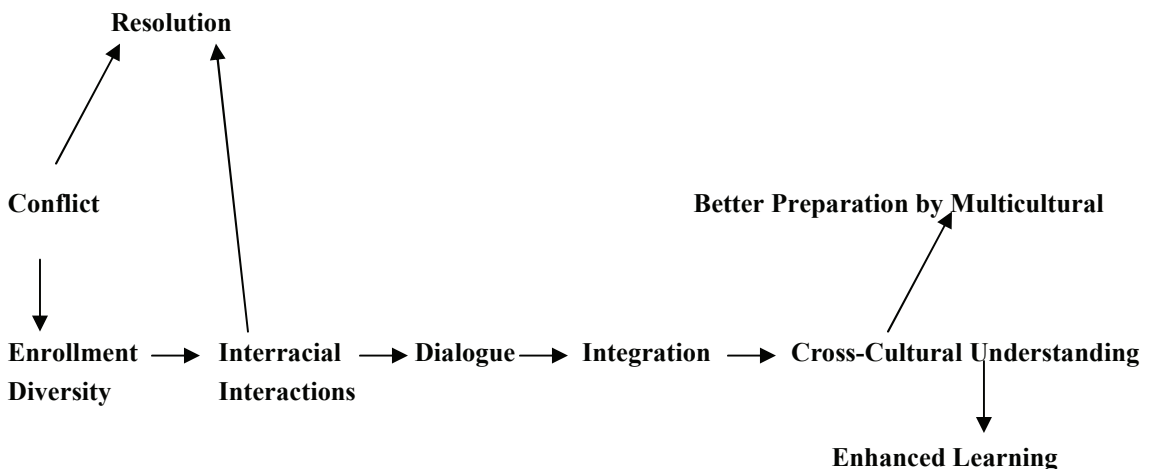
- Turn controversies into learning opportunities.
- Time and pace their efforts in ways that are appropriate to the campus climate.

Kezar & Eckel (2007) concluded that when diversity is connected to the core business of the college or university, helping students of color succeed becomes both an opportunity for students to learn and institutions to learn more about themselves (p 20).

The following models and program studies are: 1) model for the potential of educational benefits for enrollment diversity Figure 4; 2) orientation programs promoting diversity, the Delphi survey technique Figure 5; 3) study of racial diversity in higher education and 4) study for increased African Americans participation in higher education Figures 6 and Figure 7.

In figure 4: the potential educational benefits for enrollment diversity, a simple model of how diversity may affect educational experience; the model demonstrates that even if diversity is present, benefits will not accrue if students do not interact across racial lines. When there is meaningful dialogue present and relationships develop, then the full potential, of diversity will be realized (Saha, 2003, p.203).

Figure 4: Saha's model of potential educational benefits for enrollment diversity (p 203)



In the first survey, Saha's benefits for enrollment diversity, the analysis by Rothman et al. ignored this multistep pathway between diversity and educational benefits. Saha tested the association between enrollment diversity and opinions of educational quality without any attention to the process or absence of intervening factors. With this failure to account for quantity and quality of individual students' interracial interactions it severely limited the ability to draw substantive conclusions from their study. (Saha, 2003).

The second survey, Sackman et al (1971, 1975) used the Delphi technique, an exploratory research tool selected for a descriptive study that was designed to initiate a larger conversation by orientating professionals and community college leaders. First, the study allowed consensus to develop among geographically separated experts (Boening & Miller, 2005; Sackman, 1975; Weaver, 1971). Second, the study allowed for individual reflection and eliminated peer pressure to conform (Boening & Miller, 2005; Van de Ven & Delberg, 1974), a characteristic that is very important to consider with the sensitive nature of diversity and inclusion. Third, the study allowed for the consensus and creation among respondents, which might possibly lead to recommendations for new programs promoting diversity (Miles, 1997; Boening & Miller, 2005). Tables 3 and 4: Effective strategies for promoting diversity through orientation reports the findings of the second and third round of Sackman et al study (p. 46).

Table 3: Effective strategies for promoting diversity through orientation (p 46)

Strategy	Round	Round	SD	Range
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	2mean	3 mean (Rd 3)		
Show more money follows behaviors that promotes diversity	4.6	4.6	.7	4
Show the positive economy of a successfully inclusive environment	4.7	4.6	.840	4
Do not talk about diversity, just show it is important	4.3	4.3	.699	4
Have community representatives discuss inclusion in the workplace	4.1	4.1	.846	4
Have diverse orientation team leaders	4.0	4.1	.840	4
Get people of color involved	4.0	4.0	.781	4
Use pictures that show diversity in college material	4.0	3.8	1.00	4
Show diverse people getting along as friends	3.9	3.9	.983	5

Table 4: Other possible strategies for promoting diversity through orientation (p 47)

Strategy	Round	Round	SD	Range
	2 mean	3 mean	(Rd 3)	

Have a diversity center on campus	3.7	3.7	.789	4
Have a diversity workshop	3.7	3.7	.833	4
Include literature in different languages	3.7	3.7	.848	4
Have people from other countries as greeters	3.6	3.6	.946	5
Use a panel of diverse students in “Get to know us”	3.6	3.5	.799	5
Social activities that bring people together	3.6	3.5	1.10	5
Include diversity links on websites	3.5	3.4	.933	4
Include self-paced diversity workshops online	3.4	3.4	1.06	5
Have the president speak about the importance of diversity	3.4	3.4	1.01	5
Include multicultural tracks in orientation	3.3	3.2	1.04	4

Boening & Miller (2005) believed the most important finding of the research, was that those who worked in new student orientation programs in community colleges saw ways that they can promote more inclusive, diverse environments.

The third study Davis (2002), a study for racial diversity in higher education, pointed out that successful colleges and universities, or those with high percentages of minorities, were compared to unsuccessful colleges and universities, or those with low percentages of minorities. The goal was to compare the successful and unsuccessful schools in regards to affirmative action. It was essential that they are comparable variables so that these variables would be less likely to distort the comparison. The results showed successful colleges and universities differed from unsuccessful colleges and universities in four main ways: the universities and colleges structure, practices, competence and climate for college students (Davis, 2002).

The fourth and final study, increased participation of African Americans in higher education, was designed to give African American students an opportunity to express their perceptions in their own voices, which provided valuable insight for researchers and policymakers to develop and design future programs and policies (Freeman, 1997).

Researchers have focused on increasing aspirations and motivations of African American students to attend higher education while excluding the cultural considerations. The key prescription for recruitment and retention of students has been based on models that pay little if any attention to the culture and heritage of African Americans. As evidenced through their policies and practices, policymakers and educators alike have focused on remedies for increasing participation of African Americans without input from African American students themselves (Freeman, 1997). Figures 5 and 6: Reflects the barriers perceived by African Americans participation in higher education and the programs models for increasing their participation in higher education.

Figure 5: African American High-School Students' Perception of Barriers to African Americans Participation in Higher Education (Freeman, 1997, p 535)

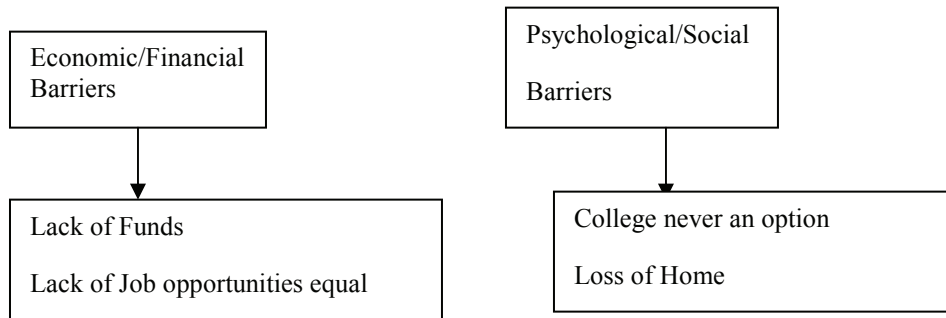
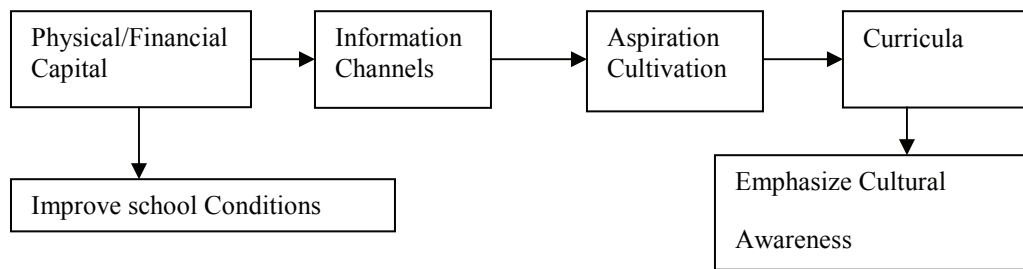


Figure 6: African American High-School Students' Suggestions for Program/Models to increase African Americans' Participation in Higher Education (Freeman, 1997, p 540)



African American experiences in higher education are not simply black/white issues but a problem in its own right. Focus must be on what has been tried and proven effective more so than putting all efforts into creating new programs and procedures to address the growing gap of African Americans pursuing higher education. Language and cultural barrier exists in understanding how to create an environment for African Americans attending higher learning institutions.

The African American Male Experience

The challenges that black men face in the classroom have been well documented. However, some researchers are pushing colleges to focus more on why some students are able to succeed, while others are pushing institutions to more carefully measure the

impact of programs intended to help black males and to embrace those that look promising. Fewer than one-third of blacks who enter four-year colleges as freshmen graduate within six years, the lowest among all racial and ethnic groups according to a analysis by Shaun R. Harper, an assistant professor of higher education management at the university of Pennsylvania (Schmidt, 2008).

Schmidt (2008) stated the overall college performance of black men is so poor that some college officials and advocates for black students are reluctant to even talk about the problem for fear that doing so will further stigmatize black men and make the situation even worse. "It is kind of an embarrassment for a lot of schools, and they don't know what to do about it," says Douglas S. Massey, who has done extensive research on minority students in higher education (p 2).

The biggest challenge in serving minority college students is not creating new knowledge about how to help them. It is creating new incentives for institutional leaders to act on the knowledge that already exists according to a report issued by the Educational Sector, a Washington based research group (Schmidt, 2008).

Harper (Schmidt, 2008) believed efforts have been misplaced in trying to understand all of the social undercurrents of underachievement. He believed it to be important work, but it only tells half the story. He stated it is just as important to focus on the enablers of success. In conclusion, Harper found that black men were less likely than other segments of the population to collaborate with other students or to admit they needed help. Black men often perceived colleges as having low expectations of them and feel tremendous pressure to prove their intellectual competence and their right to be at the institutions. Overall, there is no one pathway to success for all black men, but nothing is

more important than the consistent articulation of high expectations from parents (Schmidt, 2008).

In agreement with Schmidt (2008) study, the University of Alcorn State pointed out these factors as contributors for academic failure by Males of Color:

- See no clue of the social role for males of color in textbooks or classroom activities.
- Negative treatment encountered in schools Zero tolerance measures
- Blame Game: It is the teacher's fault; Students are complicit in their own failure
- Self-esteem issues
- Academic preparation issues
- Resource issues
- Adjustment issues (Mentoring Young Men of Color, 2006).

Reasons Students leave College:

- Academic Preparedness
- Campus Climate/Poor Fit
- Weak Commitment to Educational Goals and/or Institution
- Failure to Socially and/or Academically Integrate
- Lack of Financial Support/Aid (Source: Educational Policy Institute, 2007).

The African American Female Experience

Ever since Mary Jane Patterson became the first black woman in the United States to earn a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree at Oberlin College in 1862, black women's journey to higher education has been paved with struggle. Patterson confronted

resistance, fought against marginalization and had to negotiate space (Johnson-Bailey, 1994 & Sealey-Ruiz, 2007).

For the most part, black women were barred from academia. A turning point came for them with the emergence of black universities and colleges at the close of the nineteenth century. Of particular importance for black women was the opening of the first black women's college, Spelman, in Atlanta in 1881 (Sealey-Ruiz, 2007).

Research on black women in academia has led to a realization; the focus has been on the same message but the context has shifted. Is the black women experience the same in 2009 as it was in the fifties, sixties, and seventies? Back then, there were limits on college choices, career choices, and where one might live. In the Twenty First Century however, there is a question on whether black women have made gains in academia, career choices, and where they reside (Reid, 2004).

Career Status for Black Women

Black women career status in academia is often that of a token or "*double solo*" meaning the only member of one's gender and racial group in a work situation. This double solo has often translated into intellectual isolation from other colleges. The token status stems from the opinion of some non-minorities that blacks are not hired on merit or their qualifications, but solely to meet affirmative action goals. The token and solo status becomes more uncomfortable because there are virtually no supportive individuals in either the social or the professional environment to buffer the negative effects of this psychological burden (Carter-Obayuwana, 1995).

Campus Climate for Black Women

Traditionally the campus climate for all women in higher education has often been described as a “*chilly*” one. For black women in particular, the campus environment has been intensely inhospitable because their identities have been intertwined within the explosive framework of both race and gender. Not only have black women suffered indignities from colleagues, but students disrespected them as well. Many students held stereotyped and negative images of black women and resented the presence of black faculty. Some even challenged the black professor’s credentials or sought white faculty validation of information presented (Carter-Obayuwana, 1995).

The harsh and constant stresses and strains thrust upon African American women in higher education have been compounded by the multiple roles and responsibilities they are expected to shoulder. The “*double whammy*” of race and gender created problems on both personal and professional levels (Carter-Obayuwana, 1995).

The black women’s experience through the eyes and voices of the 11 participants interviewed for the study on African American experiences in health related and non-health related disciplines, envisioned it to be the same today as it was in the fifties, sixties and seventies. Sealey-Ruiz (2007) questioned whether black women made gains in academia and career choices.

It is noted that black women enter college with the same if not greater stressors than the African American male. The images of African American women are prescribed and controlled by sources internal and external to the black community. They are negotiated by various entities including work, family, and church. “African American women are simultaneous essential for society’s survival because as they stand at the

margins of society by not belonging, its boundaries emphasize the significance of belonging” (Harley, 2008, pp 23-24).

As the persistence of African American graduate students contribute to a diverse campus, the ways in which they navigate the culture of higher education is critical for those wanting to understand how to increase the likelihood of success for all students of higher education. Simply, stated, African Americans contribute to diversity, and diversity contributes to student success. The success of African Americans then should be an important factor for everyone in higher education working toward the success of all students (Patterson, 2006).

The United States of America has long been recognized as a country composed of multiple ethnicities and cultures. However, throughout history the U.S. has struggled with issues of discrimination and racial equality for minorities, including African Americans. Since the emancipation of the slaves by President Lincoln, blacks have experienced Jim Crow laws and sharecroppers endured dehumanizing dictates of the south regarding housing and ownership of property and land. Discrimination in the Armed Services occurred as evidenced by the Tuskegee Airman experience in which African American men began flight training school. These African American men were expected to fail but became champions of integration (Green, 2008). Education has also been an area of discrimination for blacks in the U.S. The laws of “separate but equal” were practiced in the southern states until *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruled that education of all U.S. citizens had the right to attend the same schools. Although *Brown vs. Board of Education* guarantees blacks and all U.S. citizens’ equal rights to an education, disparities continued to exist between blacks and whites in both secondary and post-secondary graduation

rates. “Due to a negative stigma that has been established about African Americans, many live their entire lives trying to refute humiliating, degrading, and offensive racial images and stereotypes” (Yeakey & Bennett, 1990, p.12).

These perpetuated images have caused frustration as well as aggression in many African Americans. These frustrations and aggressions have had an effect on their consciousness, especially when the drive towards achievement and accomplishment to which African American professionals inspires, is overwhelmed and distorted by the social reality the frustration conceals (Yeakey and Johnson, 1979; Green, 2008).

Given the presumed connection between identity development and academic outcomes for African Americans, an important variable that may be related to academic achievements for African Americans is racial identity (Awad, 2007). Racial identity is crucial because racial identity seems to guide individuals’ feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and level of investment in his or her racial groups’ cultural patterns (Helms, 1996; Sanchez & Carter, 2005) as well as other aspects of his or her identity (Carter, 1995; Carter & Pieterse, 2005; Sanchez & Carter, 2005).

Hulme (1964) stated “me, myself, and I, Who am I? How can I know myself if I and myself are the same”? As curious as we may be about our own identity, we are unable to find out who we are. We can look into ourselves, through the mirror or our own eyes, only to find this may be of little value. Looking into ourselves is like peeling an onion, we remove layer after layer never reaching the core. Whenever a person attempts to know him/herself without the help of others, he/she is likely to encounter a loss of perspective (p 1-4).

Hulme (1964) believed people could know themselves only in terms of knowing others. In fact, it is by knowing others that people develop into the persons they are. If it is through significant relationships that people develop into persons, it is also through these same relationships, that people learn to know who they are, that they develop self-image.

Another variable that has received a significant amount of attention in the study of African Americans academic performance and outcomes is self-esteem. Self-image like self-esteem is essential for psychological survival. It is an emotional *sine qua non* without some measure of self-worth, life can be enormously painful, with many basic needs going unmet (Awad, 2007). Self-esteem is born, rooted, and nurtured by the families individuals come from. People with high self-esteem learn to accept themselves when they know that others have accepted them for who they are (Hopson & Hopson, 1990).

One of the main factors differentiating humans from other species is the awareness of self: the ability to form an identity and then attach a value to it, a person has the capacity to define who one is and then decide if they like their identity or not. “The problem with self-esteem is human capacity for judgment” (McKay & Fanning, 1987 p1). Another important variable is academic self-concept; a set of attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs held by the students about their academic skills and performance (Awad, 2007; Lent, Brown & Gore, 1997).

Spirituality among African American college students, provide incredible resolve when facing adversity. Spirituality provides a sense of purpose, helping African

Americans stay on the right path as far as accomplishing the goal of graduating college (Riggins, McNeal, & Herndon, 2008).

The black church has been one of the greatest sources of support in African Americans in continuing to struggle to survive in higher learning institutions. Perhaps the most important contribution of the church to the African American community has been to foster a deep spirituality and a firm belief in God. This belief has given African Americans a sense of hope against the relentless challenges faced.” Even in the worst of times, African Americans remain optimistic that eventually we *will* triumph.” (Hopson & Hopson, 1990 p. 195). Martin Luther King Jr., spoke with that optimism when he said, “I’ve been to the mountain top, and I’ve seen the Promised Land. We as a people will get to the Promised Land.” (Hopson & Hopson, 1990 p. 195). Acknowledging the potential influence and interactions of race and religion/spirituality at both the societal and individual level can facilitate and improve the understanding of African American college students’ identity development (Hollinger & Smith, 2002; Miller, Fleming, & Brown-Anderson, 1998; Sanchez & Carter, 2005).

Related Research

Reviews of studies on African Americans written by Moore (2007) established that there is a small but interesting body of work. Several themes were identified to include: (1) Too few African American professors; (2) Race-based stereotypes from faculty; (3) Culture of low expectations; (4) Not enough cross-racial conversations; (5) Lack of space/funds for African American students and multicultural organizations and (6) Lackluster academic advising for minorities. Studies showed that

African Americans represented 12% of the student population pursuing higher education, and are shedding light on a much understudied topic. Exploratory studies, in which it is wise to include research conducted on the success and failure of African Americans in higher education, but for purposes of this study, the focus was on the African American professionals and their experiences in achieving completion of a professional degree. Qualitative studies contribute greatly to understanding the factors that contribute to an understanding of African Americans' experiences when pursuing higher education.

Increasingly African Americans are studied in their own right, to uncover the unique aspects of their educational experiences. Moore (2007) concluded with the findings of this study resulted in the interjection of the NAACP. African American students have historically felt that the school they attended at the University of Missouri Kansas City (UMKC) is an unwelcoming institution. The goal of the NAACP was to break down the barriers and perceptions to make the university more user-friendly and diversified.

Another qualitative study built on Yoder's (1996) previous study focused on confirming his earlier findings that discovered new perceived barriers for ethnically diverse students in nursing programs, and determined teaching strategies to facilitate managing these barriers (Amaro, Abriam-Yago, and Yoder, 2006). Yoder identified four categories or themes of student needs. The categories were: (1) Personal= self-motivation and determination, (2) Academic= the importance of African American teachers, (3) Language= peer support, and (4) Cultural= ethnic nursing student associations. The findings were consistent with Yoder (1996) which more clearly addressed the students'

barriers and expanded upon the strategies for coping with these barriers (Amaro, Abriam-Yago, and Yoder, 2006).

Jones (1992) pointed out that the nursing profession and in particular nursing education continue to face serious problems during the nursing shortage. The author believed this would persist for several reasons. First, it included all types of nurses in all parts of the country and in all settings. Second, approximately 78% is the current labor force participation rate for nurses, thereby making the number of unemployed nurses too small to entice back into the labor force. Third, the demand for nursing care has increased because of the restructuring of health care financing, increased acuity levels, the aging populations with more chronic health problems requiring ongoing nursing care, and the rapidly increasing demand for nurses outside the hospital setting.

Jones (1992) stated studies of four-year universities and colleges and two-year community colleges had revealed an alarming gap between the numbers of white and black students who complete their degree requirements within a reasonable amount of time. In fact, Jones noted 63% of black students enrolled in four-year universities dropped out. These figures caused alarm on poor persistence of black students. The author believed this impacted efforts to increase and retain the number of baccalaureate-prepared black nurses.

African American women have been participants in higher education for more than a century. However, African American women remain underrepresented among the faculty ranks for counselor education programs. African American female faculty, account for only 2.5% in the United States (Bradley, 2005, Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Counselor education programs like other higher education health related fields, lack

representation of African American faculty (Bradley, 2005). African American females in general and African American educators in particular, have emerged from what Hudson-Weems (1989, and Bradley, 2005) term a tripartite form of oppression, racism, classism, and sexism. These are critical times for African American faculty in general and African American female in particular. Fewer tenured positions are filled after retirement with many eliminated (Aguirre, 2000; Gregory, 1997; Turner & Myers, 2000, & Bradley, 2005).

Despite these barriers, African American women faculty achieved tenure with promotions and accomplished great strides in the universities (Gregory, 1997, & Bradley, 2005). As counselor education programs struggled to diversify their faculty. These programs should be cognizant of the interlocking effects of race, gender and career implications for African American women educators (Bradley, 2005).

Summary

The previous studies indicate the need for further investigations on increasing more effective strategies that draw on the current populations in which they wish to study. If the focus is on recruitment, retention, and program diversity for ethnic/multicultural populations, then the sample study should include ethnic and multicultural populations more than the majority population. In future studies, tools used to measure cultural awareness, curriculum diversity, and campus climate should be carefully constructed to take into account students' culture, heritage, economic status, financial status, and other factors that might limit their ability to participate in higher education.

Finally, models that accurately reflect the growth of minority participation should be further investigated, along with programs already in place such as campus diversity centers. Considerations on whether these centers should stay or go prompts room for further study.

Educators are faced with many challenges to design, implement, and deliver more diverse teaching methods when interacting with the more diverse populations entering into higher education. The challenges, however, do not stop once a more diverse model is adopted. It is important to continue to look at the existing system to see if it is adequate to recruit and retain the minority and women faculty.

Individuals' key to improving the educational system for everyone should consider the challenges, but in light of current trends and available research more needs to be done to strengthen models and measures already in place, or design new and more effective models. The importance of multicultural literature in school curricula is crucial to the educational system and society, however with the declining number of minorities in the teaching profession it raises concerns about how important and beneficial minorities are to the educational systems.

Efforts to recruit and retain minorities are failing. Many questions and recommendations have been presented. The first question is: can cultural diversity be assessed and measured accurately with administrators, faculty, and students. Of particular concern is acquiring reliable and valid tools. A second question derived from the literature review is who should teach ethnic and multicultural curriculum. A consideration is whether it is fair and appropriate to mandate minority faculty to teach multicultural curriculum because they are minority. A third question is what are the goals

of educational institutions concerning culture in their curricula. A consideration is whether the goals are broad and examine gender disparities and other ethnic culture issues. Finally, a fourth question is whether the American Council on Education and the government are doing all it can to implement and develop a more diverse educational system.

Further research must be done on how to effectively educate and recruit educators, implementing ethnic and multicultural curriculum into educational systems, more cost effective programs that work for the system and not against the system and finally an avenue for better assessments and measures of programs, faculty, administrators and students.

This research was conducted using qualitative methods within the Eurocentric and Afrocentric frameworks, which together provided the most useful and appropriate vehicle to explore the participants' experiences. The Eurocentric framework provided understanding of the norms within the Eurocentric model (social learning theory) in particular Self- efficacy, which refers to beliefs about one's capabilities to learn or perform behaviors at designated levels (Bandura, 1986; 1997). Grounded in the larger Eurocentric framework individuals obtain information to appraise their self-efficacy from their actual performances, their experiences, the persuasions they receive from others, and their physiological reactions. Self- efficacy beliefs influence choice, effort, persistence resilience, and most importantly achievement (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1995). The Afrocentric framework guided the understanding of cultural dynamics such as *truth* and *justice* as understood within the Afrocentric model (social change theory) for the purpose of this study. The concepts of community were also understood in light of the

Afrocentric principles that value shared experiences, culture, and the history in the formation of communities (Okafor, 2002; Patterson, 2006).

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

This chapter expanded on the use of qualitative methodology and procedures in particularly the critical study of the African American participants. This study sought to discover how African Americans develop thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that enhanced the likelihood of success in health related and non-health related post-secondary education. There were four major components of qualitative research used in this study: design and methodology, ethical considerations, data collection and data quality methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It was necessary to approach qualitative research using the Afrocentric framework and the Eurocentric framework with the understanding that different assumptions prevail in the development of qualitative inquiry than in quantitative study (Whittmore, Chase & Mandle, 2001). Table 5 charts the 21 African American participants' by their ethnicity, degrees, and genders.

Table 5: Study of Participants by their Ethnicity, Degrees, and Gender

Ethnicity:	
African Americans	21
Degrees:	
Bachelors	12
Masters	8
Doctorate	1
Gender:	
Male	10
Female	11

Participants

Participants were solicited by one researcher from their perspective professions and networks of health related and non-health related. Twenty-one African American professionals of diverse backgrounds were selected by invitation to participate in the study. Networking and snowball techniques were used to generate referrals from the initial participants. Of the 21 African American participants, 10 were male and 11 were females. The participants' professions were:

- four participants held masters degrees in Mental Health Counseling
- one held a masters degree in nursing
- two held Bachelor's degrees in nursing
- one participants was enrolled in a Master's of Science nursing program
- one held a bachelors in Business Management
- three held degrees in Religious studies a Bachelors a Masters and a Doctorate
- two held Masters in Education
- one held a Bachelors in Criminal Justice and Psychology
- one held a Bachelors in Dental Hygiene
- one held a Bachelors in Early Childhood Education
- one held a Bachelors in Culinary Arts
- one held a Bachelors in Health Education and Community Safety
- one held a Juries Doctorate degree in law and;
- one held a Bachelors in Electrical Engineering

The participants earned degrees from state and private universities. The participants stated having been in practice ranging from two to thirty-eight years since

earning their degrees. Participants ranged in age from 23 to 79 years of age. Seventeen of the twenty-one participants attended college as non-traditional students.

The interview protocol used in this study can be found in appendix K and appendix L. A range of questions were asked regarding demographic data and opinions about their experiences while attending college.

Ethical Considerations

Written permission to conduct this study was extended from prior approval of a pilot study in from the researchers' college Institutional Review Board. Prior to the beginning of the interviews, participants were notified that the interviews would be audio taped and transcribed. The purpose of the study was reviewed and the participants were allowed to ask any questions they may have had related to the study purpose, data collection procedure, and use of data. It was explained that the audiotapes would be destroyed following transcription and participants' comments would be strictly confidential with their identities remaining anonymous. Written consent was obtained from each participant and each participant was given a written copy of the purpose, data collection procedure, and use of data. Only the initials of each participant were used to identify each interview session. The interviews were conducted in a mutually agreed upon private location. Participants were given permission to decline discussions of any issue deemed too sensitive and/or to end the interview at any point at the participants' request.

Design and Methodology

A phenomenological qualitative design using semi-structured interview questions and survey was selected as the most appropriate methods to collect the descriptive data concerning the experiences of African Americans in post-secondary education in health related and non-health related disciplines. The interview questions and survey were designed by the researcher and structured to allow participants to talk freely about their college experiences. Because the researcher is an African American, bracketing during questioning was used to control for researcher bias related to the researcher's own personal experiences. Qualitative researchers are usually the filter through which all data are processed. If their opinion takes precedence over what their data suggests, they are relaxing the standards of objectivity in favor of their subjective opinions (Bryant, 2004).

Data Collection

The researcher conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. The questions explored the participants' perceptions of their college educational experiences. Information was elicited regarding specific feelings about college experiences, factors that empowered participants, the effects of educational experiences on career success, and the ramifications for other African American students' and faculty. The interviews lasted from about 45 minutes to 2 hours. Each interview was audio taped and then transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were reviewed by the participants to ensure accuracy. The transcripts were examined for trends by the researcher and peer reviewer and independently coded. The researcher then categorized the identified trends into common themes. Initially, the researcher identified approximately ten to fifteen themes. The common themes were then analyzed further to determine the degree of frequency of repetition throughout the transcripts as well as

overlapping concepts or key phrases. Eight themes were identified with a level of saturation by the researcher.

Data Quality Methods

The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and researcher and sent electronically to the researcher. Each transcript was copied into NVivo 8 software by the researcher for tracking and accountability of each interview. The researcher reviewed each of the twenty-one transcripts and highlighted meaningful segments using NVivo 8 coding format, member check by participants to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts, peer review by peers within the same profession or discipline to read through material and provide feedback and audit trail describing the process of the research steps taken from the start of the research until the findings of the research conducted by the dissertation committee.

Summary

The research included individual interviews with twenty-one self-identified African Americans who pursued higher education in public and private institutions within the United States. The use of qualitative methodology within an Afrocentric and Eurocentric framework provided the most useful tools for exploring the experiences of the African American participants. The specific research design and methodology highlighted and demonstrated the validity of information from the participants to elaborate on their experiences (Patterson, 2006). Specific questions about the African American participants' experiences during their post-secondary education were asked with confidentiality and their anonymous identities maintained at all times. Data collection and data quality methods were implemented in ways that did not disturb the

integrity of the study. In essence, this study called into question the reasons why the understanding of African American experiences in post-secondary education has not been sought before and now here it is to be used to enhance the educational experience for African American college students during a time when multiculturalism or diversity seems to be a top priority for many colleges and universities across the country (Nyquist, 2002).

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction

In chapter four the findings and results of the study are presented to identify, describe and accentuate how the participants' experiences provided the foundation for theme development. African American struggles and experiences in health related and non-health related disciplines are a study rooted and grounded in qualitative methodology. From a cultural perspective, it tells the many life lessons, truths, false pretences, struggles, and triumphs of the twenty-one participants interviewed for this study. It portrays the essence of their whole being as they take the reader through their courageous journeys toward growth and development for themselves as they pursued higher education.

Twenty-one African American participants took part in a general survey, which asked their gender, ages, and personal status. Survey questions addressed the participants' influential factors in their decisions to pursue higher education. Charted in Figure 7 are people of influence, the levels of education for the participants' family members, how the participants' financial obligations were met, what social economic status represents themselves and family, and their academic achievement status while in college. The age ranges were between 23-79. Participants identified a variety of influences.

Identification of Participants Survey

Figure 7: Demographic Data Of Participants

Ages of Participants:

- 23-79

Genders:

- Males = 10
- Females = 11

Personal Status of Participants:

- Married = 7
- Single = 7
- Divorced = 4
- Widowed = 2
- Other = 1

The participants stated these people as sources of influence while they were in college.

- Aunts
- Brother
- Father,
- Foster mother
- Friends,
- Grandfather
- Grandmother

- Mother

- Orthodontist

- Pastor/Minister

- Self

- Sister

- Significant other

- Stepfather,

- Teacher

Levels of Education Scale:

- Not a High School Graduate = 1

- High School Graduate = 2

- Post High School Degree/Certificate = 3

- Some College = 4

- Associate Degree = 5

- Bachelors Degree = 6

- Masters Degree = 7

- Doctorate Degree = 8

- Military Training = 9
- Other = 10

The participants stated these sources as ways their financial obligations were met while in college.

- Family
- Grants
- Job
- Loans
- Scholarships
- Other

Social Economic Status of participants and family while in college

- Low = 2
- Below Average = 1
- Average = 17
- Above Average = 1

Academic Achievement Status of participants while in college

- Excellent = 3
- Above Average = 14

- Average = 4
- Below Average = 0
- Failing = 0

Factors that influenced Higher Education for participants

- Desire for Knowledge
- Desire for higher Income
- Family
- Church/Community Affiliations
- Other

Figure 8, the scale of influence ranging from 1-5 represents how the participants' best described the people and factors that influenced their decision to pursue higher education. Using Figure 8, participants rated how these people influenced their decision to pursue higher education.

Figure 8: Scale of Influence

1 = No Influence

2 = Little Influence

3 = Some Influence

4 = Strong Influence

5 = Major Influence

	1	2	3	4	5
	None	Little	Some	Strong	Major
Mother	1	3	1	2	14
Father	10	3	5	2	1
Sister	7	4	3	2	5
Brother	8	2	6	1	4
Grandmother	10	2	2	1	6
Grandfather	12	1	1	0	7
Aunt (s)	8	4	3	2	4
Uncle (s)	14	2	1	2	2
Teacher	9	2	2	5	3
Pastor/Minister	5	1	4	2	9
Friends	4	1	3	6	7
Significant Other	10	0	5	2	4
Self	0	0	1	0	20
Other:					
Foster Mother	0	0	0	0	1
Stepfather	0	0	0	0	1
Orthodontist	0	0	0	0	1

The participants rated these factors from major to no influence in this order respectively. With desire for knowledge at 18 and other reasons a 3.

1 2 3 4 5

	None	Little	Some	Strong	Major
● Desire for knowledge	1	1	1	0	18
● Desire to mentor and make a difference to and for other African Americans	0	1	2	2	16
● Family	0	0	3	5	13
● Economic status	0	2	2	3	14
● Desire for higher income	1	1	0	6	13
● Church affiliations	2	4	7	1	7
● Community affiliations	2	3	5	5	6
● Other	18	0	0	0	3

Using figure 7, the participants stated to the best of their knowledge the highest levels of education for each category.

Levels of Education:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mother	6	8	1	1	0	2	2	1	2	0
Father	10	5	1	4	1	0	0	0	3	0
Grandmother	14	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grandfather	16	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Sister	2	2	7	0	0	1	7	2	0	0
Brother	3	7	2	4	0	3	1	1	0	0
Aunt	8	6	0	1	0	2	4	0	0	0

Uncle	14	3	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
Self	0	0	0	0	0	12	8	1	6	4

The participants stated these sources as ways their financial obligations were met:

- Jobs
- Family
- Grants
- Scholarships
- Loans
- Church support
- Military support
- Fraternity support

Using Figure 7 the economic status of the participants and their families were:

- Low = 2
- Below Average = 1
- Average = 17
- Above Average = 1

When participants were asked which represents your academic achievements

while in college? They were descriptive as charted in Figure 7.

- Excellent = 4
- Above Average = 14
- Average = 3
- Below Average = 0
- Failing = 0

Summary

The majority (20) of the African American participants rated themselves and (14) rated their mothers as having the most influence on their decisions to pursue higher education. The majority of the participants (18) stated their desire for knowledge and (3) stated other as a major influence in their decision to pursue post-secondary education. Other influences included full scholarship, military assistance, and church assistance. When asked which represents the highest levels of education for yourself and family, the participants stated:

- 12 had Bachelors
- 8 had Masters and
- 1 had a Doctorate degree

Family:

- Mother: 2 stated having a masters and 1 stated having a Doctorate
- Sister: 7 stated having masters and 2 stated having a Doctorate
- Grandfather: 1 stated having masters
- Brother: 1 stated having a Doctorate
- Aunt: 4 stated having masters and 2 stated having bachelors
- Uncle: 1 stated having masters

The 21 African American participants stated their financial obligations were met by these sources: loans, grants, scholarships, family, jobs, church, military, and fraternity.

When asked which represents the economic status of yourself and family while you were in college? In addition, when participants were asked which represents your academic achievements while in college?

- 2 participants stated low economic status
- 1 participant stated below average economic status
- 17 participants stated average economic status
- 1 participant stated above average economic status
- 4 participants stated excellent academic achievements
- 14 participants stated above average academic achievements
- 3 participants stated average academic achievements

Collectively, the responses from the participants, who as a group were underrepresented in higher education, presented certain themes described in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Identification and Summary of Participants Themes and Subthemes

Racism and Discrimination:

- Peer Relations
- Intimidation from students'
- Intimidation from faculty
- Stereotyping/Labeling
- Race Identity

Support Systems:

- Financial/Economic Status
- Student Groups
- Family
- Minister/Friends
- Faculty

Minority Faculty Mentors

- Lack of mentors
- Positive Impact
- Negative Impact
- Students

Attitudes and Self-Esteem:

- Commitment
- Life changing experiences
- Desire to learn more
- Family
- Academic Success
- Empowerment
- Encouragement
- Determination

Isolation and Segregation:

- Barriers
- Challenges
- Feeling Isolated

Spirituality:

- Purpose
- Motivation
- Dreams and Goals
- Drive and Ambition

Specific Feelings:

- Pride
- Hopeful
- Denial
- Self-Respect
- Self-Protection
- Lack of Pride
- Lack of Self-Respect
- Lack of Knowledge
- Motivators

Careers:

- Life Choices
- Successes
- Positive Outcomes
- Negative Outcomes

The researcher grouped the meaningful segments and labeled them according to themes. Eight themes were identified during the study, the themes are: (1) Racism and Discrimination; (2) Support Systems; (3) Minority Faculty Mentors; (4) Attitudes and Self-Esteem; (5) Isolation and Segregation; (6) Spirituality; (7) Specific Feelings; and (8) Careers.

Racism and Discrimination

The feelings of racism was consistent and in varying subdivisions throughout the interviews, to include stereotyping, labeling, intimidation from students and faculty, and

peer relations. The possible negative encounters experienced by Caucasians with other minorities perhaps clouded their views in connection to all minorities who seek to further their education.

The following quotes demonstrate that the participants typically noted that they were being labeled or stereotyped due to these previous encounters.

“Oh my gosh they live in North Omaha, there must be violence.”

“You know I didn’t get the scholarship just because I’m African American, I got the scholarship because there was some potential seen in me just like any other scholarship.”

“I only had one experience where I’ve felt like I was kind of discriminated against and it was one time after I had to do a speech on an issue affecting basically my culture. The teacher at the end of class he pulled me to the side. He was a white teacher of course and he said _____ it’s not likely that you or I he tried to include himself, will see six figures in our lifetime. In addition, I do not know where he came on with that comment or why he said that but he said that to me and I am thinking like what does this even have to do with my speech after the end of the class. So I stopped him dead in his tracks, and this is my pro-active attitude and this goes back into me not allowing anybody to stop me from achieving my goals. And I said it’s not likely that you would make six figures, but I’m going to see six figures in my lifetime and so I just walked away.”

“Being an African American and in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Association and 23 years old in _____. Was a good old boys club and the only reason minorities got in there was because of the United States government who made them do that because you know you weren’t welcome. Most minorities in the program already knew how the Caucasians felt about us so we were determined to go through all four years despite their best efforts to get rid of us all.”

“It didn’t really hit me until I graduated from nursing school at my master’s level. Again I was the only African American and one Hispanic and one male, so it’s always been the minorities are the minority pursuing an education it’s always been that way.”

“When I look back retrospectively a lot of my experiences should have been positive but unfortunately they weren’t. They were negative. There is a lot of racial tension. Every day that I went to the classroom there would be little notes there for me, ‘Nigger’s aren’t smart enough to be in college, let alone study

psychology, go back to your coon box nigger' these are negative things, they would really hurt me."

"I knew that they didn't want you. Our first year they gave the minorities the dirtiest jobs that they could find hoping that they would quit and then leave. And then as time went on my second, third and fourth year it got easier because of most minorities in the program already knew how they were thinking and sometimes as a group we would get together and just have a chuckle about it and how we made the Caucasians mad because they couldn't kick us out."

"I think if it's there it is always there and it comes to the surface once it's confronted. I think it was there. You just take it and like they're not going to get the experience that I'm going to get. I think a lot of times it was already there, it just got to the surface."

The following quotes demonstrate feelings of faculty intimidation, due to their unrealistic expectations.

"Like I said nothing was blatant, but it was always that feeling that you're not smart. I think that some of the instructors, the older Caucasian instructors in particular, I think they had that expectation too." "It was always that you felt like you had to try much harder. You had to work that much harder due to instructors expecting you to work harder because you had to."

"It's almost reverse racism. I hate to bring race into it but it's like you don't feel like they are going to help. You don't know that they are not going to help. You don't know that and you don't know if it is something that they are putting out or is it something we are putting out?"

"In some cases it felt like it was harder because of being African American and feeling like sometimes the teachers didn't understand or didn't give as much to make sure that you understand everything."

"I can remember one male professor who made negative comments about students and schools located where a great majority of minorities lived. I respectfully let him know that I was offended by his opinion."

"I can recall a male professor stating that I should think about dropping out of his class after failing his first test. He insinuated that I probably would not be able to pass the class."

"When an instructor of mine asked me why I was in her class and she wasn't here to baby sit anyone because I was always asking questions or asking her could she repeat what she had just said, I had to stop and think why am I here. What do I

really want out of this class? And do I belong here? I told myself yes I do belong here and this class was all about self- improvement or my own personal growth and who was she to put me down or make me feel less of a person. So I just said I'd like to thank you for teaching this class and sharing with us your knowledge.”
“I thought I was being challenged and I thought he felt because he had a Ph.D. that his word was law, but what I tried to get him to understand was that you're telling me something you read about and I'm telling you something about what I've lived with that I saw with the naked eye. And I said; what the difference of what you're telling me and what I see is the difference between a dream and a vision. A dream is something your thinking, but a vision is something you see yourself doing.”

“Yes it kind of made me feel like I was inferior because my instructor was a white person, and then the person that they picked was white, but it made me feel inferior and frustrated at the same time.”

“I would say that African Americans need to ask questions and again go back to Brown vs. Board of Education and when I said that integration is an illusion for segregation.....while we are all in the same school, it's an integrated school, but teachers are still teaching to the white audience.”

“I had a teacher who taught creative arts, and she gave me my first bad grade which shocked me because I was an honor roll student, athlete and student activist. She told me that I couldn't write and I should change my dream of wanting to be a lawyer.”

The following quotes demonstrate peer intimidation and peer relations.

“Again, African American students are intimidated by other white students if they raise their hands, because those students will think that they're dumb and I think that those African American students should ask those questions anyway and not be intimidated by their white colleagues.”

“Or feelings of not being picked, to partner up with someone, and when you get picked you're like; oh they picked me and then come the other questions. Are they picking me because they truly like me? That never goes away.”

“When I was studying in the library on campus and some students walked in and said; if my great grandmother can do this, then who am I to complain because you know they say your mind goes after 40.”

“We had to do group projects. Some people didn't want to do projects with me, but you know people, and they tend to stick with their kind.”

“My thoughts were I don’t need this. I’m going to drop out, they don’t like me, and they don’t want me here.”

“Like I said there was nothing blatant, but as for lunch time, like lunch at clinical and you find yourself sitting at one table and everyone necessarily didn’t get the invite. So do you just sit there even though they didn’t invite you and everybody else is friends and they’re talking about what they’re going to do together and you feel left out, and you don’t know, am I being left out because I’m older or am I being left out because I’m African American?”

The following quotes demonstrate feelings of racial identity as experienced by the participants.

“A lot of things I accomplished, I was able to do it through my religious affiliations from a minority historical perspective.”

“My personality is I’m going to care for people, but also a lot of times there is such a need, ask any nurse, when you walk in a room, it’s like where’s my nurse? How many people have gotten that? The perception is that they aren’t allotted for African American nurses. There’s a great need and lucky for me this is what I really felt there was a need for. Being in school, like I said, there were a lot of times it got hard. It really got hard.”

“I found it very interesting recently learning about programs at schools that are focused for minorities and how important it is to look like who you are trying to pursue.....I clearly saw it when I learned about different cultures and I teach culture education in my current role. But to see how that also affects who comes to your school, who’s interested in your school, who sees opportunities in the world through your eyes, by you being a representation somewhat of what can be.”

Participants expressed in their quotes discrimination and racism as a form of human deception. It is the refusal to acknowledge the existence of a human being who is different from the norm. In addition, racism is a serious form of mental deception that robs an individual of their true existence. Participants consistently pointed out racism as a much deeper consequence because it affects the moral fabric of one’s psychological make-up, leaving an individual emotionally and spiritually paralyzed.

Support systems

Consistent with Moore's (2007) study of the barriers and perceptions of African Americans pursuing higher education at the University of Missouri Kansas City, several themes were identified in close relation to the themes identified in this study as needing to be broken down to make universities more user friendly.

Participants typically noted that their support systems were their families. Many stated their children, financial situations, ministers, and economic status were the driving factors behind them deciding to continue pursuing their undergraduate or graduate degrees. Support systems as defined by the participants consisted of anyone who gave of their time, wisdom, guidance, faith, and loyalty to assist them throughout their educational pursuit.

The following quotes demonstrate the importance of family throughout African American participants' pursuit of higher education.

"Because I was a single parent and domestic abuse survivor, I wanted to show and instill in them that no matter what your circumstances and situations might be, you can rise above them and accomplish your goals."

"Because of my loving and caring mother, I have the drive and ambition to strive for the best and never settle for less because I don't have to. I was taught that the sky's the limit; never say you can't when you can."

"I would say motivation from my mom; I would say motivation from my son so that's what really empowered me to really get my Bachelor's degree."

"My family; especially my grandchildren because I wanted to set the example and standard for them to let them know they could do anything they set their mind to do no matter how young or old they are. You know I can't leave out my husband whose by my side no matter what I do or say he is there anyway and that's really what love is all about."

“My foster mom; she was just a great inspiration to me because she always believed in me. She always confirmed my endeavors throughout the educational area or in anything that I pursued throughout my life she was just always there as a great encourager and an inspiration for me and everybody.”

“My mom was strong in forming my sense of character. Her unwavering strength and sense of spirituality, which helped me realize that, that was my strength and that was so important in my life and so I was able to focus on my education. My mother always said; you can do anything you set your mind to if you put God first, because he is your higher power.”

The following quotes demonstrate the importance of the minister/pastor in African Americans pursuit for higher education.

“Definitely my pastor, being able to have someone readily available to talk to about all my educational and spiritual endeavors was very important to me. He never judged me, but always willing to listen and encourage me.”

“My pastor because he always talked about the importance of bettering yourself of getting an education. He just always talked positive and gave motivational speeches that I really clung on to because I didn’t have a father in my life so he was like a father figure for me.”

The following quotes demonstrate that despite the lack of minority educators there are faculty in support of African Americans pursuing higher education.

“There are some teachers that are just like you know; go for it you can do it in spite of all the difficulties, you know that you can continue and you can make it.”

“Because of your life experiences and your experiences in working that makes you even more knowledgeable than some of the students coming in straight from high school and go to college and start you know pursuing their careers.”

“I know she had expectations of the African American students. It was I expect you guys to do better because you have to and I could definitely appreciate it, but I know there were other students who not having an appreciation for that, because she didn’t let anyone slide by any means, but why is she so hard on me, why isn’t she doing this to anyone else? I took it upon myself and well you are going to have to. This is the reality of the situation.”

The following quotes demonstrate feelings of financial/economic status and student groups as noted by the participants.

“ I think that there are some financial ramifications maybe for others that can't afford to work on the Master's level, but some may have the ability or skills to and the mentality, the attitude, the academic ability to go on for the Master's, but I think that money for one thing is a factor.”

“In graduate school you had to work a lot more in groups and working with others that was good. Being around different minds intellectually you know that helped me to expand you know my thinking that pushed me much farther you know and challenged my thinking and sharpened my mind intellectually.”

“I say we because we had this little group and we did stick together and we started helping each other because I think if we had gone to the instructors together we would have gotten help.”

“Because you have a small minority base more than likely there's not a lot of support there on that campus.”

“It wasn't because I didn't want to go to college it was just because I didn't have the tools and I didn't know about all the financial stuff like grants and scholarships and things like that could help me. If I would've had that support base and then been knowledgeable on the things that I needed to be knowledgeable on this would have certainly helped me a lot.”

Many African Americans lack positive visual images of successful African American mentors therefore, leaving them with no one to connect with as a support system. African Americans need a strong support system and a safe place where they can talk about their psychosocial stressors in an Afro centric manner as evidenced by their previous quotes.

Consistent with findings of previous research, the participants clearly addressed their experiences and perceptions of pursuing higher education within the health and non-health related disciplines and strategies used to deal with these experiences.

Minority Faculty Mentors:

The lack of other minorities was a consistent theme throughout the interviews, including both a lack of minority peers and minority faculty. The following quotes demonstrate the prevalence of this theme.

“I have noticed how few minorities are pursuing higher education.”

“I definitely noticed people didn’t look like me.”

“There were no differences. Mostly just Caucasian women.”

“I was the only male African American student in their program.”

“In the majority of my classes I would be the only black person in class.”

“There is a shared bond between us as educators. We understand what it took for us to get here. We can relate to often times being the only “one” in class, meetings as well as at your school.”

The following quotes demonstrate the degree of isolation experienced by the participants due to a lack of peer minorities. Gardner (2005) reported similar finding related to insensitivity on the part of other students and its effect on the success of foreign-born nursing students.

“It didn’t affect my education, but there were times when I was struggling with a subject and it would have been a lot easier to be able to get with some other students to study with them...those first couple of years and not feeling that I had that avenue open to me that was really hard.”

“I was always the only minority in the classroom. A majority of the time I felt isolated from the group.”

“There were only two African Americans in my class, everybody was so negative, and told me I should change my major into something else because it would be hard for me to get a job.”

“I felt like I was a token again because I looked all around and I saw that I was the only black and I just felt like I was a showboat to say look what we got. I

“didn’t really feel like I was an asset or that I was considered part of the team so that I could show them, so they could say look what we have.”

“I can remember wishing I had someone else in class to talk to. It was frustrating to realize that no one else could relate.”

“Not so much not feeling welcome, but just out of place a lot of times and it just makes me try that much harder, like I had every right to be here. I never felt anything blatant, but it was a lot of people who didn’t know how to relate.”

Although participants noted the lack of peer minorities, the lack of minority faculty was one of the factors cited as being a significant factor affecting the educational experience. The following two quotes demonstrate the perceived impact of the lack of minority faculty.

“While we are all in the same schools, they are still teaching to a particular audience.”

“I think instructors teach based on their background and what they have been exposed to...”

Participants did not state that Caucasian, non-African American faculty were a barrier to their educational success. However, participants did state that having African American faculty was a motivating factor for success. For example, participants stated,

“We were so happy to see _____, she was our comfort zone. If anything happened, I’m going to talk to _____. She’ll let us vent and then kick us right back out there and tell us to go do what you have to do.”

“I took some black study courses out at _____ I had a golf teacher who was black who again you know instilled you know the principles of hard work and dedication that if you wanted anything you had to go out and get it.”

“In my undergraduate program, I feel I excelled because my instructor was also an African American woman, by this making the program interesting and she seemed to have gone an extra mile to make sure that we would not only learn the material, but that we knew how to apply it as well.”

“My undergraduate instructor instilled in me confidence and you know made me believe that I could achieve any goal I had or any new goals that I could set for myself. She encouraged me to tap deeper into the uncharted areas to grow personally and educationally.”

There are many role models in the African American community but few in the academic disciplines. There needs to be more doctors, lawyers, social workers, teachers, therapist, nurses, scientist, and medical researchers to start. African American faculty mentors are in demand students have no one to emulate to they are constantly experiencing a form of *double think*, having conflicting ideas at the same time.

These comments from participants are consistent with the findings of Nugent, Childs, Jones & Cook (2004) that “the concepts of mentorship, faculty and institutional awareness can greatly affect the retention of minority students.”

Attitudes and Self-Esteem:

The fourth theme participants identified in this study was attitudes and self-esteem. Participants stated that the greatest motivating factor was having an attitude of perseverance. The participants’ attitude of perseverance and determination are demonstrated in the following excerpts from the transcripts.

“...but that was part of my driving force that I don’t want to fail. That I want to be the best I could be. The fact that I am a minority; I felt I had to prove myself...”

“At school it gets hard. This is something I have to do. There were a lot of times it got hard. It really got hard...I can take instructions, but at times I would get frustrated. I don’t have to be here. You go to clinical; there are no African American nurses. Where are the doctors? Where are we? You look at the campus

and you say we need a little color. You have to be a really big dreamer. I can do that.”

“I understood the rules and regulations of upward mobility and that intrigued me, and everybody around me was saying, “Man you black, you can’t do A, B and C”, but I didn’t listen to that, I said, I can achieve, I can do anything I want to do if I can seize it I can achieve it. I kept telling myself, I can achieve anything I wanted to. You know frustration isn’t necessarily a negative thing and with that in mind it gave me the fuel that I needed.”

“My town, that I’m from in _____ has a population of 350 people and so I’ve always conducted myself as if all 350 of those people were looking over my shoulders, so I’ve always wanted to make sure that I didn’t disappoint these folks and make those folks think any less of me.”

“When graduating plans were being made for class without any input from the African American students, when I inquired why, I was told to my face, “You people are not interested in this stuff.” Later I wrote an article when I was in college in 1999 entitled, “Do African Americans of today face the same challenges. I wrote people do not realize the true impact of their words. I took the challenge seriously. If you do not know what your rights are, how can you fight for them? Education on the inequalities in life and the opportunities created will become my lifelong mission. If I could change one person’s perspective of the old stereotypes on African Americans and women, I have accomplished something in life. Subsequently, my class nominated me the person most likely to change the world.”

“You know I was inspired as a child to want to study law because of the legal case against _____ and _____ and as I listened to the conversations going on around me by my siblings and friends about how the rights of black people were being violated, I wanted to know more about what all these rights were and how I could help black people fight for what was theirs.”

“Before I had my degrees people would say you know you don’t have your degree, or you don’t have your academics, or you don’t have your credentials. So therefore, we can’t hire you for this or we can’t allow you to do that. These were the things that encouraged and motivated me to strive harder and go farther than

the average person, because I knew there were things that I wanted to do in my career.”

“I just knew if I stuck in there that the benefits of graduating college and having a degree would make me more than able to take care of myself and my daughter for the future so I kept my eye constantly on the prize and thinking one day I’m going to graduate college and you know I’m going to get that good job and then I’m going to be financially independent.”

“You know I just loved learning. My family thought I was unusual because I had such a passion for learning, education and that was all because of what we didn’t have this and we didn’t have that and not having the things in life I felt we needed in order for me to get the things in life, I needed an education. School was something I loved and enjoyed, it was a whole new area and arena where for me was someplace where I could go and express myself and exert myself to my fullest ability and I excelled there.”

“I actually met a powerful man at the university. When he first came to the college and gave a speech since both of us were African Americans that was the first time I heard someone that was so articulate. And as an African American very aggressive who really knew what he was talking about and that really encouraged me because as a matter of fact, he let me know that you’re here to get an education, but there’s also another education that you have to get. He was talking about on the historical side more or less our culture as possible, like where black people really have been and where they’re trying to go and where they are today. And it had a real big impact on me so you know I put forth more effort into getting my books and in going to school and really apply myself to learn the things that I really need to learn. And you know as I went on and I took to heart what he told me I would just be in shock at the things he said and told me were so correct.”

Attitudes and self-esteem are like identical twins it is difficult for one to function without the other. They are paramount not just for African American students but all students seeking to obtain a post-secondary degree.

This study revealed that participants perceived academic success as a factor that positively affected their attitude and aided them to achieve success. Participants made the following statements.

“Going for my bachelors to my masters, that bachelors experience motivated me to go for the masters.”

“It shows that our country is getting to the point where as King said “That people are not judged mostly on the color of their skin but on the content of their character” which means that I’ve prepared myself to get an education.”

Success for the participants had many definitions all concurred that success is when they have given everything they had and there was nothing left to give. Success also meant that once they have tried something and pursued it to the end, failure for them became non-exist because they have reached the finish line.

Participants stated that overall their post-secondary educational experiences resulted in increased self-esteem as demonstrated in the following statements.

“Well I would say that they have made me the woman I am today, because I have confidence in myself. Greater self-esteem, and the knowledge, and wisdom that I can and do make a difference.”

“And with that said I was able to turn it around at least cognitively and believe in myself. I noticed a tremendous amount of my self-esteem. I noticed an element in the way that I viewed the world and myself. Actually, the negativity that was displayed on me when I turned it all around and it acted as a boost of fuel. It gave me incentivizes and the energy that I needed to go on and be successful.”

Self-esteem has two key components; first, it is important for boosting one’s confidence and second, it is an essential factor to one rising to the top to accomplish their

goals. Self-esteem occurs when individuals feel good about themselves. This emotional fuel is necessary to achieve personal, professional, and academic success.

The following quotes demonstrate periods when participants felt a lack of self-esteem.

“What made my self-esteem deflate a little was when I was stunned to discover an African American professor grading papers without even reading them. I asked him if this was fair. He told me, of course, it is not, but African American students deserve the opportunity to get a B.A. what they do with it after it’s up to them. Is this not stereotyping us to say were not smart enough to make the grade? This really bothered me. I felt degraded and demoralized. This is one of our own who thought that we couldn’t make it without cheating because that’s really what it was; you might as well have given them the answer key and said I’ll turn my back.”

“You want to know what kept me going toward getting my graduate degree even though it really affected my self-esteem. Whenever I came up against a challenge in my studies, I would remember this; I had a English teacher and I remember her well. She would always bring a newspaper to class and she would read this newspaper and say professor so and so from this study has proven once again that black kids can’t compete with white kids. She would read this story about how black kids’ brains are different from white kids’ brains and there’s no way that they should have had integration because black kids are in back of white kids because they can’t compete. Black folks don’t deserve an education. I took this as a challenge where we’re going to show you that we can compete and we did.”

“Wow a big hit and almost devastating effect on my self-esteem was I can remember my thoughts were all over the place. I was sad. I was hurt, angry, depressed, and mad as hell at a fellow student and so called friend. You see it’s ok to help or assist others but when you need their assistance and they let you know you’re on your own that hurts. I blamed this fellow student because I felt if I wouldn’t have spent so much time and energy into helping her with her comprehensive exams, then I would not have, you know, I would not have been so sloppy and careless and would have had more time to work on my own comps and would have passed on my first try. You see I was an A student and nothing

like this had ever happened to me before. I almost quit school, but I realized that I had come too far to turn around and stop now.”

The lack of self-esteem can have a demoralizing effect on one’s ability to reach and accomplish their dreams and goals. Many African American participants experienced a lack of self-esteem, they conditioned themselves to believe that they were less than or unequal to their peers. This lack of self-esteem affected the participants emotionally, psychologically and spiritually.

Isolation and Segregation

Participants throughout the interviews stated and expressed concern over the ways in which their journey toward higher education was perceived and accepted by others. According to Fleming (1984), Willie (1981), Robertson, Mitra & Delinder (2005), the levels of isolation and alienation experienced by African American students can have a major impact on academic success, and social adjustment. The authors also pointed out students developed weaker personal attachments, weaker ties to faculty, fragile social relationships, and less positive intellectual maturity.

The following quotes demonstrate feelings of isolation and segregation as experienced by the participants.

“Being the only African American, I felt uncomfortable and I felt I didn’t have any support underneath me. I felt like I was by myself in any situation, I don’t know if it was a black or white issue. It was just really hard there was no support. I just thought that everybody would understand me from where I was coming from. That’s what made it difficult for me.”

“I was the only male African American student in their program. I isolated a lot and I had to really do a lot of work on myself in terms of staying positive because no one would talk to me. And it was very complicated going through that process of trying to mingle with people who did not want to be around me. It was a terrible experience in terms of how that program affected me an African American male.”

“Basically, I enjoyed participating in classroom discussion. However, I got the feeling that a majority of my classroom peers felt that I was speaking as an African American not an educator who happens to be black. The majority of the time I felt isolated from the group. I was always the only African American in the classroom.”

“I clearly identified that I was one of few. That you could pick out the people in the entire college even if they weren’t in the nursing program, they were in another Allied health program. That there weren’t a lot of minorities and there weren’t a lot of...I truly don’t remember one minority teacher my entire time there.”

When human beings are segregated, they sometimes suffer from social deprivation. When non-minority students created environments to separate themselves from the African American participants, this allowed them to entertain myths and fallacies that ultimately governed their perception toward the African American students.

Spirituality

Spirituality as defined by the participants consisted of their deeply rooted values, and beliefs about their higher power, and where their strength came from. Participants concurred, that this was the foundation that they relied on to continue their educational pursuit of higher education despite the many challenges they faced. Spirituality as demonstrated by the following quotes, express how the participants view its importance toward their goals of pursuing higher education.

“Spirituality, its been a big force for me. I think you, by you I mean everybody needs to make a psychological decision to tap into self. I don’t think you can achieve if you don’t understand who you are. I’ve met so many people that don’t have a concept of who they are and if you ask the person just off the top of your head what is your purpose, most people can’t even tell you. I know who I am. I know where I came from. I know where I’ve been. And I think I know the conclusion of my destination and I have a simple quote; “If I die today and God, ask me what happened I would say I’ve taken all the talents that you’ve given me and I had none left.”

“I’m a very spiritual person and I married a minister. But all my life my dreams and goals have been about making a difference, but I didn’t know how. Yes I am a wife of a minister, but he has his personal connection with God and I have mine. Yes I am a mother. Yes I am a sister, a friend, and a grandmother who some would say was enough. But for me I felt something was always missing, and I found it when I went back to school. ”Me” without all the roles added on I found out who I really was. And that’s the best gift anyone can get, is finding out who they really are through God and knowledge and how do you get both? Education.”

“Religion kept me away from the streets. My religion consisted of joy and do unto others as you want others to do unto you. If I didn’t have that foundation, who knows what kinds of stupid decisions I would have made as a teenager that would have affected my future.”

“In stressful times, I really just said, ‘Lord help me’. I said ‘help me Jesus’. Be honest because you know it’s something we have to deal with. It’s something that has not gone away. It has not dissipated but finding a creative way to become better and stronger even when you feel you shouldn’t have to be, but finding the strength to do so.”

“Because I was committed more religiously it allowed me to focus on the things that I needed to focus on in my higher pursuit of education.”

Spirituality is the intellectual side of human beings that holds substance. It is where the true essence of life exists and ends for many African Americans. Participants often relied on their spirituality to get them through the many hurdles and obstacles they

faced on a continual basis toward their optimal goal of getting their post-secondary degree.

Specific Feelings

Emotions derive from perceptions, which produce feelings. If one changes the way they think behaviors will follow. This theme validates and amplifies the voices of the unique and specific feelings the participants had in their pursuit of higher education. The following quotes demonstrate the participants feeling of pride, self-respect and the motivators they experienced during their post-secondary educational endeavors.

“Because everybody said I couldn’t and that made me want to do it more to show people that you know I could and I can get a job and go to school and get my degree and then I could go and start working for anybody.”

“Because knowing how people are in general, unfortunately sometimes people are just negative and they don’t want to see you grow and I have learned to overcome that and just do what I want to anyway which in turn has made me a better person.”

“With clients at the hair school it was kind of like a soap opera. But real life, I mean us girls all stuck together. We wanted and I wanted clients to walk out happy with our hairdos’. I’m my own perfectionist so it’s important for my work to reflect me.”

“Some people think that if they instill in you can invest in you that they’re giving up something of themselves that they can never regain. But the mentor’s that I found have put things inside of me. Things that would allow me to then extend their legacy because I’m able to go forward and do those things that they desire to do and take them to another level and then tell other people how to do that based on what they taught me.”

“If I had probably gotten the proper advice and information at the high-school level in preparation to my first graduate degree in correlation to testing, with me being on the high end of school. I believe I would’ve gotten the scholarships and wouldn’t have had to struggle so hard or so much because that was just so stressful and problematic for me.”

“I was probably the only black or African American in a lot of my classes but the things I’ve learned is this to know how to balance things if you’re not careful. When you’re working in group settings as a minority and the Caucasians try to digest the news and you voice your opinion, there sometimes might be a situation where I think you have to maneuver around other peoples ideas of you or your opinions because most people will decide what the larger scope of your opinion is. So if you’re not careful your self-esteem could be affected and you end up not wanting to pursue higher education or become misguided.”

“When I entered Howard University in my freshman year I attended a lecture given by Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. His message consisted of ‘They will tell you that there are too many attorneys. Until every African American knows his/her rights and racism is abolished we will continue to educate’. Now this gave my self-esteem a boost because I believe in doing just that and hearing it confirmed made me see my vision a lot clearer and my dream I felt was a lot closer.”

“I believe the fact that I was one of a few pushed me and was a driving force to be different. Because then the fact in your head you think and I didn’t know exactly at the time, but do people have a perception that we are not smart since there are so few of us? I now know that has partly to do with who they pursue as future students, but I thought about there not being a lot of RN’s that are black.”

“When I felt I needed motivation to continue pursuing my education I would think back to these specific things said to me by my high-school counselor and high school teacher. You’re not college material. You’ll never make it in college so you need to get a trade working as a sharecropper or continue to work where you are as a chef and you don’t belong here. You shouldn’t have citizenship. You don’t even deserve citizenship. You don’t deserve any of this you’re not a part of the American way. You’re just something on the side.”

“You know I had one teacher who always called everybody “Dear Heart” and I thought that was so neat so I asked her why she calls everybody dear heart and

she said because you're all my special children and dear to my heart. You know that made a great impact on me and sort of set the pace."

"In my first class, I remember that class I was so apprehensive and scared actually I really thought I could not do that I thought somehow in my mind I thought college was just on another level and so somehow in my first classes I looked at everybody else in the class and saw them and looked at their responses and said hey is this what I'm competing with? I can do this and so I never stopped."

"Our fraternity's motto is: Help others as you climb as you go up don't just get so high and mighty just look back and bring somebody else with you."

"The feelings of wisdom I would get being around my other classmates, they looked up to me because I was the oldest student in the class and I reminded some of the students of their grandmother, and so often times they just wanted to hear what I had to say on the subjects or on life in general."

"You have to be a really big dreamer. I can do that. Like Barack Obama, do your thing. Take it as far as you can take it. I mean that's a good example. People looked at Jessie Jackson, like run Jessie run. Ok move on. Did anybody really think it was going to happen? But I love Barack Obama's "Audacity of Hope" and I think it's really it in a nutshell. Like you can do different things."

"They don't have to like you. No one has to like you and it's not those people who are going to like you. You're going to go through life like that, that just makes me mad. You can't go through life expecting everyone to like you. You put yourself in a little box. Is that what you want to do for the rest of your life, just be this person? This world is a lot bigger than _____. It's a lot bigger than your little block that you come from. We wouldn't be at war right now if everybody liked each other."

"I think it is the schools responsibility to give you some direction and what you can do with certain degrees, but to have you graduate and they just put you out there not knowing where to go with it or not giving you any type of insights."

"College is very important to us African American males because for one thing you know our population. I mean, we're kind of well we're very low on the overall scale as far as percentages and graduates here in the United States of America and in the nation, so I feel we need to, we as African Americans especially males, improve the percentages and prove them wrong and really go

for what we believe in. And you would learn a lot in college depending on what your career is. Just know what career you're interested in and pursue it to the fullest to accomplish your life goals."

"I do believe however that I was very intimidating to my instructors because when it came to learning I always wanted to know more it seemed like when they stated a question or fact or situation I wanted to know how this fact, question or situation came about where did it originate from and so that kind of annoyed the instructors."

"I didn't even know that it was a problem. I was one of few in the first years of my career. At the time I didn't know there was anything wrong with it. I thought it was such a new experience that you just think this is the way it is. I took my experience at the university that it was a different setting and not that it was an issue. I think we need to just I mean the education needs to be open and honest about minorities. Some people are not going to know, even minorities if there is an issue."

"I have to be careful of the way I say this. For a long time the black community has come from the position that America owes the black community. Every country owes its citizens and now it's time for us to move from that mentality to quite literally taking our position, taking our place stepping in line now, and taking our place in society, so now it's time for us to step out and step forward and say this is mine and this is part of me to. Because in the past we were always told we didn't have a part and we didn't rate being a part."

"We must be persistent in our efforts. We cannot take failure as final, because you get to a point where it gets hard. It's meeting troubles and things head on to me but until this happens going on forward and you need to understand this, so you keep studying and asking questions and you will get passed this."

"I think that this study that you're doing as it relates to education and the welfare of humanity is something that is needed. We need to stress education, and we need to inform them that education is not our enemy but it's really a way or a step ladder to reach the heights that we want to reach."

"I'm excited to see another African American, especially a female, pursuing higher education to the degree of doctorate giving voice to the experiences of other African Americans to possibly further insight on what needs to be done to

promote and encourage more African Americans especially males to pursue higher education.”

“I discovered; *that someone’s perception of me doesn’t have to be my reality.*”

The participants stated many feeling in regards to their educational pursuit, when asked what stood out the most for them. They replied that they did not allow how someone felt about them, stop them from reaching or pursuing their desired and ultimate goals

Careers

Most African Americans derive from a matriarchal family system that is survival orient opposed to achievement orient. In addition, this may be why African Americans choose professions that provide immediate employment, instead of those requiring stressful cognitive progression. Professions that include, but are not limited to those such as; doctors, scientist/researchers and lawyers. The eighth and final theme exemplifies all the challenges and experiences that the participants have had in their pursuit of higher education.

The following quotes demonstrate the participants’ life choices, successes, and positive and negative outcomes from their educational experiences.

“As an educator in a large urban school district, I have encountered many peers who feel that I am not qualified as them. This scares and infuriates me because if they can hold an opinion of me as a colleague, what can they offer to minority students? I know that because of how I carry myself, the knowledge, and experiences I possess these educators must respect me and use my area of expertise to help educate students.”

“You know because of the education that I have obtained I’ve maximized it and my goals and accomplishing things that some feel or felt were so far reaching for the average person. I’m particularly glad that I have my degrees. I’m now a writer and business owner.”

“I feel that I gained a lot of knowledge coupled with the practical application of being a therapist. My aim is to inject this knowledge into young minds, and empower their lives, and design and implement an avenue where they can walk, run or trot down, and don’t have to worry about being in harm’s way from an educational perspective. It’s going to be a difficult task. I don’t think that I can single-handedly change the world, but if I can change one mind, my job is done.”

“Again I took all the experiences I’ve had while pursuing a law degree seriously and started a practice working with African American clients. It was hard at first because there was this preconceived notion that black men didn’t want to work and black women were superwoman. So there began my lifelong mission of helping blacks seeking their fair compensation.”

“I mean there are still prejudices out there because when I relocated to _____ when I was looking for jobs and I apply I sent my resume to an office. And in the resume you look good on paper. They don’t know what color you are, but the minute they call me for an interview and I went into the interview and then I walked in the door and told them who I was it was like oh she’s black. And you could just see it in the eyes and I didn’t even get to do my interview. But all of a sudden you know the girl goes to the back and she comes back oh the office manager she got called away on a emergency and were going to call you and reschedule and I was like forget it.”

“It teaches you how to be as one of my instructor’s she’d say ‘Be wise as the serpent and as honest as a dove’. So it allows you to obtain certain relationships with certain people. So you’re not better or you’re not biased. So it allows you to cover yourself in certain situations in such a way that your work speaks for itself.”

“The successes that I’ve had and I’ve been able to press on through the years you know even though I was out of the normal traditional path all of my education, has added to you know what I’ve been able to do like set my own life goals you know different dreams different opportunities different association. You know the list goes on and on for me.”

“I wanted to ensure that African American students would see someone like themselves in the classroom. I often wondered as a child why I only had one African American teacher during my elementary years. I have a passion for reading and developing the love of reading in others. I wanted to pursue a career that would combine my love of books and working with young people. I wanted my daughter to see that only with education can you be a productive member of society. As Malcolm X stated, ‘Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today’ I have a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction.”

“As an instructor in a large urban school district I have encountered many peers who feel that I am not as qualified as them. This scares and infuriates me because if they can hold an opinion of me as a colleague what can they offer to the minority students? I know that because of how I carry myself the knowledge and experience that I possess these educators must respect me and use my area of expertise to help educate students.”

“I think it made me more positive about life in general these experiences made me think more about what type of work or career that I really wanted to do and all that I wanted out of life.”

“I had a kind of narrow outlook on life as far as everything I thought about was just local like what was going on in _____ after going to college. I was able to get a worlds view of everything that was going on. It gave me a much larger perspective on life and what really goes on. I this nation and what’s going on around the world. You know which was very beneficial for me so now when I make decisions about anything, I don’t just look at what’s happening here in _____ but I look at what’s going on in the nation what’s happening in the world you know I would say it was a positive experiences I learned a lot in college.”

“Oh you know I just thought of something else. This is a kicker, before I actually worked for this African American dentist that I did work for I interviewed with another one before him and he told me that the only reason he would hire me was to be a token black basically. Seriously because his patients were complaining to him about him being an African American and not having any African American employees and so he just wanted to hire somebody to satisfy his patients and didn’t want to pay me jack either.”

“I feel by being involved with children and hair it has definitely made me a people’s person. I feel good when I help others and when I help myself. Also I know I’m better able to understand and to some may even be an educator, because in the end most children and people just want to be heard and who are we to deny anyone this right.”

“I would like to see more career opportunities more career workshops in high school especially my field engineering. I’d like to see more young people get in and stay with it and go through the apprenticeships just to learn.”

“To understand my career now, you know I’m the pastor of the _____ . It gave me a greater work ethic, a better study habit that in order to be on top of, or lack for a better word, your game, in proclaiming the word you have to read you have to be able to study. You have to be able to run reference and just be dedicated to the task of trying to get all you can so that when you stand your accurate. And you can rightly divide the word, and you can be truthful is best. And now that people see what you’re saying before they hear you say what you’re saying and it’s easier for them to catch hold of what you’re proclaiming if they can see it.”

The eight themes, racism and discrimination, support systems, minority faculty mentors, attitudes and self-esteem, isolation and segregation, spirituality, specific feelings and careers represented the way in which the 21 African American participants perceived their experiences during post-secondary education. These themes presented the foundation upon which this study was conducted.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the amplified voices of the 21 participants who identified, described, and accentuated how their experiences provided the foundation for themes of educational influences and a guide for this study.

Within each of the themes, sub-themes were developed to help categorize the experiences of the African American participants. Each participants experience in their pursuit of a post-secondary degree helped enhance the picture for the existence of the African American in pursuit of higher education. This chapter also provided a demographic survey that validated who the participants were. It established where the participants came from and how they accomplished their pursuit of higher education.

Chapter 5 provided further analysis of how this study could influence future researchers, practitioners, educators and the educational paradigm as a whole. Through the eyes and voices of the 21 African American participants, researchers', practioners, educators, and administrators should be aware and seeking to formulate solutions to problems that exist within educational systems.

CHAPTER FIVE

Chapter five presents with an in-depth summary of the results of this study as it relates to the conceptual frameworks chosen for this research. Each concept in its own right gives credit and merit to the Eurocentric and Afrocentric framework, however one cannot rule out the underlying current that both frameworks present in light of the African American participants' experiences during their educational journey in pursuit of a post-secondary degree.

It is imperative that attention is paid to the direct correlation between the two concepts, which will become evident throughout the following text. It will discuss the participants' experiences fit within the Afrocentric and Eurocentric frameworks of Asante and Bandura, respectively.

In social learning theory, the influence of environmental events on behavior is largely determined by cognitive processes governing how environmental influences are perceived and how individuals interpret them, (Corsini & Wedding, 2005, p.26). Specific focus is on self-efficacy, which refers to one's belief about being able to perform certain tasks or achieve certain goals. Bandura (1998) assessed this by simply asking a person to indicate the degree of confidence that he or she feels about a certain task, event, or experience.

Bandura (1995) believed high self-efficacy is necessary for successful outcomes of educational and career experiences. Students often rated their own competence in terms of their teachers' evaluations of them producing either low or high self-efficacy. Many participants who believed in their abilities to pursue higher education voiced experiences of intimidation or encouragement from educators.

In Asante's (2003) theory of social change, Afrocentricity refers to a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interest, values and perspectives predominate. This theory, places African American people in the center of any analysis of African phenomena. In terms of action and behavior, it is a devotion to the idea that what is in the best interest of African American consciousness is at the heart of ethical behavior (p. 2).

The study of African Americans requires an understanding of three principals of Afrocentricity (Asante, 2003, p. 26). The first principal, feelings, allows for insight into how African Americans like or dislike a certain experience they have had. The second principal, knowing, is how the experiences are perceived or conceptualized. The third principal, acting, focuses on behaviors African American present because of these experiences. (Asante, 2003).

The personalities and events most representative of the African American experience in America reflect significant historical values. These values teach African Americans the nature of success and failure, strength and weakness, what to hate and what to love, and what is good and what is evil. Afrocentricity questions one's approach to every conceivable human function, such as reading, writing, studying and working. Asante (2003) developed Afrocentricity, because he believed the best road to all health, economic, political, cultural, and psychological in the African American community, is through the centered positioning of African Americans within their own story. Afrocentricity, the theory of social change, is not merely about the study of black people. It is an approach with methodological and functional perspective (Asante, 2003).

The experiences of the 21 African American participants, who have told their stories, reflected the rich lineage of what's past and yet to come. The goal was not to isolate Eurocentric thought from Afrocentric theory. However, it was to correlate Eurocentric and Afrocentric theory and evaluate how the two theories interpret the experiences of African Americans in pursuit of higher education.

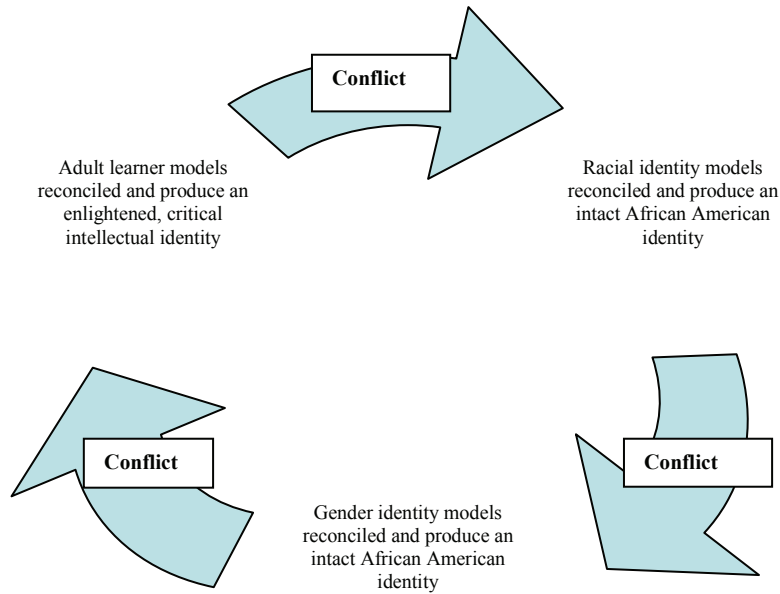
The past reflected an African American brow beaten and brainwashed who believed they were not equal, they cannot measure up, who could not see that there were no longer any chains around their ankles and most importantly, they were not smart enough evidenced by the curricula and practices in higher education. African Americans have been raised minority, but live in a Eurocentric community (Asante, 2003, p.57).

African Americans must rise above their inner struggles, and eliminate an inferior mentality. No longer chained, and bound, African Americans must embrace their roots and culture and take their rightful place in society. "Our Africanity is our ultimate reality." Once African Americans know, their historical past they can identify with who they are today. Knowing where they came from and where they want to go, African Americans can with historical strength and insight make the changes necessary to move forward regardless of any adverse situation that may occur. In short, what African Americans are told, believe and see donates their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Asante, 2003, P.56). Patterson's (2006) enlightened black womanist model, demonstrated the significance and coining of the phrase, the enlightened African American model. It is symbolic in terms of defining who African Americans are, where they are, and where they want to go.

Figure 10: Model of Enlightened African American

Racial identity (reconciled) Gender identity (reconciled) Intellectual identity (reconciled)

Result=Enlightened African American identity



Significant to African Americans who participated in this study, Patterson's (2006) model yields itself to aspects of both Afrocentricity and African American identity. Each theme emerged from a specific place and time in the participants' recall of their experiences during the participants' educational pursuit of a post secondary degree, guided by the Eurocentric and Afrocentric theoretical perspective.

In agreement with Patterson's (2006) study, each participant's voice situated in a cultural place represents *truth* with a little t, for that perspective to be evaluated by the reader who engages this study. Ultimately, in order for this study to be useful in the ways it was intended, it must stir the souls of the reader and cause them to seek the *Big T* truth that resides within everyone. The Big T-Truth would include a better educational system for minorities. In addition, more commitment of faculty to embrace diversity and a better

understanding of unique methods for responding to teaching needs for people of color (Patterson, 2006).

The recommendations and implications for theory and practice are based on the results of this study and presented within the later part of this chapter. The recommendations are conveyed by the participants' voices from the position and perspective of the researcher. Most importantly, it was to describe how people of color talk about what African Americans need. This study has been paramount in providing a venue for this to take place. In addition, it has raised the bar as with Patterson's (2006) study for deep and meaningful conversation by raising issues that pointed to the urgency and importance of exploring the experiences of African Americans pursuing higher education.

The final chapter contained several subcomponents. First, it summarized the results of this research. Second, it revisited the original research questions. Using both the Eurocentric (self-efficacy) and Afrocentric theory posed as a guide in answering these questions according to the results in this research. Third, it provided clear and precise recommendations for theory and practice based on implications generated by the results. Finally, it incorporated Patterson's (2006) the Enlighten Black Womanist model revised as the Enlighten African American model. Describing the cultural and gender development of African Americans as they matriculate through the post secondary process.

Summary of Findings

The study focused on two major areas: 1.the experiences of African Americans and their pursuit of post-secondary education and 2. To understand how these experiences influenced their career and life choices. Many recommendations and implications emerged from the results of the study. The experiences of this group were documented within the many themes that developed.

Racism and Discrimination

Participants typically noted that they experienced feelings of racism and discrimination consistent with the sub-themes to include stereotyping/labeling, intimidation from students' and faculty and peer relations.

Support networks

Participants typically reported that their support systems were their families. Many stated their children, financial situations, ministers, and economic status were the driving factors behind them deciding to continue pursuing their post secondary degrees.

Minority faculty members

Participants typically noted that the lack of minorities throughout their post secondary education included both minority faculty and minority peers.

Attitudes and self-esteem

Participants reported that the greatest motivating factor was having an attitude of perseverance. This created a desire to learn more, which encouraged and empowered them toward academic success.

Isolation and segregation

Participants expressed concerns about the ways they were treated in their journey toward higher education. This included feeling isolated producing many challenges and barriers for them.

Spirituality

Participants typically reported being spiritual and practicing their religious beliefs. Participants stated this gave them purpose, motivation, drive and ambitions and kept them grounded to realize their dreams and goals.

Specific feelings

This theme validated the participants feelings typically noted as: pride, hopeful, denial, self-respect, self-protection, lack of pride, self-respect, and lack of knowledge, during their pursuit of a post secondary degree.

Careers

Participants typically reported that their life choices and successes resulted from the negative and positive outcomes they experienced in pursuit of higher education.

The 21 African American men and women invited to participate in this study expressed feelings of gratitude, pride, and at times disappointment when recalling periods during their educational journey. These periods left a negative impression about certain career professions.

Perhaps, more significantly, was the desire of participants to share their experiences. In addition, have their experiences become important road maps for other African Americans pursuing higher education. The participants of this study gave voice and validation to *A Dream Envisioned: African American Struggles and Experiences Toward Success in Health Related and Non-Health Related Disciplines*.

In agreement with Patterson (2006) study, while many of these findings are not new in the sense of providing information that has not already been shared in previous scholarly work as indicated in the review of literature. They have provided a place where the information can be shifted through the Eurocentric and Afrocentric sieve. The participants can however reflect upon the fact that their voices can and will be heard to the extent intended within this study and for future research to be conducted. This study has provided a roadmap for those wishing to explore further the experiences of African Americans pursuing post-secondary education.

This study described in detail the perceptions of twenty one participants and acknowledged the overbearing reality that there remains more work to be done to ensure that educational systems develop and implement changes necessary to include all cultures and nationalities. This study supported findings by Patterson (2006) who reported that Black women and their intimate relationships at the doctoral level focus on internal and external relationship issues at all phases of their college education.

In the following section, a closer look at the original research questions was presented. With the guidance of the Eurocentric and Afrocentric theory to assist in answering how African American experiences in health and non-health related disciplines' affected their educational and career choices.

Research Questions Revisited

It is paramount that African Americans remember those who have gone before them, Martin Luther King, Jr., and those who stand with them, Barack Obama, the pioneers who stood and stand for justice and equality for all human beings. January 20, 2009, was about change, fellowship, and envisioning the country's destiny. If ever there

was a moment when the country realized we are all in this together, it was on this day. In regards to this study, it gives hope toward a better educational system for people of color.

African Americans are books that when opened provided resources of information open to all who wish to explore and understand the meaning of what it's like to be an African Americans. In addition, the experiences they have in society as a whole to include but not limited to their educational experiences.

Bandura (1995) knew these experiences in the social learning theory derived from the importance of self-efficacy. Asante (2003) understood and developed the Afrocentric/ the theory of social change, grounded in the fact that an ideology for liberation must find its existence in oneself. It cannot be external to one, and those other than oneself cannot impose it. It must be derived from ones particular historical and cultural experience.

The global demand for educated individuals increasingly requires that one be comfortable engaging diversity. The addition of both African American men and women in academia will take on more prominence and significance to progressive institutions of higher education (Patterson, 2006). In their study, Smith and Schonfeld (2000) demonstrated that all students tend to perform better in diverse environments. Diversity is aided by the presence of diversity in schools of thought. African Americans bring that presence as they pull from their unique gendered and raced experiences to navigate academia. Accordingly, in response to the question *Who should care?* It is clear that anyone concerned with student success will also be concerned with attracting, developing and maintaining African American students (Patterson, 2006).

The most rewarding response to this study is knowing that it may have a profound effect on African Americans. Patterson (2006) believed research that used the experiences of African Americans as the standard and refused to compare and contrast it to Caucasians as the rule. Enhanced the educational value that African Americans felt as they came to see their experiences as significant in their own right.

Finally, this study validated the unique experiences of these African American scholars and should not be underestimated. Smith and Schonfeld (2000) and Patterson (2006) agreed if student success were the ultimate goal, then there must be processes in place, implemented, and followed through to ensure that all academia becomes diversified.

Research Questions

The questions under study were: How do African American professionals perceive their higher education experiences in health related and non-health related disciplines? What are the educational experiences that influence academic and vocational career choices of African American? Although the prevalence of racial discrimination, isolation and segregation, has had periods of decline, Akbar (2006) stated, it keeps appearing at times reserved for personal growth and social economic status of participants. The current study of this dissertation found evidence for both the negative and positive experiences African Americans have encountered during their pursuit of post-secondary education.

Analysis of the participants data indicated that African Americans do not need the psychological restraint thrust upon them to produce a mindset for failure. Attacks against their racial identity and self-esteem were found which could set the stage for failure to

occur. The implications include awakening others to the experiences of African Americans and should help establish more opportunity to research and study deficiencies of the education system. Another implication is the need to diversify to fortify methods of teaching efficiently and effectively. Despite confronting many challenges, the participants were motivated and found methods to overcome the obstacles to reach their desired goal of obtaining a post-secondary degree. The following recommendations are based on the African American experiences and what educational institutions should consider when addressing minority populations.

* Institutions must work with their administrators, educators, guidance counselors, and students to neutralizing the “chilly climate.” It is very important that African American students’ climate of learning be *user friendly*; meaning more educators should teach based with diverse curricula and in diverse environments. It is important to provide other diverse perspectives. Educators tend to teach based on their backgrounds and what they have been exposed to. Educators need to expose students to different realms of life consistent with the disciplines they are studying and those that may pertain to similar disciplines.

* Educational institutions, more specifically educators, and administrators need to make themselves readily available as support systems to support minority students. There needs to be a stronger push for more tenured faculty and administrators of color to play an active role possibly in the recruitment and retention of staff and minority students.

* Educational institutions should develop cultural centers to provide students with role models, mentors, and students in disciplines with other minorities to encourage and help foster their intellectual abilities.

- * Institutions must share the responsibility of networking with other community organizations to implement programs specific to diverse curricula.

- * Foster relationships with local grade schools, high schools, and colleges to provide t students' with opportunities to attend educational and career workshops by other minority educators, business owners, and community advocates.

- * Provide scholarships and fellowships designed specifically for minorities void of stipulations internal and external for which minorities are sure to be disqualified.

- * Partner with minority churches to provide a support network that allows minority students to connect with their cultural identity, strengths, beliefs, values, and religious foundations.

- * Invite speakers from community businesses and colleges to share information with minorities on available resources such as financial assistance, scholarships/fellowships, job opportunities, benefits, and salaries.

- * Emphasis should be placed on encouraging guidance counselors to include support networks when making educational and career decisions.

- * Recruit and retain more minority educators because minority students benefit from minority educators who share their experiences. Recruitment and retention help students understand their culture and be able to move forward with challenges or obstacles.

- * Allow minority educators to function within their own culture. In addition, not to assimilate and try to be more conforming to the Euro-American role of teaching. This can be a hindrance in a sense that they leave off their cultural role, their cultural values and start teaching like the norm and not a minority, who can give guidance and advice to

the minority students' and whose unique perspective can greatly enhance all students and fellow faculty.

* Assist minority educators with the tools necessary to encourage and foster relationships among minority students such as: discuss student concerns, explore their expectations, model appropriate social skills and behaviors, share their experiences being honest, truthful and show them leadership and confidence.

* Institutions should be responsible for training their educators on providing and delivering diverse environments and curricula.

* Institutions must allow minority students to take advantage of all opportunities afforded to them and make new ones when appropriate.

* Educators, administrators and guidance counselors should stop trying to push minority students into career fields that they believe are appropriate. They should allow all students choices. Once students have the knowledge about what they want to do, provide them with the tools they will need to succeed.

* Educators need to be prepared beyond their professional education. Formulate their own opinions and be ready to incorporate them beyond the limits of the school directives and mindful of their approach.

* Educators must mentor minority youth or adults to believe they do deserve an education.

* Educators should remember their college days whether positive or negative. They made it and now have in their hands the ability to share and groom someone else's future and success. Educators should not take this opportunity lightly but grab hold to it and make it a reflection of what they stand for as it pertains to education.

* Incorporate within their curricula, programs that foster self-esteem, self-awareness, and self-identity crucial to self-attainment and advancement needed to complete any educational process.

Implications for the Profession

The examination of the experiences of African Americans in health related and non-health related disciplines in post-secondary education could provide current and future researchers, institutions, and society as a whole insight into the perceptions of educational experiences of minority students. It could assist them in purposeful and conscious decision making in finding solutions to past and present problems. Higher institutions need to increase their recruitment of minority faculty and student retention to increase minority education rates in the health related and non-health related disciplines.

Recommendations for Future Research

Administrators, educators, and the educational paradigm must look at programs, studies and methodologies that work to continue developing these programs and models to reflect the current educational needs of all students.

* Studies should look at current learning readiness programs such as Head Start to compare and contrast the impact learning readiness programs have on forming an early foundation, which assist youth in being successful in elementary, middle, high school, and college.

* Target local high schools to explore factors that influence minority students' decisions to either pursue or not pursue post-secondary education.

* Compare and contrast the experiences of African American and Caucasian students' to provide some recommendations when presented next to this study's findings to either challenge or support the various themes acknowledged in this research.

* Because there is limited research available within this area to draw upon, researchers' utilizing the qualitative and quantitative research design methods should further explore the various culture-specific models to determine their impact, reliability, and validity on academic success of minority groups. Based on the empirical study of African American experiences in health related and non-health related post-secondary education.

Summary

Qualitative studies are effective by increasing understanding of the factors that hinder or motivate African Americans pursuit of higher education within health related and non-health related disciplines. More studies should be aimed at increasing awareness of diversity on and off campus and in the workplace.

This study provided a foundation to understand the experiences African Americans had during their pursuit of post-secondary education in health related and non-health related disciplines. The themes were (1) racism and discrimination, (2) support systems, (3) minority faculty mentors, (4) attitudes and self-esteem, (5) isolation and segregation, (6) spirituality, (7) specific feelings and (8) careers. These themes were supported in the literature. The information in this research can be used as a foundation for continued research where theories and methodologies will be developed to meaningfully address and substantively diversify the American paradigm.

As noted by Skylarz (1993) "Multicultural understanding will require much more than a plan. It will require working together, joining hands and sharing in a collaborative effort unlike anything we have seen in public education" (p.24).

The following African American poetry tells of experiences, struggles, , character, strengths, weaknesses, joy, pain, and laughter throughout the decades of paths traveled by African Americans and written by an African American.

My People

Black Man.

African-American King.

You are the symbol of hard work, love, and brutality.

You have been kicked, robbed, criticized, and scandalized

But yet and still you always rise.

Black Woman

African-American Queen.

You are the symbol of love, beauty, neglect, and of those never heard, and always seen

You have been walked over, raped, but yet you have bleed, fled, and said what you mean.

We, as a black species

Have been taken from our motherland

Forced to give our service to the white man

In a nation where we are knocked from being" ...all we can."

We have been put on boats and locked down with chains,

Had to buy our freedom in a so called. "Exchange"

Wasn't "good enough" to be with the white kids in school,

Called everything from a "n----- to a coon"

Now my people descendants of black kings and queens from Ghana, Mali, Songhai,

Ashante', and Benin,

Look around and see what has happened to the offspring of our strong black.
We are redoing everything our ancestors fought not to happen to our generation.
We are killing off our own by drugs with guns, my people we need rejuvenation.
I know to come here was not our choice,
But we must stand up to ignorance, and make justice hear our voice.
We must stop using what happened years ago to our advantage.
Integrate, instead of segregate this newly formed black enhancement.
Hear the cries, and look in the eyes, we need to be equal.....
MY PEOPLE!!!!!!!!!!!!!! By: Raine Elynn Turner

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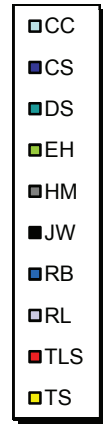
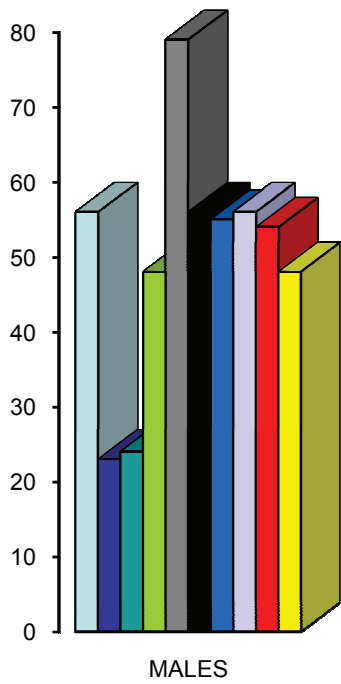
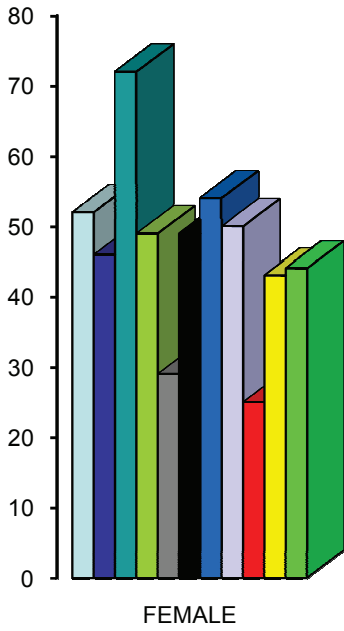
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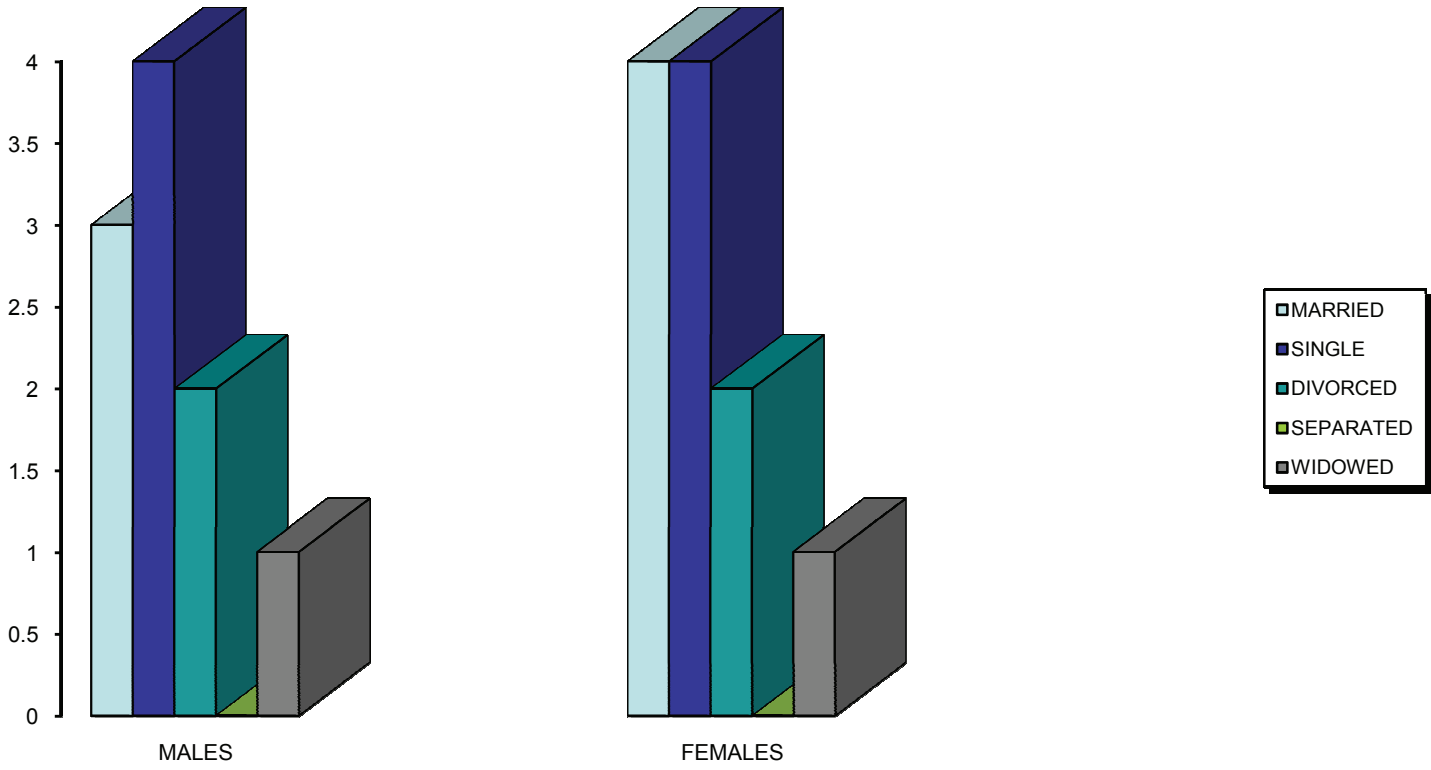
Appendix A

Ages of Participants



APPENDIX B

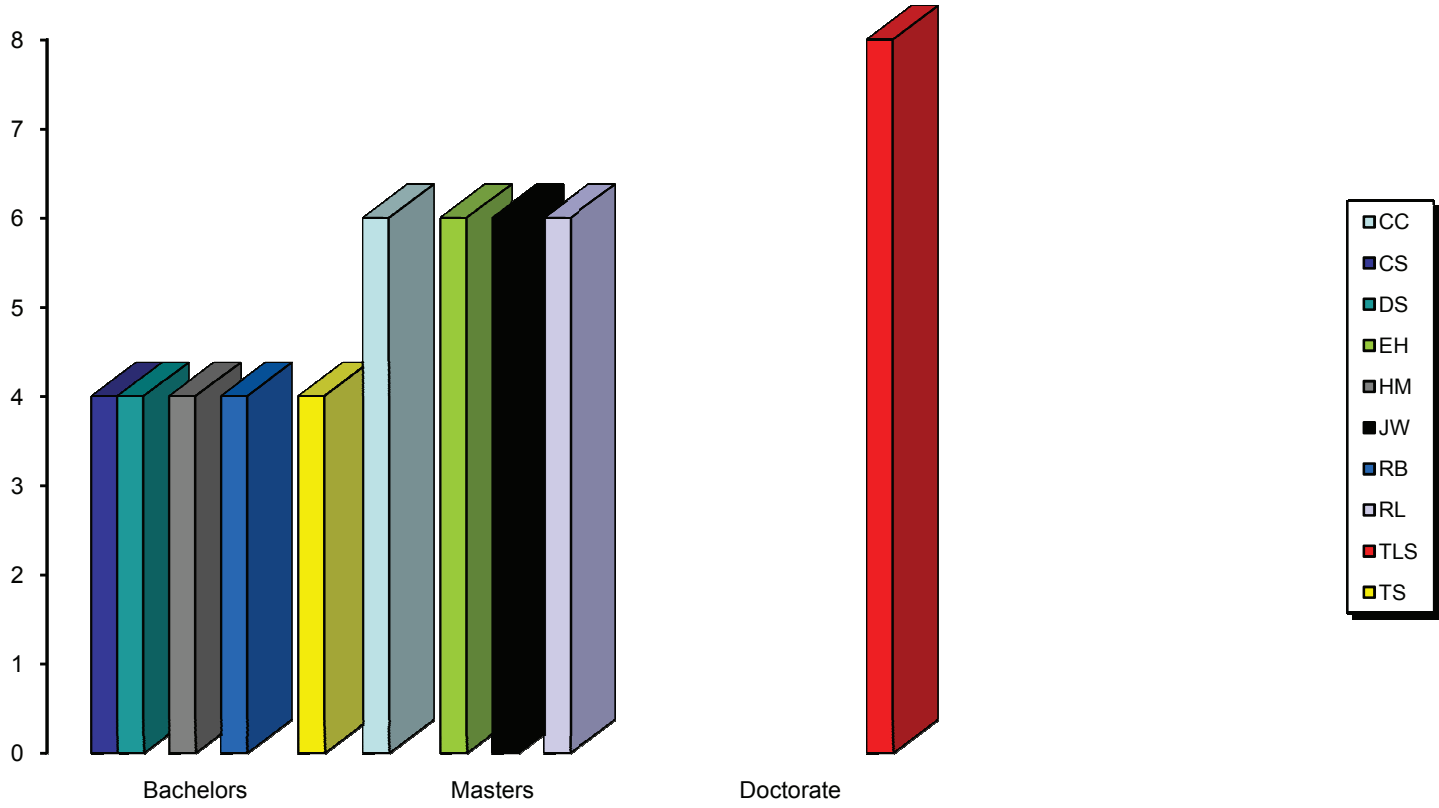
PERSONAL STATUS OF PARTICIPANTS



APPENDIX C

LEVELS OF EDUCATION

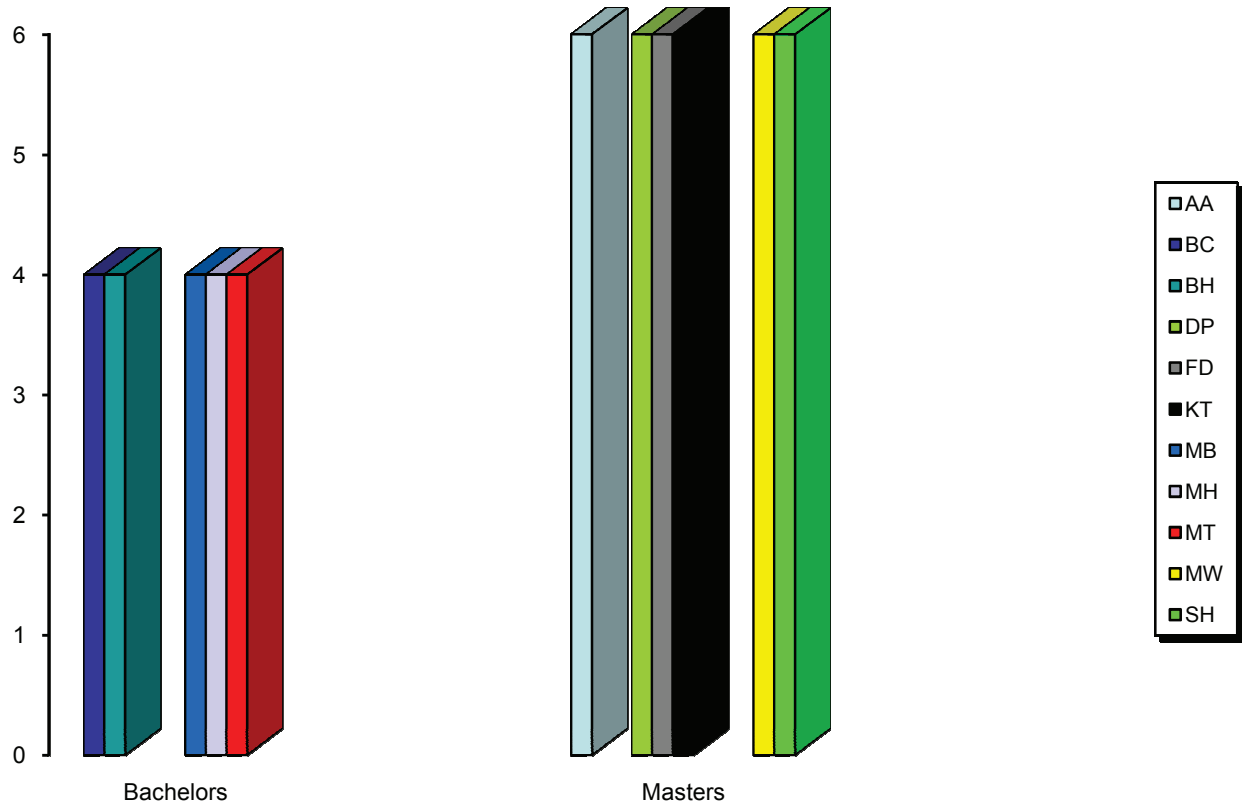
MALES



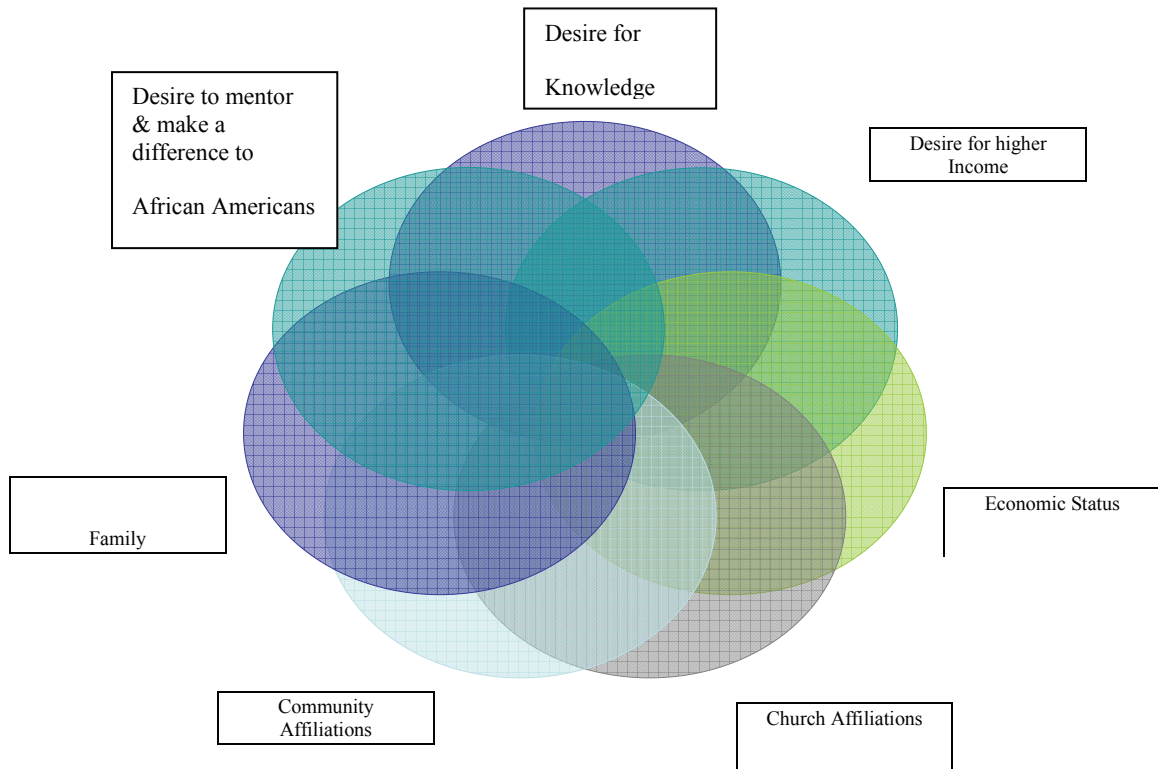
APPENDIX D

LEVELS OF EDUCATION

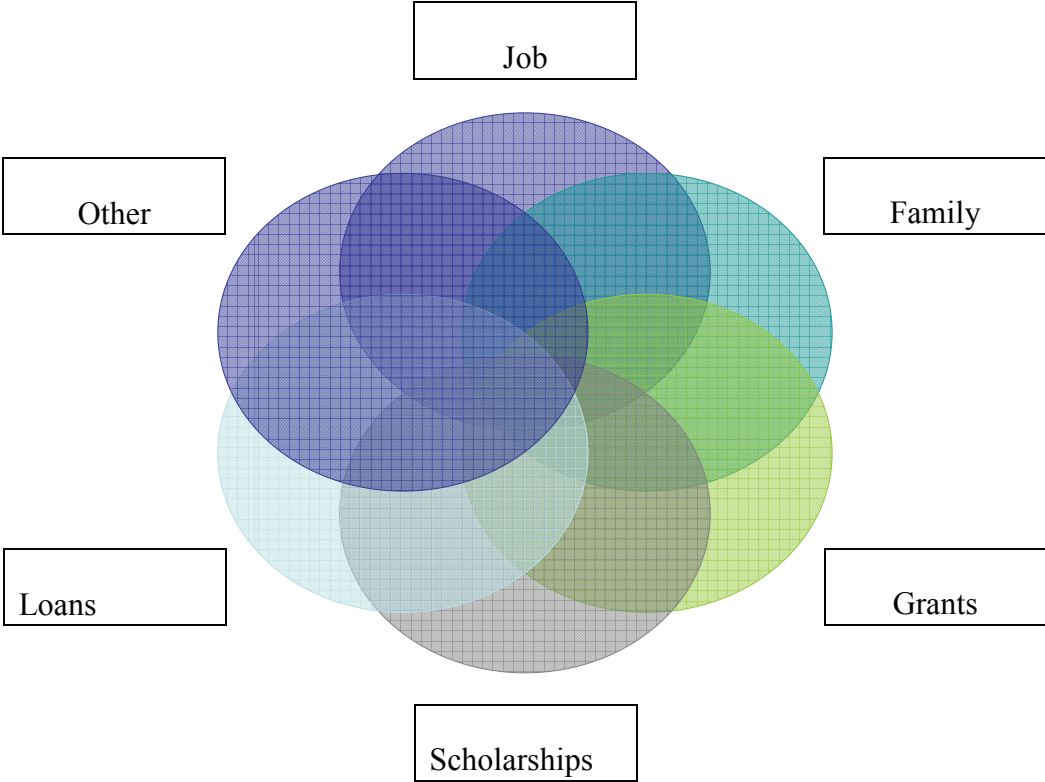
FEMALES



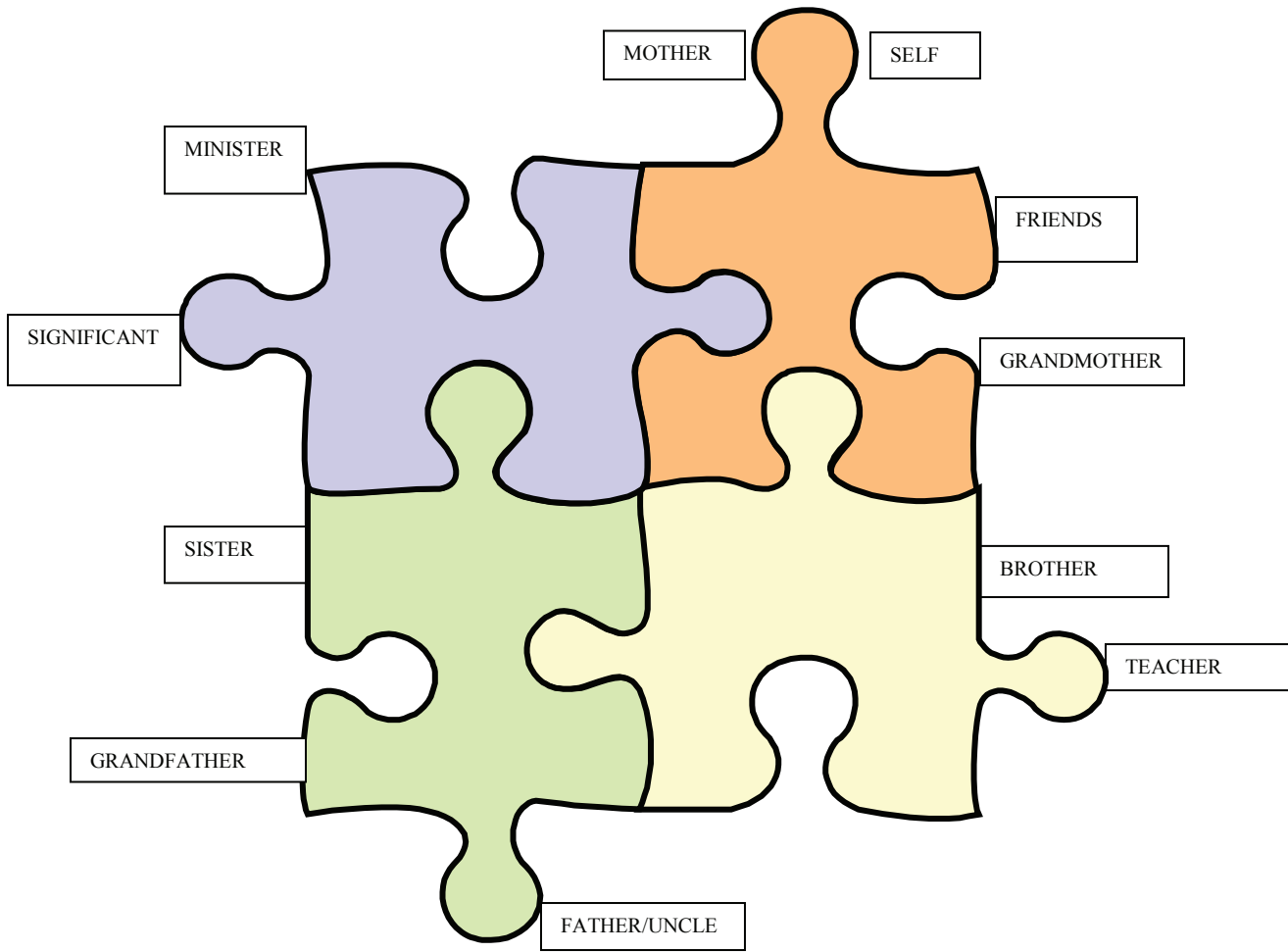
APPENDIX E
FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE HIGHER LEARNING



APPENDIX F
FINANCIAL SOURCES



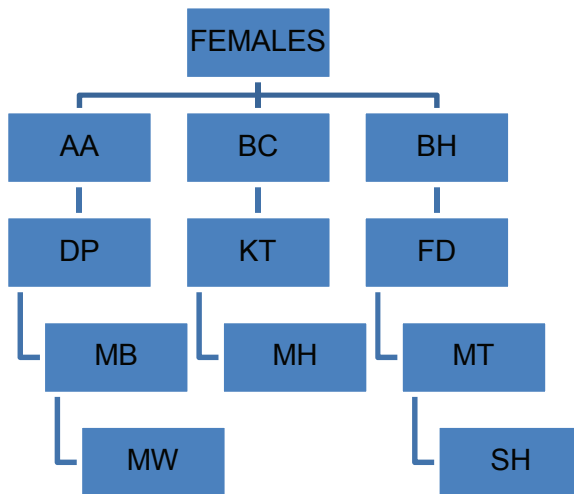
APPENDIX G
**PEOPLE WITH THE MOST INFLUENCE FOR HIGHER
EDUCATION**



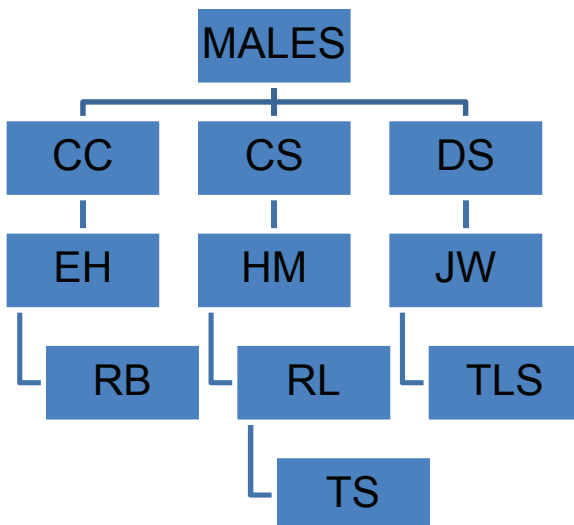
APPENDIX H

GENDERS

11 African American Women



10 African American Men



APPENDIX I



October 6, 2008

College of Saint Mary
7000 Mercy Road, Omaha, NE 68106

Dear Ms. Harper,

The Institutional Review Board at College of Saint Mary has granted approval of your request for a Change in Protocol for your study *"African American Experiences in Higher Education in Health Related and Non-Health Related Disciplines,"* at the August 3, 2007 meeting. This will enable you to add participants up to a maximum of 25 and to extend your completion date

You will continue to use the same approval number that was granted at the time of your initial approval which is CSM 08-08. The approval expires in three months as per your request on January 6, 2009. If your current Consent Form is dated to expire before you can enroll additional participants in your study, please send an electronic copy of your Consent Form to me and we will provide an updated stamped copy that you should use to enroll additional participants.

Attached is the "Rights of Research Participants" document. Remember that you are required to give each IRS research participant a copy of the document. Congratulations on your continued IRS approval and best wishes as you conduct your research!

Sincerely,

Dr. Melanie K. Felton

DR. Melanie K. Felton
Associate Professor
Chair, Institutional Review Board
mfelton@csm.edu

APPENDIX J

Qualitative Consent Form

Page 1 of 3



IRB#:

**AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES IN HEALTH AND NON-HEALTH RELATED
HIGHER EDUCATION DISCIPLINES**

Invitation

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information provided in this form is meant to assist you in deciding whether or not you wish to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you are an African American, who pursued higher education in a health related and non-health related discipline.

What is the reason for doing this research study?

It is important to understand the experiences of African American students in health and non-health related disciplines, and to understand their perceptions of these experiences.

What will be done during this study?

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of African American students, and the impact these experiences have on their career and life choices.

Procedure:

- A. You will be asked open-ended questions from a prepared questionnaire during an individual interview conducted by me the researcher. Data will be audio taped for later transcription and recording your verbal and non-verbal communication.

B. Audio tapes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the analysis of the data.

What are the possible risks of being in the study?

There are no known risks to you from being in the study.

What are the possible benefits to you?

The information from this study will be shared with you. However, you may not get any benefits from being in this study.

What are the possible benefits to other people?

The information obtained in this study is intended to provide a better understanding of the experiences of African American students, pursuing higher education in health and non-health related disciplines.

Participant's initials _____

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?

Instead of being in this research study you can choose not to participate.

How will information about you be protected?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The only person who will have access to your research records are the study personnel. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

What are your rights as a research participant?

You have rights as a research participant. These rights have been explained in this consent form. If you have any questions concerning your rights, talk to Hallie Harper at 402 960-9784 or e-mail at hr.harper@cox.net.

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study (“withdraw”) at any time before, during, or after the research begins. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator.

Documentation of informed consent

You are freely making a decision whether to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understand this consent form. (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study.

If you have any questions during the study, you should talk to one of the investigator listed below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep. If you are 19 years of age or older and agree with the above, please sign below.

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____ Time _____

My signature certifies that all the elements of informed consent described on this consent form have been explained fully to the participant. In my judgment, the participant possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research and is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent to participate.

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

Participant’s initials _____

Authorized Study Personnel

Principal Investigator: Hallie Harper

Phone No: 402 960-9784

APPENDIX K

Interview Protocol: African-American Experiences in Health Related and Non Health Related Higher Education Disciplines

Time of Interview:

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

I'd like to thank you for agreeing to participate by being interviewed for this research project on African American Experiences in Health Related Higher Education Disciplines. I want to assure you your comments will remain strictly confidential and your identity will remain anonymous. Throughout the interview, please feel free to take a break or ask me any questions you might have. You can expect the interview to last about 45 minutes to 1 hour and no more than 2 hours if needed.

- 1. Describe your educational college experiences.**

- 2. Identify any specific feelings regarding your educational college experiences, either positive or negative.**

- 3. Recall any experiences during your college educational process, which affected your self-esteem.**

- 4. What were the factors that empowered you to continue pursuing your educational goals?**

- 5. Describe how these experiences have contributed to your current success in your career.**

- 6. What larger ramifications exist from your experiences?**
A: For other African American students?
B: For African American educators?

- 7. If there is something more you would like to add about your college experiences that I have not asked, please describe them for me.**

- 8. What were the effects of these experiences for you during your educational college process?**

- 9. Tell me more about your feelings regarding your college experiences whether positive or negative.**

- 10. Take me through your thought processes during the time or times your self-esteem was affected.**

- 11. I would like to hear more about the factors that empowered you to continue pursuing your educational goals.**

- 12. Can you expound on how these experiences have contributed to the current successes you have had in your career?**

- 13. I would like to hear more on your perspective of the ramifications for both African American students and educators.**

APPENDIX L

**SURVEY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES IN HEALTH RELATED AND
NON-HEALTH RELATED DISCIPLINES: AND THE IMPACT THESE EXPERIENCES
HAVE ON THEIR CAREER AND LIFE CHOICES.**

Definition of Terms:

An African American shall be defined as; of African descent, it's people, cultures etc., a member of the African race.

1. What is your gender?

A: Male _____

B: Female _____

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is your personal status?

A: Married _____

B: Single _____

C: Divorced _____

D: Separated _____

E: Widowed _____

F: Other: _____

For the next two (2) questions, please circle the number that best describes how this person has influenced your life.

1 = No Influence

2 = Little Influence

3 = Some Influence

4 = Strong Influence

5 = Major Influence

4. Please rate how these people influenced your decision to pursue higher education.

A. Mother **1 2 3 4 5**

B. Father **1 2 3 4 5**

C. Sister **1 2 3 4 5**

D. Brother **1 2 3 4 5**

E. Grandmother **1 2 3 4 5**

- F. Grandfather** 1 2 3 4 5

- G. Aunt (s)** 1 2 3 4 5

- H. Uncle (s)** 1 2 3 4 5

- I. Teacher** 1 2 3 4 5

- J. Pastor/Minister** 1 2 3 4 5

- K. Friends** 1 2 3 4 5

- L. Significant other** 1 2 3 4 5

- M. Self** 1 2 3 4 5

5. Using the above scale please rate these factors based on their influence of your decision to pursue higher education.

- A. Desire for knowledge** 1 2 3 4 5

- B. Desire for higher income** 1 2 3 4 5

- C. Economic Status** 1 2 3 4 5

D. Family **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

E. Community affiliations **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

F. Church affiliations **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

G. Desire to mentor and **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
make a difference to and
for other African Americans.

H. Other _____ **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

Using the following scale, please answer questions A through H, Please circle all that apply.

1 = Not a high school graduate

2 = High school graduate

3 = Post high school degree/certificate

4 = Some college

5 = Associate Degree

6 = Bachelors Degree

7 = Masters Degree

8 = Doctorate Degree

9 = Military training Branch _____

10 = Other _____

6. Which is the highest level of education for your:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| A. Mother | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 |
| B. Father | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 |
| C. Grandmother | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 |
| D. Grandfather | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 |
| E. Sister (s) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 |
| F. Brother (s) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 |
| G. Aunt | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 |
| H. Uncle | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 |

I. Self

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

7. How were your financial obligations met while pursuing your education (Please circle all that apply).

A. Job

B. Family

C. Grants

D. Scholarships

E. Loans

F. Other _____

8. What social economic status represents you and your family, while you were in college?

A. Low

B. Below average

C. Average

D. Above average

E. Very high

9. Which represents your academic achievements while in college?

- a. A = Excellent**
- b. B = Above average**
- c. C = Average**
- d. D = Below average**
- e. F= Failing**

Author Note

“Words of Encouragement”

The road to reaching any desired goal, whether educational, career or personal, is obtained through perseverance. The road to success is paved with disappointments, setbacks, challenges and most of all happiness. By knowing and sticking to your dreams, realizing that the only one standing in your way is you, you can accomplish your goals. You must get past the instilled beliefs by society, that you are the victim constantly being put down, let down and shut out. No longer are you in the dark about most opportunities and information, it is what you chose to do about what you know that puts you in the dark or isolates you.

You must wear different lenses to see all that is behind you, before you and yet to come, leaving nothing to chance. It is a blessing and history being made to witness the First Black President, Barack Obama. History in the making began with Martin Luther King’s “I have a Dream”, I remember hearing someone say; “I don’t doubt that mans a leader, I just don’t know where we’re going” If only this person was alive to see today how far we’ve come and the impact of those words. We have seen Jessie Jackson, Collin Powel, Condoleezza Rice, and now Barack Obama. The question remains; “What does Barack Obama’s election mean for African Americans in Higher Education?”