It Is What It Is: The Impact of Practitioner-Student Relationships on the Success of Black Collegians

Alexis McLean

Higher education research indicates that Black students have lower graduation rates than their White counterparts and are much less likely to become academically and socially integrated into the campus community. Townsend (1994) attributed racial differences in completion rates to "universities…coming up short on their end with a shortfall of financial aid, inadequate mentoring, lack of cultural and social support, a dependence on Eurocentric curricula, faculty indifference, racial hostility, and an absence of institutional commitment to pursue Black student retention efforts" (pg. 85). Harper (2009; 2015) also pointed to weak or absent support systems, little to no sources of information that can foster academic and psychosocial success, and a lack of "intentionally designed" practices that could improve academic outcomes. Arroyo and Gasman (2014) cited inequitable access to higher education but noted that very little research adequately addresses the role of the institution in retaining Black students once they enroll. Indeed, Witham and Bensimon (2012) asserted that, all too often, institutions attempt to remedy racial achievement gaps through a process by which they "diagnose-and-react" (p. 54). Instead of thoroughly examining what may be wrong with the institution and implementing appropriate reform, problems are attributed to Black students who need fixing.

While the causes of racial disparities vary, extant literature underscores the significance of practitioners in students' collegiate experience and overall success. These institutional agents consist of faculty, staff, or administrators, who provide students with a wide range of academic and psychosocial support. This includes assisting students with navigating sociocultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic barriers and serving as a buffer to the racism and classism they frequently experience (Stanton-Salazar, 2010). As a result, practitioners play a crucial role in college students' academic and social integration.

Disparities in Rates of Degree Attainment

According to Pena, Bensimon and Colyar (2006), "not only do African Americans…have lower graduation rates than Whites…they also experience inequalities in just about every indicator of academic success – from earned grade point average to placement on the dean's list to graduation rates in competitive majors" (p. 48). In 2016, the National Center for Education Statistics indicated that Black students, who comprised 15% of students enrolled at two-year institutions, obtained 14% of the associate degrees conferred between 2014 and 2015. In

comparison, White students, who comprised 50% of students enrolled at two-year institutions, acquired 60% of the associate degrees conferred during the same time period (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016a; 2016c). Enrollment data regarding four-year institutions also highlighted racial disparities. Black students represented 14% of students enrolled at four-year colleges or universities, and White students comprised 61% of students enrolled at these institutions, but baccalaureate degree attainment for each group was 11% and 67%, respectively (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016b; 2016c). This data is not indicative of a recent trend. In fact, during every year for which it exists, racial disparities in persistence and rates of degree attainment have been evident (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016a; 2016b; 2016c).

Barriers to Black College Student Success

Literature regarding barriers to Black college students' success suggests that they are overwhelmingly subjected to feelings of isolation and alienation due to a lack of academic, cultural and social support (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella & Hagedorn, 1999; Harper, 2009; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Smith, Allen, Danley, 2007; Solorzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002; Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000; Townsend, 1994). This is often found to be the result of collegiate experiences marked by racially hostile campuses climates. Like other college students of color, Black undergraduates are frequently on the receiving end of indirect racial attacks or microaggressions. The term, coined by Harvard University psychiatrist Chester Pierce, refers to "…subtle, innocuous, preconscious, or unconscious degradations and putdowns…" that Blacks endure on a regular basis (Pierce, 1995, p. 281). According to Pierce (1969, p. 303), "the incessant lesson the Black must hear is that he is insignificant and irrelevant." Because microaggressions can lead to feelings of humiliation and erode self-confidence as well as self-image, they have long-lasting and detrimental effects on Black students' academic and psychosocial success. When Solorzano et al. (2000) investigated how racial microaggressions impact campus racial climate and the experiences of Black college students, participants reported being exposed to microaggressions while interacting with both faculty and peers. As a result, students felt increased discouragement, self-doubt, frustration, isolation, and helplessness. Incessant verbal and nonverbal racial affronts also reduced their interaction with practitioners and decreased the likelihood that they would utilize student services on campus.

When Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis and Thomas (1999) researched the experiences of Black students at a predominantly White university, participants reported that they found it difficult to initiate contact with faculty. This was attributed to their belief that asking for help would confirm

negative racial stereotypes and knowledge that certain faculty members were unfamiliar with Blacks. Harper (2015) found that even Black students who were high achievers and actively engaged were subjected to, and had witnessed, either covert or overt acts of racism being committed by faculty and administrators on campus. Unfortunately, some efforts to combat these experiences may cause further harm, and lead to the development of *racial battle fatigue* —the result of an overwhelming amount of mental, emotional, and physical strain, and of having to constantly contend with a racially hostile campus climate (Smith et al., 2007). Indeed, there is evidence in the literature that Black collegians' racial/ethnic identity and minority status negatively impacts their psychological functioning, and can lead to the development of trauma-related symptoms (McClain, et al., 2016; Pieterse, Carter, Evans, & Walter, 2010).

The impact of a hostile campus climate on the academic and psychosocial adjustment of Black students has been well documented. Participants in a study by Schwitzer et al. (1999) reported a general feeling of underrepresentation and stated that they often felt overlooked, frustrated and misunderstood. In addition, direct perceptions of racism at the institution resulted in a sense of hurt, aloneness, and isolation from faculty and peers. Cabrera, et al. (1999) researched the effects of perceptions of prejudice and discrimination on the adjustment of Black students and found that, unlike White students, their academic and social experiences were significantly shaped by perceptions of prejudice and discrimination. Ancis, Sedlacek, and Mohr (2000), who studied student perceptions of campus cultural climate by race, found that compared to both White students and other student groups of color, Black students experienced greater racial/ethnic hostility, greater pressure to conform to stereotypes, less equitable treatment by faculty, staff and teaching assistants, and more faculty racism. Pieterse et al. (2010) described similar findings when they examined the association between Black, White and Asian students' perceptions of racial and ethnic discrimination, racial climate, and trauma-related symptoms. Black students reported higher levels of discrimination, and perceived the racial climate as more negative than White and Asian students. Thus, there is evidence in the literature that Black students have unique perceptions of campus racial climates and undergraduate experiences but may also be exposed to a much more hostile environment than other students of color and their White counterparts.

According to Ancis et al. (2000), "continual exposure to a hostile educational climate, marked by racial tension and stereotyping, may adversely influence the academic achievement and psychological health of students of color" (p. 183). Indeed, Cabrera et al. (1999), who surveyed over 300 Black students across 18 institutions, found that a racially hostile campus climate hindered Black students' academic and intellectual development, and impacted their

commitment to the institution, as well as the likelihood that they would persist. This indicates a link between unsupportive and hostile campus climates, unsuccessful academic and social integration, and a lack of persistence amongst Black students.

College Student Success and the Role of Practitioners

Challenges of the Prevailing Definition of Success in Higher Education

A cursory review of mission statements or strategic plans from colleges and universities across the country reveals that while these institutions have prioritized success, they fail to provide an explicit definition of the concept (Chattanooga State Community College, 2015; City University of New York, 2018; Community College of Rhode Island, 2015; Iowa Central Community College, 2010; Prairie View A&M, 2017; San Diego City College, 2010; University of Colorado Boulder, 2018). It is clear, however, that success—for both students and institutions—is largely tied to the attainment of high and timely retention (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2006; Astin, 2004; Rockstroh, 2011). Acquiring or conferring a college degree is the prevailing definition of success in higher education.

The challenge regarding the prevailing definition of success is that it may not be consistent with how practitioners and students ascribe meaning to the concept. Schneider (2013), asserts that there is a "widening disconnect between a data-driven obsession with 'student success' and the values and experiences that graduates themselves report as transforming." When McLean-McKessey (2015) examined Black collegians' notions of success, participants explained that being the first person in their family to attend college made them successful. This was irrespective of whether they actually acquired the degree, as students had never considered pursuing higher education or had life circumstances that made embarking upon the journey seem impossible. Participants also expressed that they felt successful at several points in their academic journey that came prior to degree completion. This included instances when they exited remediation, mastered course content in an area where Black students are underrepresented, and made strides toward becoming academically and socially integrated into the campus community. Jennings, et al. (2013) had similar findings when they explored students' perceptions of success throughout their time in college. Almost half of the participants wanted to attain a "life management" goal by the end of their first year, and over 70% indicated that they wanted to reach a "social" milestone within the same time frame.

The aforementioned literature suggests that both practitioners and students may be guided by ideas and beliefs that are not taken into consideration when success is defined and/or assessed at an institutional or national level. While noteworthy, few sources in the literature study success as a fluid and subjective concept that encompasses students' individual goals.

Nevertheless, it illustrates the importance of reevaluating the predominant approach to studying college student success and suggests it may be useful to do so holistically.

Practitioner-Student Relationships and Student Success

Several scholars have linked relationships with practitioners to students' academic and personal development, and a wide range of psychosocial and professional support (Astin, 1993; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, and Gonyea, 2008; McLean-McKessey, 2015; Wood & Turner, 2011). Practitioners belong to multiple networks, and have intellectual and social resources that can be used on behalf of students (Stanton-Salazar, 2010). Some practitioners serve as mentors who develop an ongoing and personal relationship with students, where there is consistent academic, emotional, social, financial and/or professional support and guidance. When Crisp and Cruz (2009) reviewed the literature on mentorship between 1990 and 2007, they noted a general consensus regarding three essential (and beneficial) facets of these relationships. The first is that mentorship is focused on the growth and accomplishment of an individual. The second is that the mentoring experience may encompass broad forms of support including assistance with professional and career development. The third is that mentoring relationships are personal and reciprocal. Campbell and Campbell (1997) investigated the effects of student participation in a mentoring program with practitioners as mentors and noted several gains in student achievement. Students who were mentored had higher GPAs, completed more credits per semester, and had lower dropout rates than students in a control group. When Rhodes (2008) investigated whether mentoring would improve students' performance and increase graduation rates, mentored students had higher GPAs and retention and completion rates than those who were not mentored. In further research by Campbell and Campbell (2000), students who participated in mentoring programs cited in their earlier findings (Campbell & Campbell, 1997) reported that mentoring relationships helped them reach academic goals, and assisted them with graduating from the university.

Blackwell (1981; 1983; 1989) asserted that mentoring increases retention and graduation rates, as mentors provide training; stimulate the acquisition of knowledge; provide emotional support, encouragement and coping strategies for mentees; socialize protégés regarding expectations or demands of the profession; and help protégés perform at their greatest potential. In fact, Edlind and Haensly (1985) referred to the benefits of mentoring as "gifts", which consist of improved self-confidence and esteem, increased knowledge and skills, advancement of one's career, the development of known as well as undiscovered talents and a personal ethic, the establishment of a friendship, and the enhancement of creativity. Noteworthy, is what they described as the symbiotic nature of mentor-mentee relationships.

"Gifts" to mentors include completion of work, stimulation of ideas, establishment of a long-term friendship, and personal satisfaction.

Kuh et al. (2008) noted that faculty interaction within and outside the classroom is a form of "educationally purposeful engagement," and that involvement with faculty is positively correlated with student persistence. Pascarella and Terenzini (1977) also cited the importance of practitioner-student relationships when they investigated how faculty-student interaction impacted college persistence versus attrition. Students who persisted had significantly more interaction with faculty than students who left the institution. In 1999, when Terenzini, Pascarella and Blimling reviewed literature regarding the influence of students' out-of-class experiences on learning and cognitive development, they stated, "most researchers have reported positive associations between the nature and frequency of students' out-of-class contacts with faculty members and gains on one or another measure of academic or cognitive development" and "faculty-student contact and student learning are positively related, and it would seem…finding ways to promote such contact is in the best educational interests of…students and institutions" (p. 616).

In his seminal work, *What Matters in College?* Astin (1993) detailed findings from a longitudinal study involving more than 200 four-year colleges and universities, and approximately 25,000 students who attended these institutions between 1985 and 1989. Faculty-student interaction, whether frequent or minimal, contributed to students' academic and personal development, and satisfaction with the undergraduate experience. These students were significantly more likely to be racially understanding, promote social change, attend or participate in campus events, be elected to student offices, obtain a degree, and enroll in graduate or professional school. Astin's findings illustrated a link between faculty-student relationships and student development and illuminated the importance of these relationships.

Driven by the assertion that a lack of integration into an institution decreases the likelihood that students will persist, Tinto's (1993) *Theory of Student Departure* also illustrated the importance of forging relationships within the campus community, particularly as it relates to persistence and success. According to Tinto, dropout behavior could be determined by external factors (such as familial background and pre-college schooling), and a student's interaction with the college environment. Successful interaction refers to both academic integration, which is indicated by a student's grade performance and intellectual development, and social integration, characterized by relationships with peers, as well as practitioners such as faculty and administrative personnel. Tinto stated that within the college environment, academic and social systems are "invariably interwoven" and "events in one may directly or indirectly influence, over

time, events in the other" (p. 109). Academic and social integration presents many avenues towards institutional commitment, with the former allowing students to meet explicit standards and identify with the academic system, and the latter providing students with social communication, friendship support, faculty support, and collective affiliation. Once again, the role of practitioners in students' integration is evident.

The Transformative Role of Practitioners and Black Student Success

Forging relationships with practitioners can transform a Black student's collegiate experience. The benefits of these relationships include direct access to support and guidance, and someone with academic and professional insight who can prepare students to succeed while in and beyond college (McLean-McKessey, 2015). The notion that practitioner-student relationships can reduce and eliminate barriers to Black college student success is supported by the literature, which highlights a range of benefits that result from having access to a faculty member, staff person, or administrator with whom they can develop a relationship. Griffin, Perez, Holmes and Mayo (2010), who interviewed over twenty Black faculty members in STEM, found that every participant spoke about the importance of mentoring and advising in their long-term success:

> Although many participants spoke of the importance of familial support, it seems that relatives were not among those who most significantly shaped their academic experiences and careers. Undergraduate professors, graduate advisors, and occasionally older colleagues were primary mentors (p. 98).

When Wood and Turner (2011) studied factors affecting the academic success of Black men enrolled in community college, they found that faculty who were friendly and caring proactively addressed students' academic progress, listened to students' concerns, and encouraged students to succeed were associated with such success. And while some research has noted the insignificance of shared race/ethnicity (Grant-Thompson & Atkinson, 1997; Griffin et al. 2010), Palmer and Gasman (2008) asserted that, for Black students, there are added benefits when practitioners share these attributes. This included access to someone who can assist them with navigating various environments as a racial/ethnic minority, serve as a realistic role model, and prove that becoming a Black professional is feasible. In other words, Black practitioners provided Black students with an opportunity to "see themselves" in someone with whom they have forged a committed relationship.

Harper (2009; 2015) suggested that institutions make a conscious effort to diversify and educate their faculty, and increase the number of mentors available to students of color, as

practitioners who engage students within and outside of the classroom can help address racial disparities. In fact, Townsend (1994) contended that, for Black students, having access to faculty who serve as advocates, mentors, and/or counselors is positively correlated with persistence. Yet, several scholars have noted the dearth of faculty, and thus, mentors of color in academe (Allen, Jacobson and Lomotey, 1995; Blackwell, 1989; Grant-Thompson & Atkinson, 1997; Johnson, 1998). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), only 6% of the faculty at our nation's institutions of higher education are Black. Since most mentors select mentees who have similar socio-cultural attributes (Blackwell, 1989), the limited presence of faculty of color at colleges and universities decreases the number of mentors available. Blackwell (1989) stated that, within the realm of higher education, little attention has been paid to ethnic minorities and mentoring, which is "a process that can increase the retention of minority students in colleges and universities…through which larger numbers may be graduated from colleges, enter and complete graduate training, be hired for faculty positions, and be retained as contributing members of the professoriate" (p. 8). Indeed, *What Matters in College?* (Astin, 1993) revealed that faculty-student interaction was positively correlated with students choosing a career in college teaching. This finding is promising as it relates to the numbers of Black faculty who may enter academe; however, it is important to consider the underrepresentation of other practitioners of color throughout higher education. In the year 2011, less than 9% of the people who held professional administrative jobs at colleges nationwide were Black (Patton, 2013). Yet research regarding practitioners who are not faculty has indicated that administrators, counselors, and advisors can be instrumental in Black students' sense of adjustment, comfort, belonging, and competence as college students (Deil-Amen, 2011; McLean-McKessey, 2015; Orozco, Alvarez & Gutkin, 2010). Nevertheless, this research is sparse, as the literature regarding practitioners and Black collegians primarily focuses on the role of faculty.

Amaury Nora's Student/Institution Engagement Model

Amaury Nora's Student/Institution Engagement Model (Nora, 2002; 2003) accounts for the ways in which Black collegians' racial/ethnic and socioeconomic identities often intersect while highlighting the role of practitioner-student relationships in the Black college student experience. An examination of these relationships should be situated within this theoretical framework, as it captures several distinct features of such an experience, and provides a lens through which we can gain a better understanding of how to best serve this population.

The Student/Institution Engagement Model (Nora, 2002; 2003) emphasizes the interaction between a student and institution and addresses precollege, college, and

environmental factors or "pulls" that influence student retention/persistence and graduation. Precollege factors consist of parental education, academic resources, educational plans, leadership and involvement in extracurricular activities, and academic self-concept. College or institutional factors include educational goal commitment, academic performance, and academic and social integration. Finally, environmental factors or "pulls" consist of financial circumstances, work or familial responsibilities, and support for college enrollment from family and friends (Arbona & Nora, 2004). Nora's theoretical framework is appropriate for studying the role of relationships with practitioners in the success of Black college students, as key elements of the model capture several unique facets of their experiences, such as parental education and encouragement, academic performance and social experiences, campus climate, and work or familial obligations, all of which have been found to influence Black students' decision or ability to remain in college (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). In fact, Rendon, Jalomo, and Nora (2000), asserted that students live in, and interact with, "multiple worlds" composed of various persons (parents, peer networks, children, community mentors) that often help shape their aspirations and motivation. Rendon (2006) further contended that "college faculty and staff should take the initiative in reaching out to students to assist them to learn more about college, believe in themselves as learners, and have a positive college experience."

The value of practitioner-student relationships to the success of Black college students is highlighted in the *academic and social integration* piece of the Student/Institution Engagement Model. Formal and informal interaction with faculty leads to increased educational goal commitment. Validating experiences, which include encouragement and support from faculty or staff increase self-esteem, self-efficacy and acceptance of others, and the knowledge that one is part of a global society. Mentoring experiences with faculty and counseling/advising staff lead to institutional commitment or a sense of belonging and belief that attending college is a worthwhile experience. Although beneficial in and of themselves, all of these relationships, interactions and experiences can impact students' persistence, and ultimately increase the likelihood that they will graduate.

In his research on how mentoring increases persistence and graduation, Nora noted that literature on students' interaction with faculty suggests these relationships largely contribute to undergraduate success. A wide range of faculty-student interaction, including career or personal counseling, advising, intellectual discussions, and informal socializing contribute to the social integration and satisfaction of students. According to Nora and Crisp (2008):

> The more likely students view interactions as positive and feel
> they are integrated into the campus environment as valued

members, the more likely students will persist…While the argument is not that career counseling or informal socializing is the same as mentoring, it is highly probable that during such activities and interactions similar aspects of mentoring can be experienced. (p. 339)

Considering the role of counseling staff in the *academic and social integration* piece of the Student/Institution Engagement Model, this also has several implications for the significance of these practitioners in student success.

Nora's Student/Institution Engagement Model underscores the importance of precollege, college and environmental factors, and how interaction with and between these "worlds" can impact Black college students. The model also illustrates how practitioners and the institution at large function as integral parts of a student's experience. This includes interactions with practitioners and the institution that produce a wide range of psychosocial benefits, which may be defined by practitioners and Black students as isolated, or collective indicators of success. Thus, Nora's Student/Institution Engagement Model is a suitable theoretical framework for understanding the role of practitioner-student relationships in the Black college student experience, and how these relationships foster Black college student success.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study

This literature review has limitations that could be important to future research, and implications that may not be generalizable. Although there has been a great deal of research regarding the role of practitioner-student relationships in student success, several scholars have noted that there are still gaps in the literature regarding how they function as an integral part of the success of Black students in particular (Allen et al., 1995; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Griffin et al., 2010; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007). Furthermore, research regarding practitioners and Black collegians primarily focused on the role of faculty and does not substantially highlight the ways in which other practitioners impact Black collegians. The literature also provided limited solutions concerning the implementation of institutional programs and practices that provide access to practitioners who have experience working with, are able to understand, and are willing to develop relationships with Black students, and fails to clearly explain why such programs and practices may be especially beneficial for Black collegians.

Another major drawback of the literature is that, with few exceptions (Bush & Bush, 2010; Grant-Thompson & Atkinson, 1997; Pope, 2002; Wood & Turner, 2011), relationships between practitioners and Black students at community colleges have been given little attention. Research regarding the experiences of Black college students is generally based upon those

enrolled full-time at selective residential four-year colleges or universities. This fails to highlight many aspects of the Black community college student experience, including their first-generation, socioeconomic, financial aid, and enrollment statuses. Over 40% of Black undergraduates are enrolled at community colleges. A substantial proportion of first-generation college students and students receiving financial aid also attend community colleges, representing 36% and 58% of the population, respectively. In addition, over 60% of community college students are attending part-time (American Association of Community Colleges, 2017). Further examinations of practitioner-student relationships should account for the distinct characteristics of students enrolled at community colleges, and how race/ethnicity intersects with these factors.

Lastly, a wide range of scholarship has been dedicated to student success, but as previously noted, it is largely based upon assumptions and beliefs that may not be consistent with how practitioners and Black students in particular define success. It would be both practical and beneficial for future research to focus on a more holistic approach when conceptualizing notions of success. This would entail challenging the prevailing definition of success and examining cumulative achievements (e.g., exiting remediation, mastering of course contents, increases to academic and social integration), as well as the fluidity of the concept itself. Higher education research addressing all of the aforementioned would make the literature regarding the success of Black collegians more robust.

Conclusion

Relationships with practitioners can produce a number of academic and psychosocial benefits that are particularly important for Black students who, because of historical and existing inequities within higher education, do not have the same collegiate experiences or access to practitioners as their White counterparts. Research has shown that the impact of these relationships could lead to the transformation of institutional programs and practices that are racially/ethnically exclusionary, and/or the creation of those that are inclusionary (Blackwell, 1989; Harper, 2009; Harper, 2015; Rhodes, 2008). Given recent, current, and continued demographic shifts in the U.S. population, colleges and universities cannot meet institutional goals without: a) providing practitioners who are culturally competent and indiscriminately invested in student success, and b) implementing programs and practices which take the unique experiences of Black students into account. Creating and sustaining practitioner-student relationships can directly impact the success of Black students, and institutions of higher education.

References

Allen, K., Jacobson, S., & Lomotey, K. (1995). African American women in educational administration: The importance of mentors and sponsors. Journal of Negro Education, 64(4), 409-422.

American Association of Community Colleges (2017). American Association of Community Colleges fast facts 2017. Retrieved from https://www.aacc.nche.edu/research-trends/fast-facts/

American Association of State Colleges and Universities (2006). Graduation rates and student success: Squaring means and ends. Retrieved from http://www.aascu.org/uploadedFiles/AASCU/Content/Root/PolicyAndAdvocacy/PolicyPublications/06b_perspectives(1).pdf

Ancis, J. R., Sedlacek, W. E., & Mohr, J. J. (2000). Student perceptions of campus cultural climate by race. Journal of Counseling and Development: JNP, 78(2), 180-185.

Arbona, C., & Nora, A. (2004). Predicting college attainment of Hispanic students: Individual, institutional, and environmental factors. Association for Institutional Research. Retrieved from http://www.airweb.org/GrantsAndScholarships/Documents/Grants2004/ArbonaNoraRG2004Proposal.pdf

Arroyo, A., & Gasman, M. (2014). An HBCU-based educational approach for Black college student success: Toward a framework with implications for all institutions. American Journal of Education, 121(1), 57-85.

Astin, A. W. (1993). What matters in college? Liberal Education, 79(4), 4.

Astin, A. W. (2004). To use graduation rates to measure excellence, you have to do your homework. Chronicle Of Higher Education, 51(9), B20.

Blackwell, J.E. (1981). Mainstreaming outsiders: The production of black professionals. Bayside, NY: General Hall.

Blackwell, J.E. (1983). Networking and mentoring: A study of cross-generational experiences of blacks in graduate and professional schools. Atlanta, GA: Southern Educational Foundation.

Blackwell, J. E. (1989). Mentoring: An action strategy for increasing minority faculty. Academe, 75(5), 8-14.

Bush E. C., & Bush L. (2010). Calling out the elephant: An examination of African American male achievement in community colleges. Journal of African American Males in Education, 1(1),

40–62.

Cabrera, A. F., Nora, A., Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E., & Hagedorn, L. S. (1999). Campus
        racial climate and the adjustment of students to college: A comparison between White
students and African-American students. The Journal of Higher Education, 70(2), 134-160.

Campbell, D. E., & Campbell, T. A. (2000). The mentoring relationship: Differing perceptions of
        benefits. College Student Journal, 34(4), 516.

Campbell, T. A., & Campbell, D. E. (1997). Faculty/student mentor program: Effects on
        academic performance and retention. Research in Higher Education, 38(6), 727-742.

Chattanooga State Community College (2015). Mission statement. Retrieved from
        http://catalog.chattanoogastate.edu/content.php?catoid=15&navoid=1685

City University of New York (2018). Connected CUNY strategic framework. Retrieved from
        http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/connected/

Community College of Rhode Island (2015). Mission of the college. Retrieved from
        http://www.ccri.edu/about/mission.html

Crisp, G., & Cruz, I. (2009). Mentoring college students: A critical review of the literature
        between 1990 and 2007. Research in Higher Education, 50(6), 525-545.

Deil-Amen, R. (2011). Socio-academic integrative moments: Rethinking academic and social
        integration among two-year college students in career-related programs. The Journal of
        Higher Education, 82(1), 54-91.

Edlind, E. P., & Haensly, P. A. (1985). Gifts of mentorships. Gifted Child Quarterly, 29(2), 55-
        60.Grant-Thompson, S., & Atkinson, D. R. (1997). Cross-cultural mentor effectiveness
        and African-American male students. Journal of Black Psychology, 23(2), 120-34.

Griffin, K. A., Perez II, D., Holmes, A. P. E., & Mayo, C. E. P. (2010). Investing in the future: The
        importance of faculty mentoring in the development of students of color in STEM. New
        Directions for Institutional Research, 148, 95-103.

Harper, S. R. (2009). Race-conscious student engagement practices and the equitable
        distribution of enriching educational experiences. Liberal Education, 95(4), 38-45.

Harper, S. R. (2015). Black male college achievers and resistant responses to racist
        stereotypes at predominantly white colleges and universities. Harvard Educational
        Review, 85, 646-674.

Iowa Central Community College (2010). About Iowa Central. Retrieved from

http://www.iowacentral.edu/about.asp

Jennings, N., Lovett, S., Cuba, L., Swingle, J., & Lindkvist, H. (2013). "What would make this a successful year for you?" How students define success in college. Liberal Education, 99(2), 40-47.

Johnson, G. G. (1998). African American women administrators as mentors: Significance and strategies. Initiatives (Washington, D.C.), 58(3), 49-56.

Kuh, G. D., Cruce, T. M., Shoup, R., Kinzie, J., & Gonyea, R. M. (2008). Unmasking the effects of student engagement on first-year college grades and persistence. The Journal of Higher Education, 79(5), 540-563.

McClain, S., Beasley, S. T., Jones, B., Awosogba, O., Jackson, S. & Cokley, K. (2016). An examination of the impact of racial and ethnic identity, impostor feelings, and minority status stress on the mental health of black college students. Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 44(2), 101-117.

McLean-McKessey, A. (2015). A recipe for success: Examining the relationships between practitioners and Black students in community college (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3729799).

National Center for Education Statistics. (2016a). Associate's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity and sex of student: Selected years, 1976-77 through 2014-15 [Data file]. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_321.20.asp

National Center for Education Statistics. (2016b). Bachelor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity and sex of student: Selected years, 1976-77 through 2014-15 [Data file]. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_322.20.asp

National Center for Education Statistics. (2016c). Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level and control of institution and race/ethnicity of student: Selected years, 1976 through 2015 [Data file]. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_306.20.asp

National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). Percentage distribution of full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by academic rank, race/ethnicity, and sex: Fall 2015 [Data file]. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=61

Nora, A. (2002). A theoretical and practical view of student adjustment and academic achievement. In W. G. Tierney & L. S. Hagedorn (Eds.), Increasing access to college:

Extending possibilities for all students (pp. 65-77). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Nora, A. (2003). Access to higher education for Hispanic students: Real or illusory? In J. Castellanos & L. Jones (Eds./), The majority in the minority: Expanding the representation of Latina/o faculty, administrators and students in higher education (pp. 47-68). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Nora, A., & Cabrera, A. F. (1996). The role of perceptions of prejudice and discrimination on the adjustment of minority students to college. The Journal of Higher Education, 67(2), 119.

Nora, A., & Crisp, G. (2008). Mentoring students: Conceptualizing and validating the multi-dimensions of a support system. Journal of College Student Retention, 9(3), 337-356.

Orozco, G. L., Alvarez, A. N., & Gutkin, T. (2010). Effective advising of diverse students in community colleges. Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 34(9), 717.

Palmer, R., & Gasman, M. (2008). "It takes a village to raise a child": The role of social capital in promoting academic success for African-American men at a Black college. Journal of College Student Development, 49(1), 52-70.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1977). Patterns of faculty-student informal interaction beyond the classroom and voluntary freshman attrition. The Journal of Higher Education, 48(5), 540-552.

Patton, S. (2013). At the Ivies, it's still white at the top. The Chronicle of Higher Education, 59(39), A4-A12.

Pena, E. V., Bensimon, E. M., & Colyar, J. (2006). Contextual problem defining: Learning to think and act from the standpoint of equity. Liberal Education, 92(2), 48-55.

Pierce, C. M. (1969). Is bigotry the basis of the medical problems of the ghetto? In J. C. Norman (Ed.), Medicine in the ghetto (pp. 301-312). New York: Meredith.

Pierce, C. M. (1995). Stress analogs of racism and sexism: Terrorism, torture, and disaster. In C. V. Willie, P. P. Rieker, B. M. Kramer, & B. S. Brown (Eds.), Mental health, racism, and sexism (pp. 277-293). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Pieterse, A. L., Carter, R. T., Evans, S. A., & Walter, R. A. (2010). An exploratory examination of the associations among racial and ethnic discrimination, racial climate, and trauma-related symptoms in a college student population. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 57(3), 255-263.

Pope, M. L. (2002). Community college mentoring: Minority student perception. Community

College Review, 30(3), 31-45.

Prairie View A&M (2017). Strategic Plan 2016-2021. Retrieved from http://www.pvamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/StrategicPlan_Web.pdf

Rendon, L. I. (2006). Reconceptualizing student success for underserved students. National Postsecondary Education Cooperative. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/resp_Rendon.pdf

Rendon, L. I., Jalomo, R. E., & Nora, A. (2000). Theoretical considerations in the study of minority retention. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), Reworking the Student Departure Puzzle (pp. 127-56). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Rhodes, D. L. (2008). Does mentoring really work for college students? Allied Academies International Conference. Academy of Educational Leadership Proceedings, 13(2), 62-66.

Rockstroh, E. C. (2011). Examining student success: Student definitions and perceptions of success at the California community colleges (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3474465).

San Diego City College (2010). Master plan 2010-2011. Retrieved from http://www.sdcity.edu/Portals/0/About/StrategicPlanning/MasterPlan/ 2361_MasterPlan.2010-2011.update.web.pdf

Schneider, C. G. (2013). Losing our way on the meanings of student success. Liberal Education, 99(2), 2-3. Schwitzer, A. M., Griffin, O. T., Ancis, J. R., & Thomas, C. R. (1999). Social adjustment experiences of African American college students. Journal of Counseling & Development, 77(2), 189-197.

Smith, W.A., Allen, W.R., & Danley, L. L. (2007). "Assume the position...you fit the description": Psychosocial experiences and racial battle fatigue among African American males college students. American Behavioral Scientist, 51(4), 551-578.

Solorzano, D., Allen, W., & Carroll, G. (2002). Keeping race in place: Racial microaggressions and campus racial climate at the University of California, Berkeley. The Chicano-Latino Law Review, 23(15), 15-112.

Solorzano, D. G., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. The Journal of Negro Education, 69(1), 60-73.

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (2010). A social capital framework for the study of institutional agents & their role in the empowerment of low-status students & youth. USC Center for Urban Education.

Retrieved from
http://cue.usc.edu/tools/Social_Capital%2C_Institutional_Agents_%2526_the_Empower
ment_of_Low-status_Youth%2C_by_RD_Stanton-Salazar.pdf

Strayhorn, T. L. & Terrell, M. C. (2007). Mentoring and satisfaction with college for Black
students. Negro Educational Review, 58(1/2), 69-83,132.

Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E. T., & Blimling, G. S. (1999). Students' out-of-class experiences
and their influence on learning and cognitive development: A literature review. Journal of
College Student Development, 40(5), 610.

Tinto, V. (1993). Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition (2nd
ed.). The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Townsend, L. (1994). How universities successfully retain and graduate Black students. The
Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 85-89.

University of Colorado Boulder (2018). About. Retrieved from https://www.colorado.edu/about

Witham, K., & Bensimon, E.M. (2012). Creating a culture of inquiry around equity and student
success. In S.D. Museus & U.M. Jayakumar (Eds.), Creating Campus Cultures:
Fostering Success among Racially Diverse Student Populations (pp. 46-67). New York:
Routledge.

Wood, J. L., & Turner, C. S. (2011). Black males and the community college: Student
perspectives on faculty and academic success. Community College Journal of Research
and Practice, 35(1-2), 135-151.