

MANIFESTING STATUS AND EXPECTATIONS: DETERMINANTS OF COLLEGE
PERSISTENCE AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN
MALE STUDENTS

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DEDICATION

Being a parent is a choice. I am immensely grateful for my supportive parents. This work is dedicated to my father and mother. For my father, the late Richard F. Grice: I am because he was... an important man. His quiet dignity and support of his family is inspiring. For my mother, Reacy Thompson Grice, I am because she continues to be... an advocate, guiding post, and leaning post for me and all her children. I love you. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

CHRISTOPHER EDWARD GRICE

MANIFESTING STATUS AND EXPECTATIONS: DETERMINANTS OF COLLEGE PERSISTENCE AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS

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Despite a growing body of literature on college persistence and completion patterns for students of color, there is a lack of published literature that examines the academic success of African American male college students in direct comparison to their African American female counterparts. To fill this gap, this dissertation systematically examines the determinants of persistence and completion among male African American college students in comparison with female African Americans. Three research questions guide this study. First, what factors influence the persistence of African American male college students? Second, what are the most important factors in college persistence and completion for African American male students? Finally, how do the determinants of college persistence and completion resemble or differ between African American male students and their female counterparts?

This study develops a modified sociocultural model that is built on models of student integration; student attrition; student retention, and status construction theory, and critical race theory. To test the theoretical framework and hypotheses, this study uses the latest and largest nationally representative sample of African American first-time-beginning college students from the 2004/09 Beginning Postsecondary Students

Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/09) conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). The main method of analysis is logistic regression analysis because the dependent variables are dichotomous.

The results show factors influencing African American male collegians' persistence behavior differ across the three time periods but are primarily categorized as collegiate performance variables. The most important factors in male African American college student persistence and completion differ in each time period. The common determinants of persistence and completion for both male and female college students are primarily performance variables.

This dissertation makes a number of significant scholarly and practical contributions. First, this dissertation is the only quantitative, comparative study of the college persistence and completion of male African American students and their female counterparts utilizing a large nationally representative sample of African American students. This study also proposes a framework for predicting the college persistence and completion of male African American students that incorporates dominant student persistence models and embraces culturally responsive explanations of the phenomenon.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“[Educated blacks] Society refuses to consider them genuine Negroes. The Negro is a savage, whereas the student is civilized. "You're us," and if anyone thinks you are a Negro he is mistaken, because you merely look like one.”- Frantz Fanon

Nearly half of American students entering postsecondary education will not complete a degree program in six years (Evelyn 2002; Harper 2009; Hauser and Anderson 1991; Kim and Schneider 2005; Tinto 1993). This trend is ever present among ethnic minorities (Barajas and Pierce 2001; Ellis 2002; Hagedorn, Maxwell and Hampton 2001). In spite of increased attention and programs aimed at mitigating this, comparatively, African American males are the least likely of all groups to complete an undergraduate degree (Knapp, Kelly-Reid and Ginder 2010). The non-persistence and/or non-completion of undergraduate degrees contain a triad of social implications for the Black male initially and ultimately for society-at-large:

- (a) **Micro-level:** According to Mincy, Lewis and Han (2006: 8-10), at the individual level “... marriage and living with children is least likely for less-educated black men...” This group may experience higher rates of homelessness due to the racialization of labor and lower wages paid when compared to degree-holding individuals. Moreover, less-educated African American men experience higher rates of unemployment compared to their less-educated White and Hispanic male counterparts (Holzer and Offner 2006).

- (b) **Meso-level:** At the community level, lower levels of educational attainment in general and college non-completion specifically have been linked to educational and economic instability as well as higher rates of crime and incarceration among residents (Mincy 2006; Smeeding, Garfinkel and Mincy 2011). Lower wages reduce potential and actual tax revenue, which affects services to certain communities as well as the physical and social infrastructure of said communities (Furstenberg 2009; Wilson 1987).
- (c) **Macro Level:** Currently, six out of every ten jobs require some postsecondary education and specialized training (Carnevale and Derochers 2003). The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by the year 2100, non-Hispanic Whites will only make up 40 percent of the U.S. population. African Americans currently comprise about 13 percent of the total U.S. population. The far-reaching grasp of generational poverty and under-education as the accepted and expected status of ethnic minorities is systematically weakening the American economy and the role and influence of America on the world's stage (Callan 2008; Hunt 2008).

Little attention has focused on the direct impact of *status construction*¹ on the persistence and completion rates of ethnic minorities in general and African American men in particular. Despite the growing body of literature on the college persistence and completion patterns for students of color, there is a lack of published literature that

¹ According to social construction theory, status construction is a psychosociological process of how groups associate greater status and expected competence with one category of social distinction rather than others.

examines the academic success of Black males in direct comparison to their African American female counterparts. In the majority of college persistence studies, race or ethnicity is employed as a tertiary variable (Allen 1999; Astin 1987; Hirschy, Bremer, and Castellano 2011; St. John, Kirshstein, and Noel 1991; Tross et al. 2000), following student socioeconomic status and academic preparedness. Furthermore, college persistence research on African Americans traditionally focuses on institutional type (Evelyn 2002; Hagedorn, Maxwell and Hampton 2001; Richardson and Bender 1987; Wood and Turner 2011) or treats gender as a constant (Fleming 1983; Hagedorn, Maxwell and Hampton 2001; Harper 2004; Johnson, Schwartz and Bower 2000; Palmer, and Maramba 2011). Commonly, persistence researchers disaggregate data by race, but not by gender. While similarities may exist among Black male and female students, researchers should be vigilant in assuming the homogeneity of their intracultural and intercultural experiences and statuses in society as well as postsecondary education. Accordingly, it is essential to expand the literature on African American intraethnic and gendered college persistence and completion patterns in order to account for academic success factors that may be unique to the Black male experience.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine factors that determine college persistence towards degree attainment among African American male students in comparison to African American female students. The terms African American and Black are used interchangeably in this study and refer to a person having origins in any of the

Black racial groups of Africa. Much of the scholarship on collegiate student persistence uses the terms retention and persistence interchangeably. The former is one of many benchmarks in determining institutional quality, based on the percentage of students retained in specific cohorts (Reason 2009; Seidman 2005). It is a measurement of enrollment. The latter term is an individual occurrence measuring whether a student continues on to a goal.

While it is recognized that a student's goal when enrolling in postsecondary education may not be to graduate from college, the bulk of college completion research assumes college degree attainment as the primary goal. Seidman (2005: 14) describes persistence as the "desire and action of a student to stay within the system of higher education from beginning through degree completion". Therefore, for the purpose of this dissertation the term *persistence* is defined as progress towards degree attainment which includes but is not limited to continued college enrollment.

Three research questions guided this study. First, what factors influence the persistence of African American male college students? Second, what are the most important factors in college persistence and completion for African American male college students? Finally, how do the determinants of college persistence and college completion resemble or differ between African American male college students and African American female college students.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A scarcity of research is available that examines the disproportionate persistence and college completion rates of African American male students in direct comparison to their female counterparts. This dissertation contributes to the sociology of education and ethnic studies fields in three ways. First, this dissertation will be the first quantitative, comparative study of the college persistence and completion of African American students utilizing a nationally representative sample of African Americans. Current studies of college persistence and completion of African American students are chiefly qualitative, and the results cannot be generalized to the African American student population. They tend to lump male and female African American students together. Unlike the existing studies, this dissertation focuses on the college persistence and completion of male African American students in comparison to their female counterparts. It uses a quantitative approach and a nationally representative sample to test key determinants of African American male college persistence and completion. The implications of this study are wide and interdisciplinary in nature.

Second, the theoretical framework proposed in this dissertation will integrate the dominant student persistence models, status construction theory, and critical race theory and offer a framework appropriate for predicting the college persistence and completion of male African American students and perhaps students of color. Findings will contribute to an in-depth understanding of factors that may hinder socially diverse students in the postsecondary educational arena. In particular, findings will contribute to

the growing body of literature centered on gender equality in education as well as student-efficacy and community-based approaches to education.

Third, the findings of this study will yield significant practical implications for improving the college persistence and completion rates of African American students and perhaps other minority students. Currently, minorities comprise 37 percent of the total U.S. population. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2043 the country will become a majority-minority nation and racial and ethnic minorities will comprise 57 percent of the population by 2060 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). African Americans specifically are expected to increase to 14.7 percent (61.8 million) of the population by 2043 from 13.1 percent (41.2 million) currently (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). With the growth of ethnic minorities, the persistence and completion of college will become even more important. The results from this study may help generate programs and policies that will enhance the accessibility of higher education for minorities in general and African Americans in particular. Other practical contributions include specific retention approaches and models for universities and persistence strategies and coping mechanisms for African Americans and other socioculturally diverse college students.

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

This dissertation is arranged into seven chapters. Chapter two reviews the literature on the history, and contemporary application of college retention and college persistence research. This chapter also discusses significant themes that have informed the structure of this study including minority student persistence, analytical frameworks

of student persistence, and African American male college persistence and completion. Chapter three outlines a modified analytical framework called the sociocultural perspective and proposes hypotheses for testing. Chapter four describes the data, sample, variables, measurements, methods, and analytical strategies used for this study. Chapter five presents the findings of male African American two-year persistence, four-year persistence, and six-year college completion. Chapter six presents results concerning the resemblances and differences in college persistence and completion between male African American students and female African American students. Chapter seven summarizes the study's major findings, discusses the implications of the findings, highlights the contributions and limitations of this study, and provides recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“Everything can be explained to the people, on the single condition that you want them to understand.” -Frantz Fanon

The overwhelming majority of persistence research for the past 40 years has concentrated on the development (Bean 1980; Tinto 1975, 1993) and testing (Bean and Metzner 1985; Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini 1977, 1980, 1983) of theoretical and conceptual models of student departure. Research shows the first year of postsecondary education is critical for first-time, beginning college students. During this first year of study, Tinto (1993) found that over half of first-time beginning American students do not complete their first year or return to school. The factors affecting college persistence and completion are innumerable, vary across theoretical explanations, and are interrelated in nature. For example, most literature discusses how the lack of pre-collegiate preparation in middle and high school (Hirschy, Bremer, and Castellano 2011; Tross et al. 2000) may correlate with the need for first-year college course remediation. Required course remediation affects first-year college grade point average (Murtaugh, Burns, and Schuster 1999), which may impact both personal and institutional commitment, which relates to year-to-year persistence (Bremer et al. 2013). In addition, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status and age have been found to interact with

these factors making persistence towards degree completion ever more difficult for nontraditional and minority students.

RETENTION STUDIES

According to Berger and Lyon (2005), the earliest studies of American college retention date back to the 1930s. The aftermath of World War II brought about the emergence of mass higher education in America. For the first time in their history, American colleges and universities saw general increases in the enrollment of economically and regionally diverse populations, primarily because of military veterans (Thelin 2004). This rise in the accessibility of higher education created the foundation for what is commonly known today as America's middle class (Lipsitz 1998; Oliver and Shapiro 1995) in addition to a host of latent dysfunctions for American universities.

By the beginning of the 1960s, the effects of institutions not being prepared to meet the needs and/or interests of large, diverse student bodies became apparent. The burgeoning Civil Rights and Women's Rights movements, America's *war on poverty* and the looming Vietnam War situated college campuses across America as hotbeds for social and political protests. Rapid social change during this time also raised questions about social inequality and life chances in general and educational accessibility, student success and degree attainment in particular (Berger and Lyon 2005; Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski 2011). This is the genesis of modern retention research.

The employment of social theory to help explain why particular students persisted while others did not was the hallmark of retention literature in the 1970s (Spady 1970

1971; Tinto 1975). Theorists Spady (1971) and Tinto (1975) found that student attrition is rooted in academic performance, which relates to a student's level of social integration. Influential retention theorists of the 1980s include Bean and Metzner (1980, 1985) and Astin (1984, 1987). During this time literature on retention grew as many institutions sought to turn retention theory into praxis as a focal point in their institutional strategic planning goals (Berger and Lyon 2005). These scholars highlighted the importance of factors external to the respective institution (i.e., socioeconomic status, commuter status, prior academic performance, etc.), which may affect early student departure before degree attainment. The bulk of retention research in the last decade of the twentieth century focused on underrepresented populations such as students of color and those from low-wealth backgrounds (Mason 1998; Nora and Cabrera 1996; Tierney 1992; Tinto 1993). Most of the scholarship of this era focused on higher education promoting multiculturalism within its student and faculty body and campus culture as a strategy for retention (Swail 2004). Finally, retention literature from the past decade or so has concentrated on student-centered programs aimed at connecting students to their respective campus through [institution-specific] universal student experiences (Keels 2004; Thayer 2000). These programs and initiatives were designed to mitigate social disparities that created the very designation of *minority*, *nontraditional* or *culturally diverse* many students were now entering higher education with. Positive formal and informal interactions with cross-functional and interdepartmental college faculty and staff

were found to positively affect student retention (Habley 2004; Tinto 2004; Waters 2004).

MINORITY STUDENT RETENTION

There is a generous amount of research on minority student retention. The overwhelming majority of this scholarship defines *minority student* along racial and ethnic descriptors rather than gender, sexual or religious orientations, yet most of these studies do not disaggregate minority students into distinct racial or ethnic categories for an in-depth analysis. Many minority students leave school before program completion and degree attainment. This is a huge concern because racial/ethnic minorities are beginning to comprise the majority of the general population in the United States and a considerable share of the total undergraduate enrollment (Mow and Nettles 1995). The literature suggests a significant relationship between persistence and ethnicity (Henry 1991; Turner 1994; Wilds and Wilson 1998). Minority college students have unique sociocultural histories, which may affect their overall college experience. For this reason, minority students may require distinct persistence strategies compared to their White counterparts. Consistent in the literature is how financial issues (Braxton, Hirschy and McClendon 2004; Hippensteel, St. John, and Starkey 1996; Nora 1990; Parker 1997) and racial discrimination (Nettles 1988; Kemp 1990; Reichert and Absher 1997; Tierney 1988; Zambrana 1988) disproportionately affect minority student persistence. In addition, variables such as GPA, external “pull” factors (i.e., family commitments, living arrangements, etc.) along with student background and institutional experiences are found

to significantly influence minority student persistence (Bean 1985; Nora and Cabrera 1996; St. John 1990; Tinto 1993). Tinto (1993) best organizes these factors into four distinct categories: *adjustment*, *difficulty*, *incongruence* and *isolation*. Nora and Cabrera (1996) and St. John (1990) agree these features have varying effects on student persistence for different racial/ethnic groups as well as gender groups.

Previous research on minority student retention has shown the absence of academic and non-academic support systems as a huge impediment to persistence (Boylan et al. 1994). Many studies suggest that a large number of minority college students do not possess specific proclivities prior to enrollment and once enrolled may lack access to services designed to improve their chances of persistence (Stamps 1988; Stromei 2000; Szelenyi 2001). This includes limited access to services such as academic tutoring and study skills, coping mechanisms and personal development skills, in addition to organization, planning and time management (Stromei 2000; Szelenyi 2001). Subsequently, researchers such as Padilla et al. (1997) emphasize the use of retention models based on student strengths and institutional distinction. The overarching postulation of this model is student success is hinged on prior and gained cultural and social capital by students. More directly, Padilla et al (1997) view students as experts with various amounts of theoretical and practical knowledge to navigate their specific collegiate landscape.

Academic under-preparedness may affect minority attrition yet it was found to be less significant when compared to non-cognitive factors (Boylan et al. 1994; Sedlacek

1987) such as support and social integration. More specifically, Astin (1975), Sedlacek (1987), and Tinto (1993) discuss the importance of non-academic factors on minority student retention. Tinto (1975, 1993) suggests that institutions retain students and students achieve persistence when their academic and especially social lives are fully integrated with their respective institution. Astin (1975) echoes this in his discussion on the influence of “involvement and identification” on student persistence. According to this model students are more likely to persist when they identify and participate in specific college programs, campus organizations and activities that reflect their goals, interest or backgrounds. This concurs with Sedlacek’s (1987) study that included students’ individual perceptions and conceptualizations of their relationship with their respective schools. A key factor and reoccurring theme in the literature on minority student retention is social integration. Minority student retention improves when positive and authentic social relationships with peers, faculty and the campus environment are established.

AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE COLLEGE PERSISTENCE AND COMPLETION

The face of the American university is changing literally and figuratively (Keller 2001; Pascarella and Terenzini 1998; Woodard et al. 2000). In recent years, scholarship and policies to address the shifting demographics of college enrollment and challenges faced by socially and culturally diverse students have come to the forefront of attention (Reason 2009; Woodard et al. 2000). The last two decades have produced a great body of work on college persistence and completion applying Tinto’s model to populations

beyond its original traditional student focus to include commuter-students, students with disabilities and Latino college students while taking into account the environment factors posited by Bean and Metzner (Braxton 2000; Reason 2003). While a bevy of research on college and minority student retention and completion is available, studies focusing on African American male students specifically are still limited.

Statistically speaking, Black male college students do not complete college at rates comparable to other groups. More specifically, in 2005 Black males comprised about 4.7 percent of the total undergraduate population but received only 3.3 percent of the degrees awarded (U.S. Department of Education 2007). Additionally, in 2009 enrollment increased to 5.3 percent for African American males but they earned only 3.5 percent of undergraduate degrees (U.S. Department of Education 2007). Furthermore, the widest gender-based gap in college enrollment across American racial/ethnic groups is between Black female and Black male students (Harper 2012). Black female students outnumber Black males in enrollment and degree completion (King 2010). This is a trend reversal compared to scholarship from in the 1970s and 1980s, which suggested African American males enjoyed higher rates of enrollment and institutional engagement compared to their female counterparts (Evelyn 2002; Harper 2009; Peter and Horn 2005; Sedlacek 1987). Despite sharing similar sociocultural histories, Black female college students are out-persisting Black men. A concrete understanding of differing factors that may be unique to the Black male experience is imperative. As such, this study focuses on these factors.

Johnson (2013) illuminates that scholarship on Black male college students is typically organized in three broad categories: (a) environmental, (b) social and (c) psychological. Through these categories we can better understand the four commonly documented factors that affect African American male persistence toward degree attainment, which include: (a) the level of social and academic integration in college (Allen 1986; Allen, Epps, and Haniff 1991; Brown 2006; Harper and Quaye 2009); (b) external factors hindering academic progress (Cabrera, Nora and Castaneda 1995; King 1999; Mincy, Lewis, and Han 2006; Palmer and Gasman 2008); (c) availability of non-traditional teaching styles with the employment of culturally responsive views in the curriculum (Davis 1994; Harper et al. 2004; Henry 1991; Palmer and Maramba 2011; Thayer 2000); and (d) experienced or imagined racial discrimination and stereotyping (Brown and Lee 2005; Cuyjet 1997; Feagin and Sikes 1995; Fries-Britt and Griffin 2007; Steele 1997). Several of these elements are similar to those variables that can affect the persistence of all students, but the perception and/or experience of racial discrimination is a glaring difference.

Previous studies indicate that Black males are affected by discrimination and racism when it comes to education (Cross and Slater 2000; Fries-Britt and Griffin 2007; Jenkins 2006; Steele 1997; Steele, and Aronson 1995) and personal development. These phenomena have direct and indirect impacts on Black male college completion. Positive self-image and self-efficacy affect the persistence of African American male students. African American male students experience greater difficulty in developing healthy

gender and racial identities (Brown 2011; Fanon 1952; Kunjufu, 1986) in comparison to their female counterparts. This is an important stage of psychological and social development for all individuals and affects one's ability to function; (Erikson 1968) therefore it is a central idea explored in this study.

Helms (1990) suggests that positive parental, family and community influences can aid in the healthy identity development. Impaired self-identity coupled with real or imagined institutional discrimination can negatively impact intellectual performance and institutional commitment (Gay 1985; Steele 1992), which are factors in college persistence. Dent (1974: 4) states that institutional racism is "a pattern of acts, a well-established set of organizational procedures, formal or informal, which are woven into the operational structure of the organization or institution which subordinates a person or group because of race". Much evidence exists suggesting that African American students attending historically black colleges excel better than those at white colleges. The reason is that black colleges provide encouragement, acceptance, and support for the student's self-esteem, and make them feel mainstream and normal (Fleming 1983, 1984). To increase the retention and completion of African American men and minority students, research has consistently suggested institutions must work to create culturally responsive environments that help students fully develop and be active participants in their education and college community (Kemp 1990; Nettles 1988; Pope 2006; Tinto, Goodsell-Love and Russo 1993; Walters 2004; Wilson 1990; Woodard, Love and Komives 2000).

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS OF COLLEGE PERSISTENCE

Student Integration Models

College persistence research is adeptly rooted in sociological thought. Spady (1970) employed Durkheim's theoretical explanation of suicide to explain early departure of college students. Durkheim asserted that individuals who are not adequately integrated into their given society are more vulnerable to suicide. Spady (1970) applied this idea to suggest that students who are not fully integrated into the social environment of their universities are more susceptible to leaving without attaining a degree. Spady(1971) suggested that five variables including (a) academic potential, (b) normative congruence, (c) grade performance, (d) intellectual development, and (e) friendship support contributed to social integration and could be indirectly linked to the decision to drop out of school through the intervening variables of satisfaction and commitment.

Spady's model was reconfigured by Tinto (1975). In his model, Tinto (1975) added an academic integration component, believing comprehensive student integration into higher education relates to academic and social factors. Tinto's model is the most cited model in persistence research (Bailey and Alfonso 2005; Flowers 2006; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991).Tinto's (1993) core model is constructed of six interrelated elements believed to predict college students' early departure before degree attainment: (a) student characteristics (i.e., family background, cognitive skills, and academic preparedness), (b) original intended academic and career goals (i.e., college major, type of degree seeking), (c) social experiences on campus, (d) level of academic and social

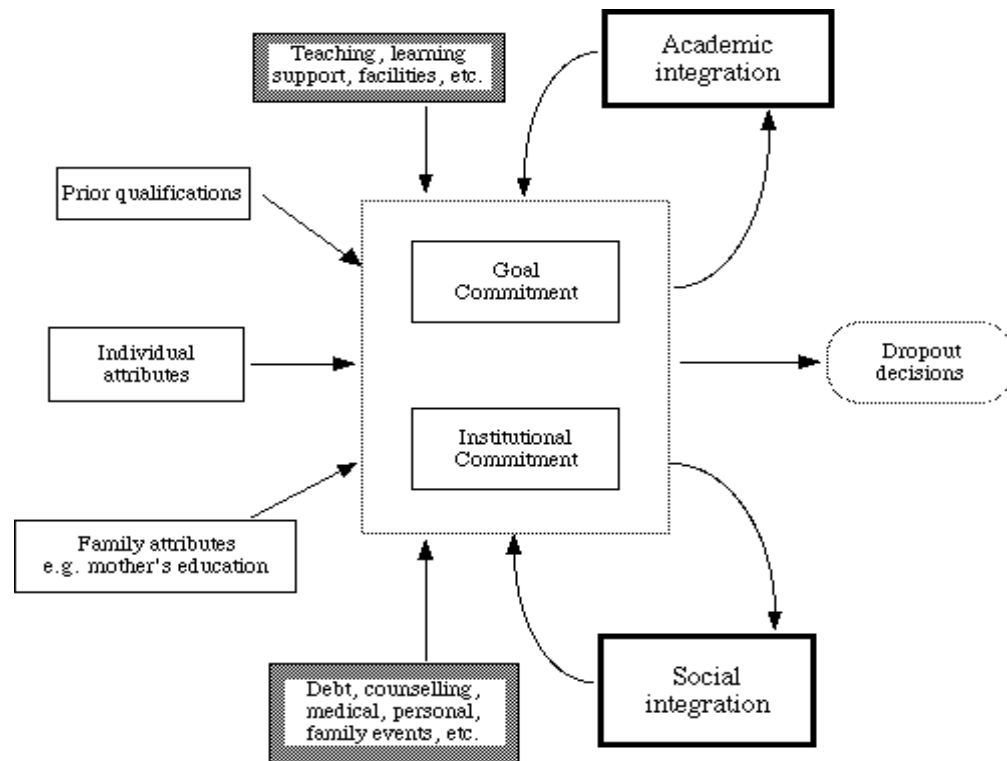
integration, (e) adjusted academic and career goals, and (f) student's level of commitment.

Students' background characteristics have a direct role in explaining whether they persist towards a degree (Tinto 1993). However, their level of academic and social integration is the strongest predictor of college persistence (Tinto 1975, 1987, 1993). Academic integration is traditionally measured by such indicators as academic advising, participation in study groups, college tutoring, and Grade Point Average (GPA). Tinto (1993) included factors such as participation in extracurricular college clubs and campus organizations as well as collegiate and intramural sports teams to compose a social integration scale. Important social relationships aid in student efficacy during important transitions, which positively influences academic performance (Napoli and Wortman 1998), which in turn affects commitment to degree attainment via persistence (Strauss and Vokwein 2004; Tinto 1975, 1987, 1993).

The employment of the academic and social integration framework for understanding persistence and degree completion has been extensively applied to Black male collegians (Dabney-Smith 2009; Flowers 2006; Hampton 2002; Mosby 2009; Riley 2007; Strayhorn 2012) yet is excursive in nature. This study addresses this theoretical weakness. For example, Spradley (2001) reports that positive experiences with peers facilitated persistence among African American male graduates from an urban commuter university, finding a reciprocal relationship between African American males' social integration via classroom interaction and their level of academic integration (i.e., study

group involvement, collaborative work, and positive classroom interactions). In his study, Spradley also noted that these interactions provided African American male students with a medium for supportive friendships and positive academic competition with fellow students. In the same vein, Jones (2001) categorized specific programs and activities that nurtured African American male persistence via social integration into four types: (a) peer relationships; (b) mentoring programs; (c) student government/unions; (d) campus recreation/intramural sports.

In two different studies, it was found that formal social integration affected academic performance of African American males more than informal interaction (Fries-Britt and Turner 2001; Mayo et al. 1995). In a quantitative study, Mayo et al. (1995) found that African American and other ethnic minority male students' academic performance was greatly influenced by formal social integration. In a study of African American students enrolled at a predominately White institution, Fries-Britt and Turner (2001) found that nearly all of the African American participants they interviewed refrained from direct interaction with faculty because they believed they would have to continuously validate their intellectual ability. Although integration is posited by Tinto as the key to determining persistence towards degree attainment, it is well documented African American students experience a high degree of isolation and alienation when attending predominantly White colleges and universities (Allen 1992; Davis 1994; Jones 2001).



2

Figure 2.1. Tinto Conceptual Model

Student Attrition Models

Bean and Metzner's (1985) model is the second dominant model in retention and college completion literature. This model attempts to directly address Tinto's model's problem of generalizability by specifically focusing on factors that affect the persistence of nontraditional students. Bean and Metzner originally conceptualized nontraditional college students as those who may be older in age, attend school part-time, work outside of the institution, and live off-campus or are considered commuter students. This attrition

² Adapted by Steve Draper 2008 from Tinto, V. (1975) "Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research" *Review of Educational Research* vol.45, pp.89-125.

model specifically examines the role of “...(a) background variables (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, gender, educational goals, high school success; (b) academic variables (e.g., course availability, study habits, attendance); (c) environmental variables (e.g., financial support, encouragement, transfer options); and (d) social integration variables (extracurricular activities, on-campus peer relationships)” (Wood 2010) on persistence of nontraditional students.

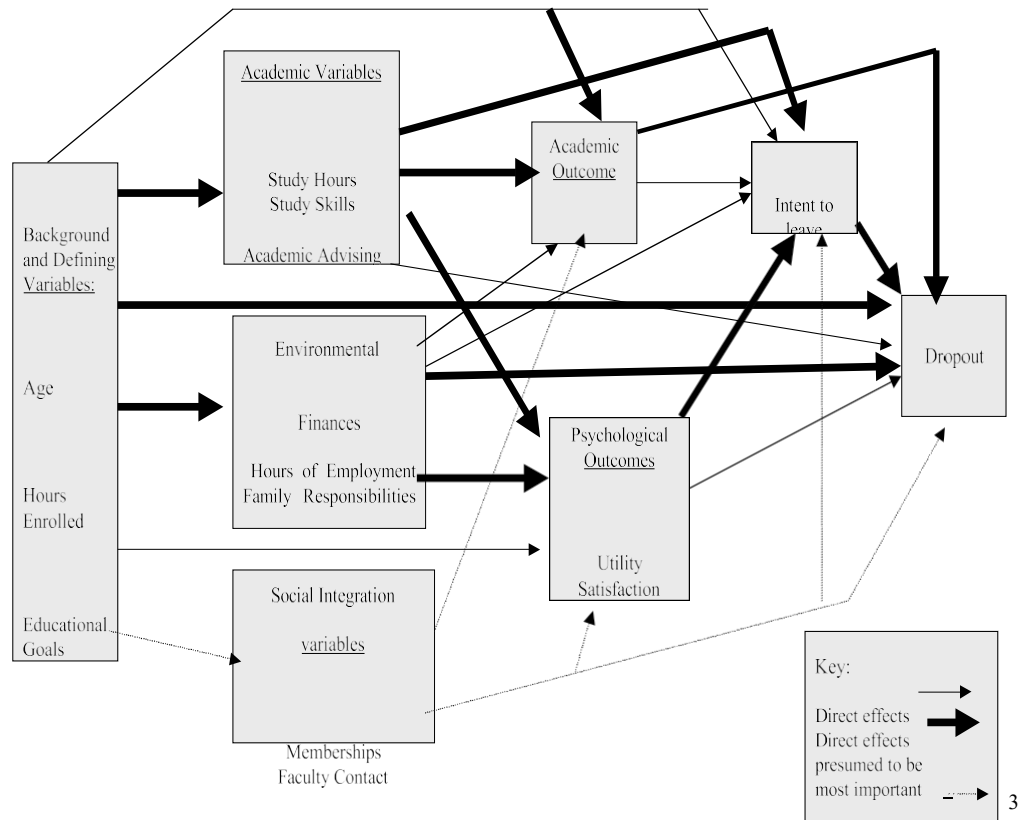


Figure 2.2 Bean and Metzner's Conceptual Model

³Adapted by Mark Alan DeRemer from Bean, J. P. and Metzner, B. (1985). A Conceptual Model of Nontraditional Undergraduate Student Attrition. *Review of Educational Research* 55 (4), 485-540.

At the forefront of this model is an investigation of factors that are external to the college or university the student is attending yet which may affect their persistence towards completion. A major element of collegiate success is the student being able to nurture authentic relationships in the form of mentoring or role models (Choy 2002; Mason 2012; Perna and Titus 2005). Comparatively, African American students are more likely to be first-generation college students from low-wealth families and rely on tuition assistance from the government (Cofer and Somers 1997; Kim and Schneider 2005; Nora 1990; Thayer 2000). This limits the direct impact of family members serving as role models and may create a need for off-campus employment to supplement educational expenses, as well as affect one's ability to live on campus to prevent additional costs. Consequently, many African American students are categorized as nontraditional students and for this reason many researchers use Bean and Metzner's model to scaffold their scholarship (Mason 1994, 1998; Wood 2010; Wood and Turner 2011) on African American persistence and degree attainment. Bean and Metzner (1985) discuss how work or family obligations may compete with a student's attention, attendance and enrollment intensity (Mason 1998; Riley 2007; Wood 2010).

Scholars have discovered that familial support/encouragement is a strong predictor of African American college completion (Gloria and Robinson-Kurplus 1999; Palmer and Gasman 2008; Perna and Titus 2005). This is especially true for Black students at predominately White institutions. (Bonner and Bailey 2006). This is a key component of Bean and Metzner's (1985) external factors affecting persistence and

completion. Yet, beyond Mason (1994, 1998), Wood (2012) and Wood and Williams (2013)—similar to the use of Tinto’s model—few current studies on Black male students solidly identify themselves as reverberations of Bean and Metzner’s model or explicitly state they are building from its framework.

Mason (1994) developed a model that can be considered an offshoot of Bean and Metzner's (1985) model of nontraditional student attrition. Mason's (1994) findings specifically contribute to understanding how psychological factors coupled with traditional academic and environmental factors affect African American male college persistence. In his conceptual model, Mason focused on background variables as well as academic and environmental variables specifically affecting persistence of community college students. Employing a mixed methods approach, Mason surveyed four distinct groups of African American male students: (a) those who did not continue after their first semester of college enrollment; (b) those who completed the first semester yet did not enroll the following semester; (c) those who completed the first semester and began the second; and (d) those who completed two consecutive semesters.

Through survey data and interviews Mason identified key variables that affect Black male retention: certainty of course major; academic advising; course availability; study habits; and nonattendance. In addition to cost of tuition, outside employment, familial responsibilities and encouragement, Mason asserts that these variables collectively produced psychological outcomes such as utility—or the belief that the degree and effort will be worthwhile—satisfaction; goal commitment; and stress. These

psychological factors were just as important in a student's decision to persist towards their goal of completion as previously establish academic and social integration factors or external pulls.

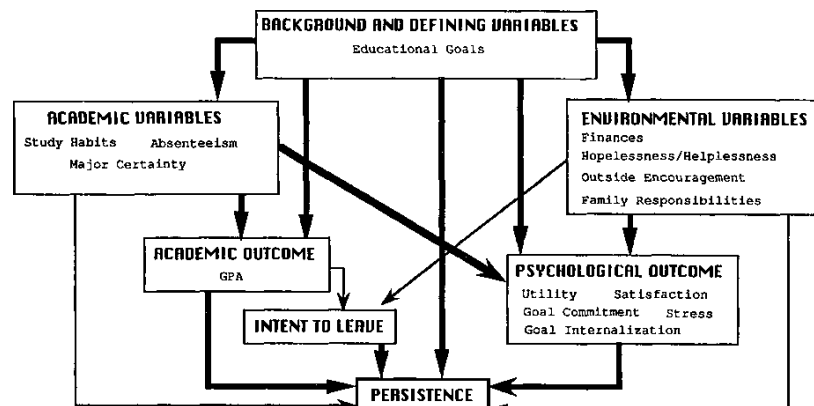


Figure 10
Final Conceptual Model for African American Male
Urban Community College Student Persistence

key : → Direct effects
→ Direct effects presumed most important

Figure 2.3 Mason's Conceptual Model

SUMMARY

This section provided a review of retention and persistence literature related to this study. Prior studies reveal differences in African American male college persistence compared to their female counterparts and other students. Yet in evaluating current studies of college persistence and completion patterns, a consensus among several researchers is that there is no widespread agreement about the efficacy of current explanations to why African American males suffer disproportionately from non-completion compared to other groups (Boner and Bailey 2006; Dancy 2013; Davis 1994;

Hagedorn, Maxwell and Hampton 2001; Pope 2006). In addition, studies often present siloed explanations while neglecting to include theoretical frameworks—such as status construction theory and critical race theory—outside the scope of traditional educational research when examining this phenomenon. Hence, there is a need for a more unified theoretical framework that can best explain the persistence and completion patterns of African American male college students.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

“He who is reluctant to recognize me opposes me.”- Frantz Fanon

Sociology has a unique charge as a living discipline in its being able to be a mirror, snow globe (synthesize and contextualize the past), and crystal ball (predict the future) simultaneously. The former analogy of a mirror serves dual purposes: it speaks to the field’s desire and ability to explain current social phenomena and its methodologies for explaining said phenomena are reflected in the material goods and cultural capital of the studied society. This aptitude occurs because of theory. Yet outside academia, and among a subset within, there is an incorrect but omnipresent idea that social researchers merely pontificate loosely-jointed ideas and personal critiques to explain social phenomena. Colloquially speaking, this cannot be further from the truth. Theory examines the logical part of science and data collection deals with the observational perspective (Babbie 2004; Ethington, Thomas and Pike 2002). Theory requires cultivation and not in a grandiose sense of refinement but in a very pragmatic manner that embraces the continuous modification and expanding of scholarship (Wyer 2004). Accordingly, this study seeks to expand the understanding of male African American college persistence and completion. This chapter proposes a theoretical framework for explaining the college persistence and completion of male African American students by

integrating the useful ideas of existing theories and puts forward hypotheses derived from the framework for testing.

A MODIFIED MODEL FOR MALE AFRICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE PERSISTENCE AND COMPLETION

The Need for a Modified Model

Although prior scholarship on minority student retention and persistence advances the understanding of unique college experiences of undergraduate students with diverse sociocultural histories, there are significant gaps in knowledge as it relates to African American male college students and their experiences (Johnson 2013; Wood 2010). There is a dearth of scholarship on Black male collegians that centers gender in the analysis (Bush and Bush 2013). Instead, most studies (Allen et al. 1991; Bonner and Bailey 2006; Flowers 2002, 2003; Fries-Britt and Griffin 2006) focus on the outputs of racialized identities (i.e., implication of microaggressions and institutional racism on persistence) instead of the inputs of status. In other words, most research on Black male students focuses on the impact (e.g., underperformance) of their status as minority college students, not the social construction of their racialized status as males. It is important to note that universities are not isolated from societies; instead, they are microcosms (Feagin and Sikes 1995). More directly, they reflect society's values and norms.

This study appreciates the invaluable insights offered by the three dominant persistence frameworks⁴ in the scope of college persistence, per their utilization hereof. Even so, their incorporation is punctuated by the recognition of their limited applicability in examining male African American student persistence. These seminal works are not without criticism, which warrants a modified model that addresses their theoretical weaknesses, generally, and applicability to Black male collegians specifically. While Tinto's (1975, 1993) student integration model is the most frequently cited work on college student retention it is not without criticism. Historical critiques have centered on the model's lack of generalizability. More specifically, subsequent scholars have cited the model's overreliance on characteristics of traditional—White, middle class, young adult and male—college students (Tierney 1992); its lack of evaluation of the effects of institutional costs and/or available financial aid on persistence (Bers and Smith 1991); and its applicability to students at non-four-year institutions (Cejda and Hoover 2010; Nora 1990). Tierney (1999) directly challenges Tinto's model of student integration through posing whether or not to achieve integration for students of color it required as he conceptualized a *cultural suicide*. Studies suggest that when socioculturally diverse students are able to maintain and/or incorporate their cultural heritage into their development as students they are more successful (Allen, Epps, and Haniff 1991; Cabrera et al., 1999; Davis 1994; Sedlacek 1987).

⁴“Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research” (Tinto, 1975); “A Conceptual Model of Nontraditional Undergraduate Student Attrition” (Bean and Metzner 1985); “A Persistence Model for African American Male Urban Community College Students”(Mason1998)

Likewise, criticisms of the Bean and Metzner's (1985) student attrition model highlight how the original model did not take account of parental education or family socioeconomic status as background variables in addition to statistically insignificant rates of student retention based on race/ethnicity. In addition to these factors a students' community level interaction/integration, not just with their respective college but with the larger community in which the university is housed and the community from which the student is from, should be evaluated.

The importance of the setting is taken into view by Mason (1994, 1998) in his study. He examines the social environment of the college campus and the geographic region it is located and that many of the male students used in his sample resided. As indicated in Wood (2013) a growing number of scholars are employing Mason's model because unlike Tinto (1975) and Bean and Metzner (1985) it specifically examines Black male collegians. However a limitation of Mason's work is found in its specificity. More directly Mason's model is explicitly based on African American males attending urban community colleges. Many public four-year postsecondary institutions are located near urban centers but may be considered as a "suburban" or even "rural" campus through the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Furthermore, not all male African American college students attend two-year colleges. Again, the model is widely used and cited for its thoroughness, so its validity is not in question; its applicability to a broader range of Black male collegians is.

Hence, this study formulates a modified model that builds on the models of Tinto (1975), Bean and Metzner (1985), and Mason (1998) through a reexamination and reconfiguring of interrelated variables specifically for male African American college student persistence and completion and by the incorporation of useful elements from status construction theory and critical race theory.

Theoretical Foundations of the Modified Model

Sociological perspective. Tinto's (1975) student integration model is useful for understanding the persistence of college students including male African American students. He believed that comprehensive integration was the key to student persistence towards degree completion. He expanded Spady's (1970) social integration model to include an examination of the role academic integration plays on student persistence. Founded on Durkheimian thought, Tinto's model stresses interaction between the individual and institution. He believed that Durkheim's sociological theory of suicide is adept for explaining student departure before degree completion. "When one views the college as a social system with its own value and social structures, one can treat dropout from that social system in a manner analogous to that of suicide in the wider society" (Tinto 1975).

Tinto conceptualized postsecondary institutions as social systems divided into two interrelated spheres: academic structures and social structures. The former constitutes student-based performative measures and institutional resources designed to integrate students into their respective college community. These performative measures

specifically, and integration generally, are important to examining Black male persistence. Tinto found performative measures such as meeting with academic advisors or faculty to discuss progress important to student persistence. These activities contributed to academic outcome variables such as grade point average which lend itself to a student's commitment to stay within the system. Tinto noted that academic and social integration are equally important, for students may find success in one but not both, which may lead to early departure. An example of this would be students with higher GPAs who leave school prior to degree completion. This may be reflected in an institution not meeting the social needs of the student, or the student not fitting in with their respective institution's environment. Socialization is at the heart of this perspective. His model was primarily based on an all-male, primarily White, four-year residential university (Frierson, Wyche, and Pearson 2009) where integration into the dominant campus culture and environment played a significant role for the student body. This notwithstanding, one of the guiding principles of this study is Tinto's assertion that student persistence is a longitudinal, interactionist process rooted in shared values and the availability of social and academic support.

Psychological perspective. Likewise, Bean and Metzner's (1985) chief concern in their student attrition model is also environment. However, they poignantly focus on environmental attributes not solely determined by the respective institution, but those that primarily occur away from campus—in the lives of the students. This is important when surveying the collegiate experiences of Black males. Bean and Metzner's nontraditional

student model has been applied in the works of many scholars to examine an array of populations beyond the scope of their original designation to encompass the ever-expanding definition of *nontraditional* college student. This study is no different in that regard. However, in their original definition, Bean and Metzner (1985) defined a nontraditional student as an individual with a combination of the following factors: older than 24 years of age, does not reside in campus housing, and/or is enrolled part-time. They further add that this individual's enrollment is primarily motivated by the school's academic offerings (degrees, certification programs, or particular courses) and less by its social environment (intramural sports, extracurricular activities, student organizations/groups).

They unapologetically reduce the significance social integration plays in influencing the persistence and completion behavior of nontraditional college students. Moreover, as Bean and Metzner (1985) state, "it is the evaluation of our past experiences that gives rise to our attitudes." Thus, attitudes shaped intentions, which in turn create behavior. This model posits that a student's collegiate and non-collegiate experiences shape their decision to persist towards degree completion. Accordingly, academic and environment variables directly affect the psychological outcomes and attitudes a student has towards school. In other words, a student's commitment to the process of degree attainment or perceptions of the utility of their degree—which shapes their intent to leave—is contingent upon academic factors such as GPA and earned credit hours, as well as environmental factors such as family encouragement, tuition affordability, or even

time restrictions due to family or work obligations. Whereas Tinto primarily used sociological theory, Bean and Metzner employed both sociological factors and behavioral psychological factors to form the basis of their model. They see persistence as a cognitive-behavioral process that first introduced *student intention* in persistence literature.

Mason's (1998) student retention model provides an expanded look specifically at "student intention" or their decision to persist towards degree completion through the effect of psychological outcomes on student persistence. He specifically examines the effects of academic, environmental, and psychological predictors on male African American students' persistence at an urban community college. Many male African American students begin their collegiate careers at two-year institutions, so Mason's model is of sound value to this project. A direct offshoot of Bean and Metzner's (1985) model of nontraditional student attrition, Mason (1994) cites his desire to contribute to theoretically based scholarship on nontraditional students that does not emphasize social integration, but employs external environmental factors and a multivariate design. Mason's model is similar to Tinto's and Bean and Metzner's in its discussion of academic influences alongside environmental factors to contribute to student persistence. These two dimensions, coupled with the extension of psychological variables from Bean and Metzner, collectively contribute to an enhanced understanding of student persistence as a cognitive-behavioral process.

Employing a mixed-methods approach of survey data and interviews, Mason identified important variables that affect Black male retention: certainty of course major; academic advising; course availability; study habits; and nonattendance, cost of tuition, outside employment, familial responsibilities and encouragement. According to Mason, these factors cumulatively yield psychological outcomes such as utility—or the belief that the degree and effort will be worthwhile—satisfaction; goal commitment; and stress. Mason’s model, like Bean and Metzner, suggests an individual’s thoughts form his outlook, which creates behavior based on that outlook. According to Mason, psychological influences are as important, if not more important in a student’s decision to persist towards their goal of completion, as previously established academic factors.

Status construction theory. Status construction theory originated from expectation states theory and the early work of Joseph Berger and his associates at Stanford University. Expectation states theory is considered a theoretical research program, “consisting of a set of interrelated theories, bodies of relevant research concerned with testing these theories, and bodies of research that use theories in social applications and interventions” (Berger and Webster 2006). Early versions of status construction theory were centered on the implications of interaction in newly formed task-work groups whose members were not equal (Ridgeway 2001a). Originally developed to explain how status distinction affected performance expectations, status construction theory has evolved to *core theory* status in the expectation states theory program for its wide use in studies on

inequality, power and prestige in fields such as social psychology and occupational/organizational psychology (Berger and Webster 2006).

Critical race theory. Critical race theory (CRT) is an interdisciplinary framework for understanding the ubiquitous nature of race, power, privilege and inequity (hooks 1990; Patton, McEwen and Howard-Hamilton 2007). The cumulative works of ethnic studies, cultural and nationalism studies, United States/developing world feminism, critical legal studies, neo-Marxist, and internal colonialism movements (Bell 1998; Crenshaw et al 1995; Hill Collins 1986; hooks 1990; Lawson 1995) bore CRT, and serve in its continued multidisciplinary approach to scholarship and activism. Originally employed as an analytical framework for examining education inequity (Bell 1986; Decuir and Dixson 2004) CRT has expanded through an ever-growing body of scholarship that examines and deconstructs the intersections of social inequity.

These interactionist frameworks are rich in their elucidation of the social distinctiveness of Black males and instrumental in augmenting the three dominant models to apply broadly to Black male college persistence and completion. An example, a glaring limitation of the applicability of Tinto's model and its reverberations to Black male collegians is their reliance on normative congruence. Tinto views early student departure as a consequence of the student's inability to fully academically integrate and/or socially integrate into their respective postsecondary institution. This unfortunately oversimplifies the complexity of the role individual cultural identity and collective sociocultural history plays in the development of minority students, Black

males especially. One's ability to integrate is hinged on a number of factors internal and external to the student that the three dominant models do not wholly address. CRT addresses the social embeddedness of race, power and inequity in both every-day and institutional interaction between groups. This understanding is imperative for exploring Black male persistence and completion.

For a long time, African Americans were first denied education, followed by access to quality education which created status beliefs about their intellectual capacity, and consequently the prevailing status as *nonacademic* or perpetual *labors* and *lay workers*. A legal system of subjugation through Jim Crow, Black Codes, and a host of "separate but equal" social policies created distinct cultural patterns for African Americans and non-African Americans. So much so that half a century later with the eradication of these policies through the Civil Rights Act of 1964 one can assert that Du Bois' 1902 concept of "two-ness" is still relevant to African American identity. More directly, status construction theory and CRT examine the reality that African American students may toggle between cultural expectations based on their status as racial minorities, and the expectations of their status as college students from both African Americans and non-African Americans. This toggling and contradiction of expectations may make integration from either side not wholly possible. Whereas Tinto's model does not take this into account, the modified model in this does.

Bean and Metzner (1985) directly address Tinto's model and its applicability to nontraditional college students. They assert social integration is not as important to

nontraditional students as Tinto and others believed. Instead they believe the student's environment played a significant role; hence, they focus on the effects of phenomena that occurred on-campus and in the student's life off-campus. However, many of the measures are discussed from a deficit perspective. For example, family commitments and off-campus employment are seen as disadvantageous to persistence. As mentioned earlier, minority students have unique experiences and to narrowly view particular variables from the adverse stance may limit the scope of analysis, especially if the group has collectivist cultural elements.

This concurs with Mason's (1998) approach of looking at the factors related to Black male retention, versus attrition. This study expands on that perspective. Moreover, a feature of CRT involves counter-narratives that focus on the development of strengths-based responses to problems, and espouses culturally responsive "definitions of situations". In other words, advocates of this framework acknowledge many of the dominant perspectives are narrowly rooted in White, middle class patriarchy and not wholly reflective of the populations they study; including but not limited to scope of problem, operational definitions or proposed solutions. Examining the full complexity of factors related to Black male persistence and completion is needed, and addressed through the sociocultural perspective.

A Modified Model

This study proposes a sociocultural perspective that modifies the three dominant student persistence models and incorporates status construction theory and CRT to

explain the persistence and completion of male African American students. This sociocultural model emphasizes the important effect of social status on Black male persistence. It views expectation states theory and critical race theory (DeCuir and Dixon 2004; Dupree, Gasman, James and Spencer 2009; Ladson-Billings 1998; Riley 2007) as interactionist paradigms working in tandem to justly explore college persistence and completion patterns. These paradigms first shape the emphasis on psychosocial factors, and second the rationale of the reconfiguring of several traditional persistence and completion variables.

The sociocultural perspective grew out of the work of Lev Vygotsky, who believed that first a child's micro-level interaction with parents, caregivers and peers and then the child's meso-level interaction with his culture at-large were responsible for the development of one's "higher order functions." According to Vygotsky (1978: 57), "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, at the social level, and later, at the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)". In other words, self-concept, efficacy, skill development and performance are not only influenced by family and friends but through cultural beliefs and attitudes.

Variables in each of the categories are guided by the sociocultural perspective and reconfigured from the three dominant analytical frameworks to stress the interaction between the development of an individual and the culture in which he or she lives. This study organizes these influences into four broad categories for investigating the

persistence and completion of Black male college students: (a) background variables, which are primarily ascribed in nature; (b) psychosocial variables, which reflect outlooks determined by social position/status; (c) collegiate performance variables, which include and expand traditional academic achievement measures; and (d) collegiate environment variables, which highlight institutional characteristics.

Background factors. This category of variables holds much of the core demographic information social researchers conventionally rely on when studying a sample of the population. Tinto (1975) uses prior schooling, individual skills and ability, and family background as background/defining variables. Bean and Metzner (1985) expand the grouping with the inclusion of ethnicity, gender, age, high school performance, enrollment status, and residence. Mason (1998) uses age, high school performance and enrollment status as background variables in his model. The modified model used in this study includes five background variables: (a) respondent's age at first enrollment in postsecondary education; (b) parents' level of education; (c) TRIO program eligibility (first-generation college student and/or from a low-wealth background); (d) federal financial aid; (e) financial assistance from parents. These variables reflect ascribed status sets not controlled by the student and in several instances that have constructed many of structural explanations to the underachievement of African American students in the context of college persistence and completion.

These specific variables were selected and organized based on status construction theory. Status construction theory studies the psychosociological process of how groups

“associate greater status and expected competence” with one category of social distinction rather than others (Ridgeway 2001b). In other words, the status of an individual or group is created and perpetuated based on how categories of social distinction such as an individual’s gender or ethnicity, or being upper-middle class or a nontraditional-age college student is linked to widely-shared beliefs in one’s sociocultural environment about the distinction. Status construction theory asserts that widely-shared beliefs may present as situational, yet they are created and sustained by social structure. This provides a new life for many of the background factors taken-for-granted in scholarly discussions about minority educational attainment.

Psychosocial factors. In the three dominant persistence models psychological variables are limited to institutional commitment, intentions, education goals, utility of degree, stress, satisfaction, and the helplessness and hopelessness factor. According to Tinto, these psychological variables coupled with other factors can predict all student attrition, whereas Bean and Metzner apply it to the attrition of non-traditional students. Mason believes that these and other factors explain retention of Black male community college students. Cumulatively, these variables reflect student outlooks, yet—with the exception of Mason’s helplessness and hopelessness factor— do not take into account society’s influence on shaping those individual views and dispositions. The individual and society are two sides of the same coin. Allport (1985) states, “...the thought, feeling and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of other human beings”. Those other human beings collectively are society.

This study employs status construction theory to expand this grouping of variables to include factors the previous models organized separately as *environmental factors* reconfiguring it into a collection of seven *psychosocial factors* to include: (a) marital status; (b) whether the student has dependent children; and (c) is employed. In the models of Tinto, and Bean and Metzner, these factors were considered external commitments that mostly had an adverse effect on student attrition. Akin to Mason's (1998) approach of examining factors predicting African American males' retention versus attrition rates, this study incorporates recent research that suggests the evolving nature of influences once considered damaging to degree completion. For an example, a growing body of work proposes one's role and identity as a parent requires similar organization and time management skills necessary for student persistence, and may also encourage degree completion. In the same vein, some studies suggest that when socioculturally diverse students remained connected to their home communities they are more successful (Allen, Epps and Haniff 1991; Davis 1994; Hiraldo 2010.) Therefore this study includes (d) community involvement; (e) the highest degree the respondent expects to attain; (f) lifestyle motivation; and (g) altruism motivation variables where the three previous models do not. Overall, it is believed in addition to other influences, psychosociological factors about perceptions, belief systems, identities, and behaviors as determined by social position can predict the persistence and completion of male African American college students.

Collegiate performance factors. Tinto's model organizes academic variables into performance, integration and interaction subcategories to include: (a) student GPA; (b) participation in study groups; (c) meeting with faculty; and (d) meeting with academic advisors. Bean and Metzner include many of the same variables with the addition of (e) absenteeism; (f) certainty of major, and (g) course availability, which Mason replicates. This study leans on the wisdom of over forty years of retention/ persistence research where the validity and subsequent inclusion of these academic variables have stood the test of time. However, hereof they serve as performative measures to speak to behaviors warranted by the status of *student*. This study's modified model uses six academic variables labeled *collegiate performance*: (a) enrollment status; (b) student GPA; (c) remedial coursework; (d) participation in study groups; (e) meeting with faculty; and (f) meeting with academic advisors.

This study incorporates established academic factors per the three dominant models, yet it is not done haphazardly or indifferently. Instead, the sociocultural perspective, particularly CRT, critically evaluates the intersectional role race, class and gender may play on the academic preparedness of Black male collegians. Many economically disadvantaged students arrive in college without the necessary rigor of college-readiness. What is more is minority status or lower socioeconomic status may have negative effects on academically prepared male African American students as well. These students may be high-achievers but feel socially distant from peers, faculty and

staff and refrain from the social navigation required for many of collegiate performative factors.

Collegiate environment factors. Critical race theory reflects the idea society at its most fundamental level is a system of interrelationships that connects individuals together. Three core tenets of CRT are of value to this study in relation to status construction theory, and in the context of male African American college student persistence and completion: (a) racism is “ordinary” in the fact it is embedded in social institutions; (b) racism advances the material interest of elites and the physical interests of the working class alike; (c) race is a product of social thought and relations. Moreover, CRT is employed hereof to survey the role collegiate environment plays on the college persistence and completion of male African American students. For a more inclusive examination, factors traditionally categorized as *social variables* (extracurricular participation, peer group interaction, and other social integration factors) in Tinto, Bean and Metzner and Mason’s models have been relabeled *collegiate environment factors*. The sociocultural perspective assumes individuals have an awareness of their circumstances; social, cultural, and physical environments. This awareness dually explains and dictates behavior and social interaction for and between dominant and marginalized social groups. The seven variables that comprise the collegiate environment category in the modified model include: (a) institution type (four-year or a two-year); (b) institutional designation as a Historically Black College/University; (c) student residence;

(d) participation in sports teams/events; (e) participation in student clubs/groups; (f) participation in fine arts activities/events; and (g) informal interaction with faculty.

Table 3.1 summarizes the similarities and differences between my modified model (sociocultural perspective) and the existing models in the categorization of the determinants of college persistence and completion.

Table 3.1. Analytical Framework Comparison

MODEL	TINTO (1975) Attrition	BEAN & METZNER (1985) Attrition	MASON (1998) Retention	SOCIOCULTURAL (2015) Persistence/Completion
<i>Variables</i>				
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prior Schooling ▪ Individual skills/abilities ▪ Family Background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Age ▪ Ethnicity ▪ Gender ▪ High School Performance ▪ Enrollment Status ▪ Residence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Age ▪ High School ▪ Performance ▪ Enrollment Status 	Background <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Age ▪ First-Generation/Low-Wealth Student ▪ Parent's Education Level ▪ Federal Financial Aid ▪ Financial Assistance (Parents)
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goals ▪ Intention ▪ Institutional Commitments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educational Goals ▪ Satisfaction ▪ Stress ▪ Utility ▪ Intent to Leave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educational Goals ▪ Utility ▪ Helplessness/ ▪ Hopelessness 	Psychosocial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marital Status ▪ Dependent Students ▪ Employed ▪ Altruism Motivation ▪ Lifestyle Motivation ▪ Community Involvement ▪ Highest Degree Expected
Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Academic Performance ▪ Academic Integration ▪ Faculty Interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GPA ▪ Study Habits ▪ Absenteeism ▪ Academic Advising ▪ Major Certainty ▪ Course Availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Study Habits ▪ Absenteeism ▪ Academic Advising ▪ Major Certainty ▪ Course Availability 	Collegiate Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enrollment Status ▪ GPA ▪ Remedial Coursework ▪ Study Habits ▪ Faculty Interaction ▪ Academic Advising
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peer-Group Interaction ▪ Social Integration ▪ Extracurricular Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social Integration 		Collegiate Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institution Type ▪ HBCU ▪ Residential Student ▪ Participation in Sports ▪ Participation in Fine Arts ▪ Participation in Clubs ▪ Informal Social Interaction with Faculty
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ External Commitments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family Responsibility ▪ Outside Encouragement ▪ Finances ▪ Transfer Opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment ▪ Family Responsibility ▪ Outside Encouragement ▪ Finances ▪ Transfer Opportunity 	

HYPOTHESES

All propositions in this study were critically informed by scholarship in the areas of higher education, critical race studies, and the expectation states research program to answer the three research questions for this study. The first research question for this study is what factors influence the persistence of African American male college students? The following hypotheses were tested:

H1: Older African American male college students are less likely to persist in college than younger African American male college students. Students older than the traditional 18-24 age range traditionally enter postsecondary education for much different reasons than their younger cohorts. Farabaugh-Dorkins (1991) found evidence that older students are more likely to have work and family responsibilities that may hinder academic performance.

H2: African American male students with more educated parents are more likely to persist in college than those with less educated parents. The TRIO website (2006) states that to fit the definition of first-generation college student that “neither parent has earned a four-year college degree.” Studies indicate that a parents’ education level directly and indirectly affects the life chances of their children (Kim and Schneider 2005; Perna and Titus 2005). This lends itself to the accessibility to and success in postsecondary education.

H3: African American male students from higher income families are more likely to persist in college than African American male students from lower income families.

According to Lohfink and Paulsen (2005) typically, first-generation college students occupy intersecting statuses of oppression based on race, gender and class in particular. Many students from low-wealth families do not have the opportunity to enroll in postsecondary education. Those who do enroll, often find difficulty navigating the social and academic landscapes of their respective institutions (Nora 2004). Many scholars (Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice 2008; Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin 1998) have studied persistence and completion patterns related to a student's socioeconomic status (SES) finding that many students from this group lack pre-collegiate academic preparation (e.g., GPA, study skills).

H4: African American male students who receive federal financial aid and/or financial assistance from parents are more likely to persist in college than their counterparts who do not receive federal financial aid. Many studies have analyzed the relationship between financial aid and student persistence (Nora 1990; St. John, Kirshstein and Noel 1991), finding that government financial aid programs play an important role in students' ability to persist towards degree completion.

H5: Being married is associated with a lower degree of persistence for African American college students. Research has indicated that college students who are married do not have the same college experiences as single students (Shannon 2006).

H6: Having children is associated with a lower degree of persistence for African American college students who are parents than for African American students who do not have children. According to Bean and Metzner (1985), external factors such as

family and work responsibilities may conflict with activities of persistence such as time and financial commitments required to attend and be successful in school. For those individuals enrolled in college with children, their status as *parent* is the principal status compared to the secondary status of *student* which is secondary (Stewart 2009). Students who are parents typically enroll in less credit hours per semester, and this increases the likelihood of non-completion (Shannon 2006).

H7: African American male students who are employed are less likely to persist in college than those who are not employed. Tinto (1974) asserted, and Bean (1985) provided evidence that an important factor in the collegiate persistence process was student interaction with faculty. Low student involvement on campus due to time spent working off campus can hinder a student from participating in different activities and social interactions on campus (Bean 1985; Brown 2006; Cabrera, Nora and Castaneda 1995).

H8: African American male students who are motivated for a college degree beyond economic opportunities are more likely to persist towards degree completion than those who are primarily motivated by economic pursuits. Attaining an adequate amount of specialized training and formal education is the imperative to a global society. Students attend college for many reasons; one is to be competitive on the job market. Education scholars state that beyond attaining credentials for a particular occupation a student's personal motivations play an influential role in their commitment to the task of degree completion (Nora 2004; Tierney 1992; Tinto 1993; Tross et al. 2011). Students

who are intrinsically excited about learning, along with those who are inspired to work in a field they are passionate about tend to do well in college when faced with adversity or major transitions (Tinto1993).

H9: African American male students with an aspiration to complete a baccalaureate or higher degree are more likely to persist in college than those with an aspiration to attain a lower degree. Aspiration is an essential psychosocial concept in academic learning. Research proposes students persist when they perceive their educational pursuits as worthwhile (Mason 1998). Wood and Williams (2013) further reveal that the short-term consequences of degree pursuit (e.g., lower income, prolonged adolescence) may conflict with its long-term utility for many students, especially African American men. This may lead to the prioritization of other goals (e.g., working or meeting family obligations) above a student's education (Fries-Britt and Griffin 2007; Mosby 2009; Tross et al. 2011). In other words, students may decide to pursue lower level degrees such as vocational certificates or Associate's degree compared to baccalaureate degrees.

H10: African American male students who are enrolled fulltime are more likely to persist in college than their counterparts who are enrolled part-time. The reasons students attend school part-time vary, including working full time, raising and supporting a family as well as for financial necessity (Nora 1990). However, many studies show those factors may negatively impact a student's success compared to full-time college students because they may compete for the student's energy (Bean and Metzner 1985; Brown 2006; Nora

1990). Often, universities consider part-time students *at-risk* because of the increased amount of time to degree completion and the higher likelihood of non-completion (Bean and Metzner 1985; Brown 2006; Tinto 1993).

H11: African American male students with a higher level of academic integration are more likely to persist toward degree completion than African American male students with a lower level of academic integration. Tinto (1975, 1993) found that student attrition is rooted in academic performance. Other scholars have provided additional evidence that student participation in academic advising, participation in study groups, college tutoring, and GPA positively affects persistence (Bailey and Alfonso 2005; Flowers 2006; Walters 2004).

H12: American male students with a higher GPA are more likely to persist in college than African American male students with a low GPA. The traditional and most widely used measure of student academic success is their Grade Point Average (GPA). Freshman year GPA has been found to be a strong predictor of cumulative undergraduate GPA (Murtaugh, Burns, and Schuster 1999), which affects year-to-year persistence towards degree completion (Tinto 1975, 1993).

H13: African American male students enrolled in remedial courses are less likely to persist in college than African American male students not enrolled in remedial courses. The enrollment of Americans in postsecondary education has steadily increased since the end of the Second World War. However, there is an alarming rate of first-time beginning college students who are not prepared for college-level work (Thayer 2000).

These college students often require developmental and remedial courses to aid in acquiring sufficient skills required to advance in postsecondary courses. Conversely, participation in remedial courses may negatively impact academic program competitiveness (e.g., Undergraduate Social Work, Nursing, Pre-law, or Pre-Med programs) and ultimately persistence (Hirschy, Bremer and Castellano 2011).

H14: African American male students enrolled in four-year institutions are more likely to persist towards degree completion than those enrolled in two-year postsecondary institutions. Research shows students who start at two-year institutions are less likely to complete a degree than those who start at four-year schools (Astin 1975, 1977, 1993; Esther and Mosby 2007; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991, 2005).

H15: African American males who attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) are more likely to persist than those enrolled in non-HBCU. African American students who enroll in diverse schools tend to be more academically successful (Fries-Britt and Griffin 2007). Racial minority students are disproportionately affected by discrimination and racism when it comes to education (Cross and Slater 2000; Fries-Britt and Griffin 2007; Jenkins 2006; Steele 1997; Steele, and Aronson 1995) and personal development. Studies reveal that diverse, multicultural institutions that constructively focus on students' culture can increase the social integration of all students but especially racial/ethnic minority students (Gloria and Robinson-Kurplus 1999; Nora and Cabrera 1996; Pope 2000).

H16: African American male students who live off campus are less likely to persist in college than those who live on-campus. Commuters are traditionally defined as those college students whose place of residence is not in a campus residence hall or in a fraternity or sorority house. Studies reveal that students who live on campus are more socially engaged with various aspects of college student life, which may yield academic benefits and further institutional commitment. This lends to persistence towards degree completion (Astin 1984, 1987; Bean and Metzner 1985). Jacoby (2000) asserts that off-campus or commuter students are not less motivated to academically achieve but face many external pulls that may limit their attention or availability to engage in on-campus social activities or those that produce academic rigor such as group studying.

H17: African American male students with a higher level of social integration are more likely to persist toward degree completion than those with a lower level of social integration. Tinto (1975, 1993) asserted that participation in extracurricular college clubs and campus organizations as well as collegiate and intramural sports teams will create important social relationships that aid in student efficacy during important transitions. This contributes to persistence. In a quantitative study, Mayo et al. (1995) found that African American and other ethnic minority male students' college success were greatly influenced by positive social integration with peers.

The second research question for this study is: what are the most important factors in college persistence and completion for African American male college students? Mayo et al. (1995) found that African American and other ethnic minority male students' college

success was greatly influenced by positive social integration with peers. Studies reveal that diverse, multicultural institutions that constructively focus on students' culture can increase the social integration of all students but especially racial/ethnic minority students (Gloria and Robinson-Kurplus 1999; Nora and Cabrera 1996; Pope 2000). Accordingly, for the second research question, I anticipate social integration will be the most important factors in determining African American male persistence followed by family income level. Many scholars (Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice 2008; Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin 1998) who have studied persistence and completion patterns related to a student's socioeconomic status (SES) found that many students from this group lack pre-collegiate academic preparation (e.g., GPA, study skills). For this reason, I expect African American male students from higher income families are more likely to academically integrate to their respective colleges, which lends to greater odds of persistence and completion.

The final research question for this study is: how do the determinants of college persistence and college completion resemble or differ between African American male college students and African American female college students? To answer this research question, I expect that the determinants of college persistence and completion will vary between African American male and African American female college students. It is expected for both male and female students key background (e.g., parent's education level, income level) and collegiate performance variables (e.g., GPA, degree of academic integration) affect persistence. I predict being a parent, employment status and enrollment

intensity (fulltime or part-time status) will determine African American female persistence, while psychosocial and collegiate environment variables, specifically campus diversity and level of social integration, wield the greatest effect on persistence for African American male students.

SUMMARY

Conventionally, when discussing the underperformance of ethnic minority students Steele's social psychological concept of stereotype threat, its subsequent reverberations and other ad-hoc theoretical models are employed. Often times these well-worn explanations are limited in their scope of dealing with multidimensional and interrelated processes involved in student persistence. Conversely, this study employs two synergetic paradigms that speak to the *ascribed, identity, performance, and environment* factors related to Black male collegians persistence/completion behavior. The strength of expectation states theory and critical race theory is that they allow for optimum development in the realm of practical implications in applied research, empirical scholarship via experimentation, as well as theory advancement. The intersectionality of status (Berger, Ridgeway, and Zelditch 2002; Ridgeway 2013), race (Bobo 1999; Brezina and Winder 2003; Foschi and Buchan 1990; Solorzano and Ceja 2000) and gender (Correll 2004; Miles and Clenney 2010; Ridgeway 2001b) solidifies these paradigms as adept frameworks for this study.

CHAPTER IV

DATA AND METHODS

“Oh my body, make of me a man who always questions!” - Frantz Fanon

This study investigates the six-year persistence and completion of African American male and female college students. The study centers on respondents' cumulative persistence and attainment from 2003 through 2009. More specifically, second-year persistence, fourth-year persistence, and sixth-year completion serve as the three outcome variables in this study. This chapter first describes the data and sample used. This is followed by a discussion of the variables and their measurements. The final section of the chapter discusses data analysis procedures.

DATA

Many times social research involves the traditional method of collecting data by asking participants questions and analyzing their answers. It is well documented that scientific inquiry occurs in a variety of contexts and forms, yet survey is a widely employed method by social researchers (Ary et al. 1985; Fowler 2009). This study is based on the assumption that persistence and degree completion patterns are contextualized by gender with its related expectations and experiences, and therefore a nationally representative sample of African American male students best informed research questions. The data used for this study come from the 2004/09 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/09) conducted by the National

Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), which collected information about students' education and employment in the 6 years since they first enrolled in postsecondary education. The weighted, de-identified, longitudinal survey results of the three-wave BPS: 04/09 questionnaire was used to assemble quantitative data, to examine factors predicting persistence and completion of African American male and female students.

BPS: 04/09 has multiple advantages as the dataset for this dissertation. Many studies of persistence/attainment utilize single-institution studies but BPS: 04/09 is a nationally representative sample, so the findings can be generalized to the corresponding U.S. population. BPS: 04/09 also has the largest sample size for African American college students. BPS: 04/09 includes many traditional and nontraditional attributes, ranging from age at the time of their first enrollment to other background/demographic variables and college enrollment attributes. The wide range of topics covered, and the comprehensive gathering of demographic information and respondents' school and work experiences, in addition to persistence, transfer, and degree attainment patterns are another advantage of utilizing this dataset.

Tracking students as they persist, stop-out, return, and/or complete makes the BPS longitudinal study most advantageous for studying system-level persistence. BPS: 04/09 was developed with a sample of 18,640 first-time beginning postsecondary education students enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the United States. At the conclusion of the BPS: 04/09 data collection, 16,680 had enough data from the student interview or from administrative sources to be classified as BPS: 04/09 study respondents. Utilizing

longitudinal BPS survey data collected from the years 2003 to 2009 an individual unit of analysis amongst a sample of students who started their postsecondary education for the first time during the 2003–04 academic year took place.

SAMPLE

The target population for this study was African American male first-time, beginning students enrolled at postsecondary institutions in the United States of America. More specifically, data was restricted to a [respondent self-identified] African American/Black subsample of BPS: 04/09. This subsample included 804 male respondents. For comparison, a subsample of 1396 African American female respondents was also extracted from BPS: 04/09. The combined total of African American college students included in this study was 2,220 cases.

VARIABLES

Dependent Variables

Considering the range of diversity that exists in the aspirations for college students, especially first-generation or those from socially diverse backgrounds, this study considers all postsecondary credential attainment in its analysis. More directly, to answer the study's research questions, three dichotomous outcome variables were used in this study. The dichotomization of these measures is consistent with research and best practices from the federal government's Committee on Measures of Student Success (2011), which asserts that measuring student progress [persistence] and/or achievement

[completion] involves any high-order outcome, including but not limited to certificate attainment, degree completion or transferring to a four-year institution.

The first dependent variable captures respondents' second year persistence behavior recoded as "0" = "No, did not persist/attain," and "1" = "Yes, persisted/attain". This variable was derived from the BPS: 04/09 variable Prout2, the categories of which include: (a) attained bachelor's degree, (b) attained associate's degree, (c) attained certificate, (d) no degree, still enrolled, and (e) no degree, left without return. In this study, the dependent variable of interest is defined as "1" = "Yes, persisted/attained" (including categories a, b, c, and d) and "0" = "No, did not persist/attain" consisting of "No degree, left without return" (category e).

The second dependent variable captures respondents' fourth year persistence behavior recoded as "0" = "No, did not persist/attain," and "1" = "Yes, persisted/attain". This variable was derived from the BPS: 04/09 variable Prout4, the categories of which include: (a) attained bachelor's degree, (b) attained associate's degree, (c) attained certificate, (d) no degree, still enrolled, and (e) no degree, left without return. In this study, the dependent variable of interest is defined as "1" = "Yes, persisted/attained" (including categories a, b, c, and d) and "0" = "No, did not persist/attain" consisting of "No degree, left without return" (category e).

The third and final dependent variable captures respondents' sixth year completion behavior recoded as "0" = "No, did not complete a degree," and "1" = "Yes, completed a degree". This variable was derived from the BPS: 04/09 variable Prout6, the

categories of which include: (a) attained bachelor's degree, (b) attained associate's degree, (c) attained certificate, (d) no degree, still enrolled, and (e) no degree, left without return. In this study, the dependent variable of interest is defined as "1" = "Yes, completed" (including categories a, b, and c) and "0" = "No, did not complete a degree" (including categories d, and e).

Independent Variables

The survey offered data on what existed in the milieu of postsecondary academic and social experiences and data on relationships between known and unknown variables. To provide a range of different concepts, and theoretical perspectives on specific factors predicting college persistence and completion for African American students, relevant literature was reviewed across higher education research. Academic and nonacademic factors influencing student social and academic integration was prevalent (Bean 1980; Bradburn 2002; Johnson 2008; Tinto 1975, 1987). This study then organized these variables into specific categories to evaluate if particular types of influence predominately affected the ability of Black male students to persist towards degree completion, compared to their female counterparts.

To explore various demographic and background attributes along with other factors a set of independent variables consistent with previous college persistence and degree attainment research was included in the regression models. These variables were grouped into four broad categories: (a) background variables are demographic characteristics about the student. Many of these variables represent ascribed status sets, or

factors undetermined by the respondent (Bean and Metzner 1985; Tinto 1993); (b) psychosocial variables include respondents' perceptions, belief systems, identities, and behaviors as determined by social position (Bean and Metzner 1985; Fine 1995; Mason 1998; Michener 2004; Tinto 1975); (c) collegiate performance variables include and expand on traditional academic performance measures. These variables are related to phenomena that occurs upon the respondents' initial enrollment (Nora and Cabrera, 1996; Stahl and Pavel 1992; Tinto 1993); and (d) collegiate environment variables are institutional characteristics that include but are not limited to the availability of extracurricular and intramural sports programs, as well as institution type and setting (Bean and Metzner 1985; Mason 1998; Nora and Cabrera 1996; Tinto 1993). Data were recoded and dummy coded as appropriate and as suggested by previous research. The specific independent variables included in this study are:

Background variables. **Age.** In this study the respondent's age as of 12/31/2003 was included as a continuous variable. Age was then dummy coded into primary groups⁵. Students age "15-19" were coded "1", students age "20-29" were coded "2", and students "30 years old or older" were coded 3.

Financial aid. Indicates whether the respondent received federal financial aid (Pell grants, subsidized loans, unsubsidized loans, etc.) through a dichotomous variable coded "1" for "yes," and "0" for "no."

⁵ The decision to dummy code this variable was warranted by small number of older students; the sample primarily consisted of younger students.

Parent's highest level of education. This study operationalizes the concept as an ordinal variable with the education attainment by the respondent's mother and/or father. Responses were coded "1" for "less than a high school diploma/equivalent", "2" for "high school diploma/equivalent", "3" "some postsecondary training", "4" "associate's degree", "5" "bachelor's degree", "6" "graduate degree", "7" "doctoral degree".

First generation college student/ low wealth background. This variable measures whether a respondent is a first-generation college student or economically disadvantaged based on their eligibility of federal TRIO programs through a dichotomous variable coded "1" for "yes", and "0" for "no".

Financial assistance from parents. Indicates whether the respondent received financial assistance from parents to help pay the costs of college (tuition, books, supplies, housing, personal allowances) through a dichotomous variable coded "1" for "yes", and "0" for "no".

Psychosocial variables. **Marital status.** Indicates whether the respondent was married in 2004, 2006 and/or 2009 through a dichotomous variable *Married Student* coded "1" for "yes", and "0" for "no".

Parent status. Indicates whether the respondent was a parent of dependent children (under the age of 25) in 2004, 2006 and/or 2009 through a dichotomous variable *Dependent Children* coded "1" for "yes", and "0" for "no".

Work commitment. Indicates whether the respondent was employed off-campus (in a non-work study job) in 2004, 2006 and/or 2009 through a dichotomous variable *Employed* coded “1” for “yes”, and “0” for “no”.

Personal motivations. This study indexed responses to several BPS: 04/09 variables, based on the dichotomous response of “yes” or “no” for several questions. Two dummy variables *Altruistic Motivations*, and *Lifestyle Motivations* were created based on yes or no responses of (a) whether influencing the political structure was an important personal goal, and (b) whether being a community leader was an important personal goal, along with (c) whether being financially well off was an important personal goal, and (d) whether having steady work was an important personal goal, respectively.

Community Involvement. Indicates whether the respondent volunteered in their community in 2004, 2006 and/or 2009 through a dichotomous variable coded “1” for “yes”, and “0” for “no”.

Educational aspirations. This study distinguishes between students who aspired to a bachelor’s or higher degree and students who did not aspire to a bachelor’s degree. The ordinal variable *Highest Expected Degree* was created and responses were code “1” for “no degree expected”, “2” for a “certificate”, “3” for “associate’s degree”, “4” “bachelor’s degree”, “5” “graduate/professional degree”, and “6” “doctoral” degree.

Academic performance variables. **Full-time status.** In this study students who attend full-time will be compared with those who do not (i.e. attended part-time or a mix

of part-time and full-time when enrolled) through a dichotomous variable coded “1” for “yes”, and “0” for “no”.

Grade Point Average. In this study, first-year GPA is a continuous variable based on a traditional 4.0 scale. GPA was then recoded into primary groups. Students with a GPA of “1.24 or below” were coded “1”, “1.25-2.74” coded as “2”, GPAs “2.75-3.24” coded “3”, and “3.25-4.0” coded “4”.

Level of academic integration. The BPS: 04/09, indexes academic integration derived variables, based on the average of how often the respondent indicated they took part in various activities during the 2003-04, 2006-2007, and 2008-2009 academic years. The four actions comprising the academic integration index are: (a) participated in study groups; (b) met with faculty to discuss academic matters outside of class; and (c) met with an academic advisor.

Remedial course taking. In this study whether students were required to take remedial course work in one or more subjects during the 2003-2004 academic year was captured with a dichotomous variable coded “1” for “yes, required to take remedial coursework”, and “0” for “no, not required to take remedial course work”.

Collegiate environment variables. **Four-Year Institution.** In this study, the level of the institution of attendance is included, coded “1” for students “attending four-year institutions” and coded “0” for students “attending two-year or less than two-year schools”.

Historically Black College or University. In this study respondents who attended institutions with this designation were coded “1” for “yes”, and “0” for “no”.

Commuter Student. Indicates whether the respondent lived on campus or not through a dichotomous variable *Lives on-Campus* coded “1” for “yes”, and “0” for “no”.

Level of social integration. The BPS: 04/09, indexes academic integration derived variables, based on the average of how often the respondent indicated they took part in various activities during the 2003-04, 2006-2007, and 2008-2009 academic years. The four actions comprising the social integration index are: (a) attended fine arts activities; (b) participated in intramural or varsity sports; (c) participated in school clubs; and (d) informally interacted with faculty.

LIMITATIONS OF DATA

The primary limitation of this dataset is that it is a secondary data source and the author’s inability to control procedures used to collect data as well as specific questions that were administered to the respondents. Because the BPS:04/09 study only includes data on first-time beginning college students, returning students as well as graduate and professional students are excluded from analysis. Results are not generalizable beyond first-time undergraduates. This research is also limited by the availability of data in the BPS study that may be relevant to persistence. Other limitations include specific variables left out of the analysis, including those not measured in the BPS: 04/09 dataset or selected for this specific analysis on African American male college students. African American

female students are used for comparative purposes. The limitation of this study is not meant to suggest that other racial and ethnic groups are unimportant.

METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

This study is primarily a predictive analysis. Its chief purpose is to establish the association between twenty-five independent variables and three dependent variables measuring college persistence and completion. According to Gravetter and Wallnau (2009), researchers can make accurate predictions about the outcome of social phenomena when factors are known to be systematically related. This study sought to learn whether subsequent relationships revealed if any of the ascribed, identity, performance, or environmental variables could predict whether African American male college students will successfully persist through college towards degree completion, compared to their female counterpart. In turn these associations have the potential to be employed for theory building and/or theory verification (Freeman 2003; Gravetter and Wallnau 2009; Mason 1998).

Because the outcome variables are dichotomous variables rather than interval-ratio variables, logistic regression serves as the most appropriate method to examine these relationships. In particular, logistic regression allows for each categorical variable to be assessed, while controlling for all of the other variables in the study (Austin, Yaffee, and Hinkle 1992). This attribute spurred on decades of logistic regression as the widely used statistical method in education research.

Akin to linear regression, as a statistical procedure logistic regression produces a constant term and regression coefficient for each predictor variable in the analysis.

Researchers engaging in similar studies have discussed the four assumptions required to employ logistic regression in statistical analyses, which are: (1) linearity in the logits, (2) non-multicollinearity, (3) independence of the responses, and (4) a sample size with a minimum of 30 cases (Austin, Yaffee, and Hinkle 1992). These assumptions were met.

The subsample used for the first and second research questions consisted of 804 African American male first-time beginning (FTB) college students. Male respondents comprised about 36 percent of the total sample of 2,200 African American FTB college students. The sample used for the third, and final research question consisted of 2,200 African American FTB college students. Female respondents comprised about 64 percent of the total sample. In an effort to make this research statistically generalizable descriptive and demographic characteristics of the sample were attained. Descriptive statistics for all variables used in the study are presented per predictor category along with its corresponding regression analyses for each dependent variable.

Each of the research questions was explored through three separate dichotomous dependent variables: *year-two persistence*, *year-four persistence*, *year-six completion*. Independent variables for this study were first categorized into four distinct predictor categories; background, psychosocial, collegiate performance, and collegiate environment. This was followed by model building procedures, and then finally logistic regression analysis. To conduct regression analyses, this study engaged in the multistep

process of inferential model building. This process began through a multivariable analysis, followed by refitting, verification, and finally assessment of fit. The goal was to find a balanced comprehensive model (Freeman 2003; Hosmer and Lemeshow 2000).

The preliminary model for each dependent variable included five coded variables grouped into the *background* category. The next model included those, and the addition of seven coded variables grouped into the *psychosocial* category. Model three was comprised of those eleven variables with the addition of six coded variables forming the *collegiate performance* category. The final model included seven environmental factors with the 18 prior variables, tallying 25 predictor variables.

In total, twenty-four regression models were created to examine the effects of categories of predictors on each of the dependent variables for both male and female students. The findings for both male and female students are the results of the best models for predicting second year persistence, fourth year persistence, and sixth year completion of African American male and female students. For each dependent variable, the model with the largest Chi Square value, smallest -2 log likelihood and largest Pseudo R^2 was selected and presented. This study employs a 95 percent confidence interval as an indication of the stability of the models, and primarily report findings through the odds ratio. The odds ratio is the proportion of how much more likely it is for persistence or completion to occur for a unit change in a particular explanatory variable, while holding all other variables in the model constant (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 2000).

$$OR = \text{odds}(x + 1) / \text{odds}(x) = \frac{\frac{F(x+1)}{1-F(x+1)}}{\frac{F(x)}{1-F(x)}} = e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1(x+1)} / e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 x} = e^{\beta_1}$$

The Statistical Package for Social Science 22.0 (SPSS) served as the software analysis tool in this study. SPSS is a widely used and respected integrated collection of quantitative analysis software employed for statistical inquiry on various federal datasets. The data was loaded into SPSS to be evaluated, where multiple regression analyses were conducted. Findings that address the three research questions this study are discussed in chapter five and chapter six.

CHAPTER V

DETERMINANTS OF COLLEGE PERSISTENCE:

MALE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

“Sometimes people hold a core belief that is very strong. When they are presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence cannot be accepted. It would create a feeling that is extremely uncomfortable, called cognitive dissonance.” – Frantz Fanon

This chapter reports the findings that address the first and second research questions of the study about the determinants of college persistence and completion for male African American students. The results are presented for three periods: second-year persistence, fourth-year persistence, and sixth-year completion. Descriptive statistics for the whole sample are presented first, followed by multiple regression analyses for each time period. The final section summarizes the findings.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The means and standard deviations for the variables used are presented in Table 5.1. The mean for the first outcome variable (second-year persistence) was highest (Mean = .750), followed by the second outcome variable (fourth-year persistence; Mean = .595). The third outcome variable (sixth-year completion) had the lowest mean score (Mean = .411). Multiplying the means of these three outcome variables yields the rates of college persistence and college completion by year for male African American students, which are shown in Figure 5.1.

This study considers all postsecondary credential attainment in its analysis, and examines institution type as a unique determinant of persistence therefore readers should be diligent in directly comparing these rates because many prior studies only report attainment for students who begin their college career at four-year institutions (Ross et al. 2012), while others examine attainment at two-year institutions exclusively (Hagedorn, Maxwell and Hampton 2001; Hall and Rowan 2001; Mosby 2006; Wood 2012). Other studies solely report the rates of only bachelor's degrees (Ross et al. 2012; Snyder, et. al 2008). Subsequently, when discussing male African American persistence and college completion comparative evidence is a mixed bag. However Figure 5.1 shows that 75 percent of male African American students remained in college after two years, about 60 percent of them persisted after four years, and approximately 41 percent completed a degree program at the end of a six year period. These figures are in line with much of the previous research established by the country's respected educational agencies (Digest of Education Statistics 2005; Mason 2012; NCES 2007; U.S. Department of Education 2012).

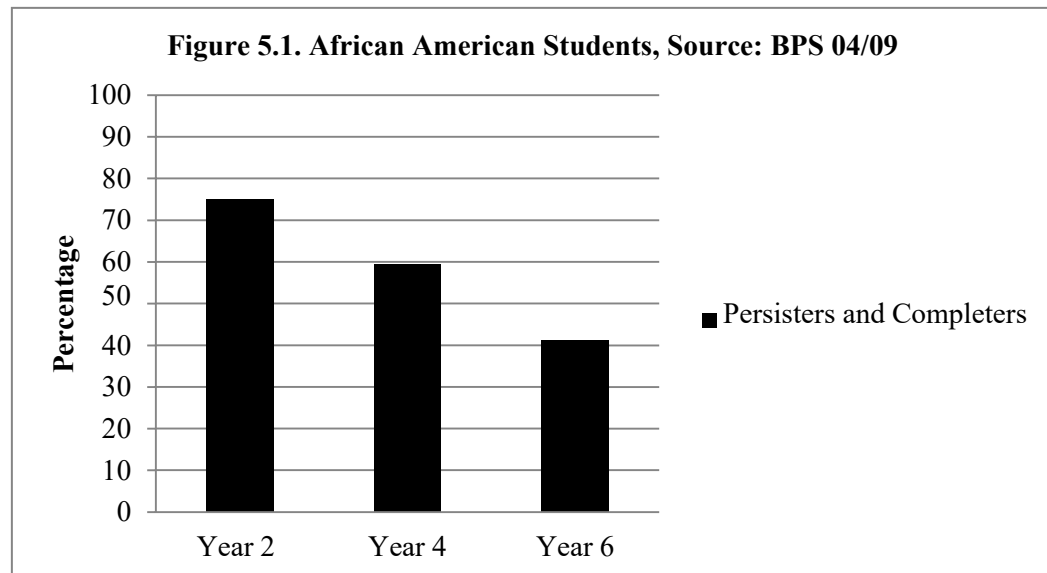


Table 5.1 shows the descriptive statistics of the predictor variables. The respondents were on average about 22 years old. More respondents received federal financial aid in year-four and year-six (Mean = 42.8), compared to year-two (Mean = .248) Respondents primarily came from first-generation college student backgrounds (Mean = 2.15) with parents having *some postsecondary education* beyond a high school diploma, but had not enough for an associate's degree. Yet and still, 50 percent of respondents received financial assistance from parents during each of the time periods.

Ten percent of respondents in the sample were married in the 2004-2005 academic year, and the proportion of married students increased to about 14 percent during the 2006-2007 academic year and about 20 percent during the 2008-2009 academic year. Nearly 28 percent of respondents in the sample had dependent children. Almost 30 percent reported believed having altruistic motivations (e.g., influencing the political structure, and being a community leader) were important to them, while over

half (Mean = .519) believed having a steady work and income (lifestyle motivation) was important. Most students did not volunteer in their community, with the highest occurring during year-two (Mean = .360) than the other periods. The mean score for respondent degree expectation was 5.00, which is an expectation to receive a graduate/ professional degree.

Respondents primarily attended school full-time across each of the three (78 percent in year-two; 84 percent in year-four; and 80 percent in year-six) periods. This may be related to respondents earning mostly B's in year-two and year-six and a combination of B's and C's in year-four. About 26 percent of respondents were required to enroll in remedial coursework at the start of their collegiate careers. Study group participation slightly fluctuates across the three time periods with lowest mean score (Mean = .474) in year-two and highest in year-four and year-six (Mean = .480). The mean score was highest for students meeting with faculty members to discuss academic progress for year-two (Mean = .662). This was similar to 61 percent meeting with academic advisors.

Table 5.1 Descriptive Statistics of Variables Used in the Analysis. African American College Students, BPS: 04/09

Variable	Year 2		Year 4		Year 6	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
<i>Dependent Variables</i>						
Persistence/Completion	.750	.433	.595	.491	.411	.492
<i>Predictor Variables</i>						
Age	22.5	7.78	22.5	7.78	22.5	7.78
Federal Financial Aid	.248	4.17	.428	4.17	.428	4.17
First-Generation Student	2.15	1.18	2.15	1.18	2.15	1.18
Parent's Education (7-point scale)	3.00a	6.00b	3.00a	6.00b	3.00a	6.00b
Parental Assistance	.499	.500	.499	.500	.499	.500
Married Student	.102	.303	.143	.350	.203	.402
Dependent Children	.275	.446	.275	.446	.275	.446
Employed	.520	.449	.520	.449	.520	.449
Altruism Motivation	.295	.456	.295	.456	.295	.456
Community Involvement	.360	.480	.058	.235	.059	.236
Lifestyle Motivation	.519	.499	.519	.499	.519	.499
Degree Expectation (6-point scale)	5.00a	5.00b	5.00a	5.00b	5.00a	5.00b
Full-Time Student	.784	.411	.835	.370	.795	2.43
GPA	271.1	83.3	236.5	134.3	1.05	2.89
Remedial Courses	.263	.440	.263	.440	.263	.440
Study Groups	.474	.499	.480	.499	.480	.499
Meets with Faculty	.662	.473	.585	.492	.585	.492
Meets with Advisor	.610	.487	.610	.487	.610	.487
Four-Year Institution	.386	.487	.399	.489	.475	.499
Attends HBCU	.125	.331	.125	.331	.125	.331
Lives on-Campus	.255	.436	.144	.351	.100	.301
Participates in Sports	.167	.373	.181	.385	.181	.385
Participates in Fine Arts	.280	.449	.280	.449	.280	.449
Participates in Clubs	.227	.419	.227	.419	.227	.419
Socialize with Faculty	.361	.480	.330	.470	.330	.470
a Median						
b Range						

The six years of varying mean scores for four-year institutions in general; (Mean = .386 for year two); (Mean = 3.79 for year four); and (Mean = 1.60 for year six).

Overall, respondents attended two-year postsecondary institutions with enrollment at four-year school increasing over the six year period; from about 39 percent in year-two, to 40 percent in year-four and 48 percent in year-six. Only about 13 percent of these respondents attended a HBCU. The mean score of students residing in on-campus housing decreased over the three time periods with the highest percentage in year-two at

nearly 39 percent, dropping to about 14 percent in year-four, and only 10 percent in year-six. The mean score was lowest for students participating in campus sports teams/events for year-two (Mean = .167). Respectively, nearly 28 percent and 23 percent of respondents participated in campus fine arts activities and school clubs over the three periods. A third of respondents informally interacted with faculty, this figure was slightly higher in year-two.

YEAR-TWO PERSISTENCE

Regression Analyses

Table 5.2 displays four models constructed to examine second-year persistence. The best model for predicting the second year persistence of African American male students was Model 4. The interpretations below are based mainly on the best model, but relevant results of other models will be discussed for comparative purposes. Model 4 comprises 25 explanatory variables derived from each of the four predictor variable categories. Compared to the three previous models examining second year persistence, this model has the largest Chi Square (χ^2) value (155.32) and smallest -2 log likelihood (689.26). This particular model also explains nearly 28 percent of the variance in the second year persistence of Black male collegians.

Background factors. Respondent's age and being a first generation college student or from a low-wealth background negatively affect college persistence in each model, but the effects of these two variables are not statistically significant at the conventional level, although age is significant in Models 1 to 3 and being first-generation student is

significant in Model 1. These findings cast doubt on conventional assumptions in the educational literature that suggest (a) younger African American male students are more likely to persist in college than older African American college students, and (b) first-generation college students or students from low-wealth backgrounds are less likely to persist than their counterparts. The literature presents a popular assumption that students with more educated parents are more likely to persist in college than those with less educated parents. However, as Table 5.2 shows parents' education is not statistically significant across the four models. Receiving federal financial aid increased the odds of second year persistence for males in each model, but its effect is not statistically significant in Model 4 after controlling for all four categories of predictors, although it is significant in Models 1 and 2. Financial assistance from their parents increased the odds of persisting but did not reach statistical significance at the .05 level.

Predictor	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio
Background												
Age	-.564*** (.140)	.569	-.413* (.163)	.662	-.349** (.169)	.706	-.238 (.179)	.788				
Federal Financial Aid	.527*** (.189)	1.694	.467* (.193)	1.596	.356 (.203)	1.428	.291 (.217)	1.338				
First-Generation Student	-.539* (.320)	.583	-.536 (.326)	.585	-.600 (.333)	.549	-.454 (.361)	.635				
Parent's Education	.066 (.056)	1.068	.042 (.057)	1.043	.027 (.058)	1.027	.017 (.061)	1.017				
Parental Assistance	.248 (.219)	1.281	.211 (.233)	1.235	.076 (.244)	1.027	.124 (.262)	1.131				
Psychosocial												
Married Student	-	-	-.103 (.322)	.902	-.161 (.330)	1.079	-.198 (.346)	.820				
Dependent Children	-	-	.075 (.273)	1.078	.170 (.281)	.851	.198 (.346)	1.218				
Employed	-	-	-.565*** (.186)	.568	-.490** (.191)	1.185	-.340 (.209)	.712				
Altruism Motivation	-	-	-.012 (.188)	.988	-.074 (.194)	.613	-.067 (.209)	.936				
Community Involvement	-	-	.298 (.195)	1.348	.220 (.200)	.929	.108 (.221)	1.114				
Lifestyle Motivation	-	-	-.114 (.179)	.892	-.102 (.184)	1.246	-.119 (.196)	.888				
Degree Expectation	-	-	.294 (.083)	1.342	.188** (.087)	.903	.095 (.092)	1.100				
												Continued

Collegiate Performance									
Full-Time Student	-	-	-	.391 (.213)	1.207	.284 (.227)	1.328		
GPA (4.0 Scale)	-	-	-	.197 (.114)	1.479	.226 (.122)	1.254		
Remedial Courses	-	-	-	.551* (.228)	1.218	.691* (.246)	1.995		
Study Groups	-	-	-	.319 (.204)	1.734	.081 (.226)	1.085		
Meets with Faculty	-	-	-	.483* (.221)	1.376	.376 (.240)	1.456		
Meets with Advisor	-	-	-	.193 (.212)	1.620	.037 (.234)	1.037		
Collegiate Environment									
Four-Year Institution	-	-	-	-	-	.994*** (.280)	2.702		
Attends HBCU	-	-	-	-	-	-.123 (.350)	.885		
Lives on-Campus	-	-	-	-	-	.378 (.365)	1.459		
Participates in Clubs	-	-	-	-	-	.148 (.318)	1.159		
Participates in Sports	-	-	-	-	-	-.047 (.296)	.954		
Participates in Fine Arts	-	-	-	-	-	.077 (.262)	1.080		
Socialize with Faculty	-	-	-	-	-	.460* (.243)	1.585		
Constant	1.759*** (.518)	5.805	.655 (.691)	-338 (.778)	1.925	1.213	.566		
-2 log likelihood	837.03		810.32	781.85					
Model χ^2	71.56		98.28	123.71					
Pseudo R ²	.126		.170	.215					
Degrees of freedom	5		12	18					
N	804	804	804	804					
*p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001 Notes: The odds ratio is the antilog of the B.									

Psychosocial factors. Being married negatively affects persistence for African American male students, but the effect is not statistically significant at the .05 level. As shown in Table 5.2, having dependent children, being involved in the community and high degree expectations are the psychosocial factors that increase the likelihood of second year persistence in each of the three models containing these factors, but none of these variables attains statistical significance at the .05 level. The finding for the dependent children provides no support for the hypothesis that having children is associated with a lower degree of persistence for male African American college students. Having dependent children actually increases the likelihood of persistence but not significantly. Dependent children having a positive effect on year-two persistence may be an output of the breadwinner system (hooks 2003; Janssens 1997; Lorber 1993), or American patriarchy in general. In other words, male students may feel a sense of personal responsibility to provide for offspring through work that requires specialized skills and/or education (Mincy, Lewis, and Han 2006; Smeeding, Garfinkel, and Mincy 2011). This may provide ample motivation for persistence towards degree completion for male students with dependent children compared to their child-free counterparts. By and large, the effect of having children on persistence requires further research because it is statistically insignificant.

The largest factor in this category negatively affecting second year persistence for male students is being employed off-campus. The evidence seems to be somewhat in line with the hypothesis that African American male students who work off campus are less

likely to persist in college than those who are not employed, but working only marginally decreases the probability of second year persistence. This factor was highly significant at the .001 level in Model 2 where it first appears, moderately significant at the .01 level in Model 3, yet not significant in Model 4. Another factor negatively impacting male persistence is altruistic motivations. Table 5.2 shows the assumption African American male students who are motivated for a college degree beyond economic opportunities are more likely to persist towards degree completion than those who are primarily motivated by economic pursuits is unsupported. For male students who believed being a community leader and/or influencing the political structure is important, the odds of second year persistence decrease in model 4 but insignificantly. Similar to altruism motivations, lifestyle motivations marginally decrease the odds of second year persistence. But this variable is not statistically significant and counters the assumption male students who believe financial security and steady work are important motivations are more likely to persist towards degree completion than those who do not.

These factors are primarily explored through the altruism variable that measures respondents' views on whether altering the political structure or being a community leader is important motivations. Students who feel this way may toggle between *stop-out* status and *opt-out* status (Hoyt and Winn 2004) where they are employed in not-for-profit agencies or engaged in forms of experiential learning through long-term service (e.g., AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, CityYear, etc.) organizations (Martin 2010; Simon and Wang 2002). The result for community involvement suggests that male African

American students who are involved in the community through volunteerism are somewhat more likely to persist than those who are not, but the difference is not bigger enough. Finally, a higher expected level of education slightly increases the predicted odds of second year persistence increases, but the effect is small .

Collegiate performance factors. Findings also show male students who are enrolled full-time are more likely to persist in college than their counterparts who are enrolled part-time, but the effect is not significant. Though not statistically significant Model 4 reveals that students with a higher GPA are somewhat more likely to persist in college than students with a lower GPA, but the difference is not significant. The largest factor predicting the persistence of male students in this subgroup is having ever taken a remedial college course, which is significant at the .05 level. Table 5.2 shows this variable was moderately significant in Model 3 where it was first introduced. Students who have taken remedial coursework are about 100 percent (Odds Ratio= 1.995) more likely to persist. This does not support the proposition that African American male students enrolled in remedial courses are less likely to persist in college than African American students not enrolled in remedial courses. This may be explained by a growing body of work that suggests when remediation is not stigmatized students may have long-term benefits beyond the remediated course, and gain cross-functional skills needed for successful matriculation in postsecondary enrollment (Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum 2002; Keller 2011; Paulson 2012).

Table 5.2 shows some evidence for the hypothesis that African American male students with a higher level of academic integration are more likely to persist toward degree completion than African American male students with a lower level of academic integration, but the evidence is not strong enough to be statistically significant. An example is how study groups increases the probability of persisting, but not significantly. Another example, male students who meet with their professors had greater odds of persisting. This factor was moderately significant in Model 3 but not in Model 4. Lastly, meeting with an academic advisor increases the probability of persisting, but not significantly.

Collegiate environment factors. Institution type is the largest predictor of second year persistence in this subcategory. For students attending a four-year institution, the odds of persistence increase 170 percent, which is highly significant at the .001 level. This supports the hypothesis that African American male students enrolled in four-year institutions are more likely to persist towards degree completion than those enrolled in two-year postsecondary institutions. The assumption that African American male students enrolled at historically black colleges/universities (HBCU) are more likely to persist towards degree completion than those attending predominately white institutions (PWI) is not supported. Table 5.2 shows that attending a HBCU slightly but insignificantly decreases the odds of persisting. This result may be explained by a lack of resources at the disposal of these institutions. Financial aid has both positive and negative consequences on student persistence (Bettinger 2004; Cabrea et al. 1999; Cabrera, Nora

and Castaneda 1995). Many HBCUs do not receive public state dollars because they are private institutions, which may limit attending students' access to adequate funding.

Male students who live on campus are more likely to persist in college than those who live off campus. Findings reveal African American male students with a higher level of social integration are more likely to persist toward degree completion than those with a lower level of social integration. The findings provide mixed evidence for this hypothesis. For an example participation in campus related student organizations and fine arts activities, are not statistically significant, although the effect on the odds of second year persistence is positive. The only social integration factor negatively affecting persistence is participation in campus sports teams or events, but its effect is insignificant. Whereas, socially interacting with professors increases the probability of second year persistence by 59 percent, which is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Male students who live on campus are more likely to persist in college than those who live off campus. Findings reveal African American male students with a higher level of social integration are more likely to persist toward degree completion than those with a lower level of social integration. The findings provide mixed evidence for this hypothesis. For an example participation in campus related student organizations and fine arts activities, are not statistically significant, although the effect on the odds of second year persistence is positive. The only social integration factor negatively affecting persistence is participation in campus sports teams or events, but its effect is

insignificant. Whereas, socially interacting with professors increases the probability of second year persistence by 59 percent, which is statistically significant at the .05 level.

FOURTH YEAR PERSISTENCE

Regression Analyses

Table 5.3 displays each model used to examine fourth year male persistence. Model 4 was deemed the best model for predicting the fourth year persistence of African American male students. This model comprises 25 explanatory variables across the four categories of predictor variables. This model has the largest Chi Square value (180.32) and the smallest -2 log likelihood (926.67), compared to the three previous models examining fourth year completion/persistence. This model also explains 27 percent of variance in the likelihood of fourth year persistence among Black male students. The following interpretations are largely based on the best-fitting model, but pertinent results from other models will be discussed as well for comparative purposes.

Background factors. Age was highly significant in Model 1, significant in Model 2 and not significant in Model 3. Table 5.3 shows that in Model 4 age group is moderately significant at the .01 level and negatively related to fourth year persistence. More directly, for each increase in age group (as reported in 2003) the odds of persistence decrease 32 percent. This result supports the hypothesis that older African American male students are less likely to persist in college than younger African American college students.

Receiving financial aid in the fourth year decreases the chances of persistence for male students. These findings call into question the assumptions in educational literature that suggest students who receive federal financial aid assistance are more likely to persist in college than students who do not receive federal financial aid. The scarcity of data sets with comprehensive financial aid data including but not limited to institution-specific aid and federal aid have created a space where few empirical studies on the effects of financial aid on persistence exists (Gross, et al 2007). An ever-evolving understanding of the implications of financial aid suggest contrary to wide belief, receiving financial aid can negatively impact student motivation and commitment, which are features of persistence. Bettinger (2007) suggests students receiving financial aid may not fully engage because the initial financial investment required of college was not personal, but provided by the government. This may explain this occurrence in the model. He further states that certain types of federal aid eliminate “The ‘sunk cost fallacy’ which suggests that people often devote greater resources and more effort in areas where they have already made an investment”.

Being a first-generation college student and/or from a low wealth background is not statistically significant, and decreases the odds of persisting. For every level increase in parents’ education the odds fourth year persistence decrease for Black male students. These findings do not support the hypotheses that African American male students from higher income families are more likely to persist in college than African American male students from families with lower income families; and that students with more educated

parents are more likely to persist in college than those with less educated parents.

Parental involvement at all education levels is widely seen as positive (Eccles and Harold 1996; Jeynes 2007; Shoup et al. 2009). However, some studies have shown college-age students with overly involved or “helicopter” parents have lower levels of family satisfaction (Segrin et al. 2012), and psychological well-being (LeMoyne and Buchanan 2011; Padilla-Walker and Nelson 2012) which may lead to issues of anxiety, depression or disengagement, which negatively affect persistence. Helicopter parenting is a form of child-rearing that is overprotective, seemingly excessive and often times not developmentally appropriate (Schiffrin et al. 2013). In order to engage in this form of parenting, social, cultural, and economic capital are required. Students who come from middle-class households with formally educated parents with moderate incomes are more likely to experience this form of parenting. This may explain why male students with higher education parents odds of fourth year persisted.

Receiving financial assistance from parents increases the likelihood of fourth year persistence and completion for African American males. This is the only background factor that positively affects fourth year persistence. However, as Table 5.3 shows financial assistance is not statistically significant across the four models.

Predictor	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	Odds Ratio		B	Odds Ratio		B	Odds Ratio		B	Odds Ratio	
Background												
Age	-.417*** (.128)	.659		-.361* (.144)	.697		-.475 (.156)	.622		-.392** (.158)	.676	
Federal Financial Aid	.109 (.169)	1.115		.056 (.172)	1.058		-.046 (.187)	.955		-.123 (.191)	.884	
First-Generation Student	-.225 (.245)	.799		-2.37 (.250)	.789		-.114 (.268)	.892		-.048 (2.75)	.953	
Parent's Education	.003 (.048)	1.003		-.017 (.049)	.983		-.045 (.053)	.956		-.041 (.054)	.960	
Parental Assistance	.243 (.185)	1.275		.275 (.195)	1.317		.210 (.208)	1.233		.226 (.212)	1.254	
Psychosocial												
Married Student	-	-		-.289 (.239)	.749		-.325 (.255)	.723		-.218 (.256)	.804	
Dependent Children	-	-		.437 (.257)	1.548		.491 (.274)	1.633		.472 (.272)	1.603	
Employed	-	-		-3.45* (.153)	.708		-.303 (.163)	.739		-.177 (.176)	.838	
Altruism Motivation	-	-		-.182 (.160)	.833		-.167 (.172)	.846		-.170 (.176)	.844	
Community Involvement	-	-		.867** (.316)	2.379		.718 (.337)	2.051		.612 (.344)	1.844	
Lifestyle Motivation	-	-		.123 (.152)	1.131		.098 (.162)	1.103		.060 (.165)	1.061	
Degree Expectation	-	-		.196** (.074)	1.217		.077 (.081)	1.080		.037 (.083)	1.038	
Continued												

Collegiate Performance									
Full-Time Student	-	-	-	-	.587 (.212)	1.798	.462** (.214)	1.587	
GPA (4.0 Scale)	-	-	-	-	.740 (.113)	2.096	.740*** (.114)	2.097	
Remedial Courses	-	-	-	-	-.383 (.184)	.682	-.347 (.188)	.707	
Study Groups	-	-	-	-	.631 (.196)	1.880	.428** (.204)	1.535	
Meets with Faculty	-	-	-	-	.480 (.200)	1.615	.192 (.223)	1.211	
Meets with Advisor	-	-	-	-	-.238 (.181)	.788	-.401 (.190)	.670	
Collegiate Environment									
Four-Year Institution	-	-	-	-	-	-	.417 (.199)	1.517	
Attends HBCU	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.147 (.264)	.863	
Lives on-Campus	-	-	-	-	-	-	.523 (.278)	1.688	
Participates in Clubs	-	-	-	-	-	-	.306 (.221)	1.358	
Participates in Sports	-	-	-	-	-	-	.308 (.213)	1.360	
Participates in Fine Arts	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.12 (.198)	1.012	
Socialize with Faculty	-	-	-	-	-	-	.358 (.199)	1.431	
Constant	.787 (.437)	0.13 (.597)	1.013	-2.346 (.724)	.096		-2.397*** (.734)	.091	
-2 log likelihood	1071.6	1045.36		949.53			926.67		
Model χ^2	35.337	61.634		157.46			180.32		
Pseudo R ²	.058	.099		.238			.269		
Degrees of freedom	5	12		18			25		
N	804	804		804			804		
*p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001 Notes: The odds ratio is the antilog of the B.									

Psychosocial factors. As Table 5.3 shows, being married is negatively related to the odds of fourth year persistence for Black males in each of the models. Findings for the dependent children variable provide no support for the hypothesis that having children is associated with a lower degree of persistence for male African American college students. Having dependent children increases the likelihood of persistence, but is not significant. Working, and altruistic motivations are negatively related to the odds of fourth year persistence for Black males in each of the models. These findings echo traditional persistence literature about how African American male students who are married; and who work are less likely to persist in college than those who are not married or employed, yet are not statistically significant. Whereas the assumption male students who are motivated for a college degree beyond economic opportunities are more likely to persist towards degree completion than those who are primarily motivated by economic pursuits is unsupported. There is a positive relationship between male students who are involved in their respective community and the likelihood of persistence, but the effect is not statistically significant at the .05 level. Similarly, lifestyle motivations and the high degree expectations increase the odds of fourth year persistence yet do not attain statistical significance at the .05 level.

Collegiate performance factors. The largest factor predicting the persistence of male students in this subgroup is enrollment status, which is statistically significant at the .01 level in Model 4. The odds of fourth year persistence are .462 times greater (Odds Ratio= 1.587) for fulltime male students. This supports the proposition African American

male students who are enrolled fulltime are more likely to persist in college than their counterparts who are enrolled part-time. The belief students with a higher GPA are more likely to persist in college than students with a lower GPA is supported. Student GPA is not significant in Model 3 but statistically significant in the final model.

Having ever been required to take a remedial course decreases the likelihood of fourth year persistence. As shown in Table 5.3 study group participation increases the likelihood of fourth year persistence yet is insignificant in Model 3 and moderately significant in Model 4. Meeting with faculty to discuss academic progress is related to increased odds of fourth year persistence, while meeting with advisors relates to a decrease in the odds of persistence for this period, yet both are statistically insignificant.

Collegiate environment factors. Findings shows attending a four-year institution increases the probability of persisting, but not significantly. Attending a historically black college/university (HBCU) slightly but insignificantly decreases the odds of persisting in year-four. Findings reveal a positive relationship between participation in campus related clubs, sporting teams, fine arts activities, socially interacting with professors, and the likelihood of fourth year persistence, but none of these variables attains statistical significance at the .05 level.

SIXTH YEAR PERSISTENCE

Regression Analyses

Table 5.4. displays the best-fitting model for predicting the sixth year persistence and/or completion of college among African American male students. Model 4 is the best

model because it has the largest Chi Square value (165.16) and the smallest -2 log likelihood (899.142), compared to Models 1-3. This model also explains 25 percent of variance in the likelihood of six year completion among Black male students.

Background factors. Age and receiving federal financial aid are insignificant and negatively related to the odds of six-year completion for male African American students. Being a first generation college student and/or from a low wealth background increases the likelihood of six year completion, but this effect is not statistically significant at the .05 level. For every level increase in parents' education, and receiving financial assistance from parents, negatively impact the likelihood of six-year degree completion. None of these variables attains statistical significance at the .05 level.

Psychosocial factors. Male students who are involved in their respective community likelihood of completion increases, but not significantly. Table 5.4 shows being married, having dependent children, and being employed insignificantly decrease the likelihood of six-year degree completion. Likewise, altruistic motivations, lifestyle motivations and high degree expectations decrease the chances of completion for male respondents.

Collegiate performance factors. Enrollment status, which is significant at the .001 level increases the odds of completion (38 percent). Findings also show a positive relationship between higher GPAs and male students' odds of six year completion, but the effect is not statistically significant. Ever enrolling in remedial coursework decreases the odds of completion.

Predictor	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio
Background								
Age	-.176 (.133)	.838	-.062 (.145)	.940	-.160 (.161)	.852	-.074 (.165)	.929
Federal Financial Aid	.274 (.174)	1.315	.181 (.178)	1.199	.049 (.193)	1.050	-.021 (.198)	.980
First-Generation Student	-.060 (.244)	.942	-.026 (.249)	.974	.048 (.267)	1.049	.117 (.274)	1.124
Parent's Education	.003 (.049)	1.003	-.004 (.050)	.996	-.018 (.054)	.983	-.023 (.056)	.977
Parental Assistance	.153 (.188)	1.166	.036 (.198)	1.037	-.064 (.214)	.938	-.038 (.219)	.962
Psychosocial								
Married Student	-	-	-.361 (.205)	.697	-.420* (.221)	.657	-.355 (.224)	.701
Dependent Children	-	-	-.071 (.258)	.931	-.116 (.278)	.890	-.109 (.280)	.897
Employed	-	-	-.406 (.153)	.667	-.341** (.164)	.711	-.231 (.171)	.793
Altruism Motivation	-	-	-.171 (.162)	.843	-.126 (.176)	.881	-.110 (.180)	.895
Community Involvement	-	-	.501 (.285)	1.651	.372 (.304)	1.451	.316 (.310)	1.372
Lifestyle Motivation	-	-	.099 (.075)	1.104	.025 (.165)	1.026	-.030 (.169)	.970
Degree Expectation	-	-	.097 (.075)	1.102	-.051 (.084)	.950	-.103 (.087)	.902
Continued								

<i>Collegiate Performance</i>										
Full-Time Student	-	-	-	-	1.269*** (.236)	-	-	3.556	1.217*** (.239)	3.376
GPA (4.0 Scale)	-	-	-	-	1.269*** (.236)	-	-	2.181	.765*** (.123)	2.150
Remedial Courses	-	-	-	-	.780** (.121)	-	-	.627	-.362 (.197)	.696
Study Groups	-	-	-	-	-.467*** (.192)	-	-	1.845	.463*** (.214)	1.589
Meets with Faculty	-	-	-	-	.613 (.205)	-	-	1.422	.147 (.239)	1.158
Meets with Advisor	-	-	-	-	-.183 (.186)	-	-	.832	-.343 (.197)	.710
<i>Collegiate Environment</i>										
Four-Year Institution	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.491** (.204)	1.634
Attends HBCU	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.542 (.266)	.581
Lives on-Campus	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.476 (.267)	1.609
Participates in Clubs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.262 (.214)	1.300
Participates in Sports	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.321 (.202)	1.379
Participates in Fine Arts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.031 (.200)	.970
Socialize with Faculty	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.219 (.198)	1.245
Constant	-.496 (.446)	.609	-.705 (.609)	.494	-3.596*** (.761)	-	-	.027	-3.604*** (.773)	.027
-2 log likelihood	1054.16		1035.992		922.76				899.142	
Model χ^2	10.134		28.312		141.54				165.162	
Pseudo R ²	.017		.047		.220				.253	
Degrees of freedom	5		12		18				25	
N	804		804		804				804	
*p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001 Notes: The odds ratio is the antilog of the B.										

*p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001 Notes: The odds ratio is the antilog of the B.

The largest factor predicting the completion of male students in this subgroup is participation in study groups, which is highly significant at the .001 level. Male students who participate in study groups odds of completion increase 60 percent. Table 5.4 shows meeting with faculty, and meeting academic advisors, each decreases the likelihood of completion.

Collegiate environment factors. Attending a four-year institution (moderately significant) increases the odds of completion 63 percent for male students. Black male students who attend HBCUs odds of six year completion insignificantly decrease. This is the lone factor in this category that negatively impacts degree completion. Living on-campus is related to increased odds of completion but is not statistically significant at .05 level. Finally, Table 5.4 shows some evidence for the assumption that Black male collegians with a higher level of social integration are more likely to complete a degree than their African American males with a lower level of social integration, but the evidence is not strong enough to be statistically significant.

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF PREDICTORS

The second research question for this study is: what are the most important factors in college persistence and completion for African American male college students? This question was explored through three separate dichotomous dependent variables; *Second Year Persistence*, *Fourth Year Persistence*, and *Sixth Year Completion*. Independent variables for this study are categorized into four distinct categories: background, psychosocial, collegiate performance, and collegiate environment. To answer this

question, multiple regression models examining the effects of categories of predictors on each of the dependent variables for Black male students was conducted.

Conventionally speaking, results do not reveal a clear pattern in the most important factors that predict the persistence and completion of male African American college students. This is because the magnitudes and statistical significance of odds ratios of the predictors vary across each of the three periods. Noteworthy variables were identified as those statistically significant, with an Odds Ratio score significantly under 1 or above 1, that appear a minimum of twice, across the three periods. With the aforementioned, reviewing all variables does expose *collegiate performance* factors as the most influential category of determinants of persistence and completion for African American males. In particular, taking remedial courses (Odds ratio = 1.995) was the single most important determinant of year-two persistence. In year-four persistence, GPA (odds ratio = 2.097), full-time status (odds ratio = 1.587), and study group participation (odds ratio = 1.535) were most important. For year-six college completion, full-time status (odds ratio = 3.376) yields the greatest predictive power, followed by GPA (odds ratio = 2.15) and study group participation (odds ratio = 1.589). In addition, the Odds Ratio for full-time student status increased across the three periods from 1.328 in year two to 1.587 for year-four, and 3.376 for year-six. This variable is only statistically significant in year-four and year-six. Similarly, study group participation is moderately significant in year-four and year-six. Furthermore, its effect increased over time from 1.085 in year-two to 1.535 in year-four; and 1.589 in year-six. The importance of GPA

increases over the three-year period from 1.254 in year two to 2.097 in year four and 2.15 in year six. This variable is highly significant at .001 level in year-four and year-six.

Among the collegiate environment factors, attending a four-year postsecondary institution is most important in predicting the persistence and completion of male African American college students. The Odds Ratios for this variable changed over the three periods, from 2.702 in year two to 1.517 in year four and 1.634 in year 6 with year-two and year-six being highly significant and moderately significant, respectively.

The effects of background variables are mostly insignificant, except for age in year-4 persistence. None of the psychosocial variables is statistically significant for any of the three periods.

SUMMARY

This chapter first analyzes the factors that influence the persistence and completion of African American male college students and then assesses the relative importance of these factors. Persistence is measured by two dichotomous outcome variables, “year two persistence” and “year four persistence”. Completion is measured by the dichotomous outcome variable of “year six completion” that indicates whether the respondent attained a degree or certificate. To test the effects of the predictors on the outcome variables logistic regression was employed.

The most important factors influencing Black male collegians’ persistence behavior differ across the three time periods but are primarily categorized as collegiate performance variables. For example, the most important factors for year-two included

having ever taken remedial coursework, attending a four-year school and informal social interaction with faculty. Full-time enrollment, GPA, and study group participation are the most importance factors predicting year-four persistence. Year-six completion is similar with the addition of attending a four-year postsecondary institution. Black male students who attended four-year schools were more likely to complete a degree in six years compared to their counterparts attending two-year or less.

CHAPTER VI

DETERMINANTS OF COLLEGE PERSISTENCE: COMPARISON OF MALE AND FEMALE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

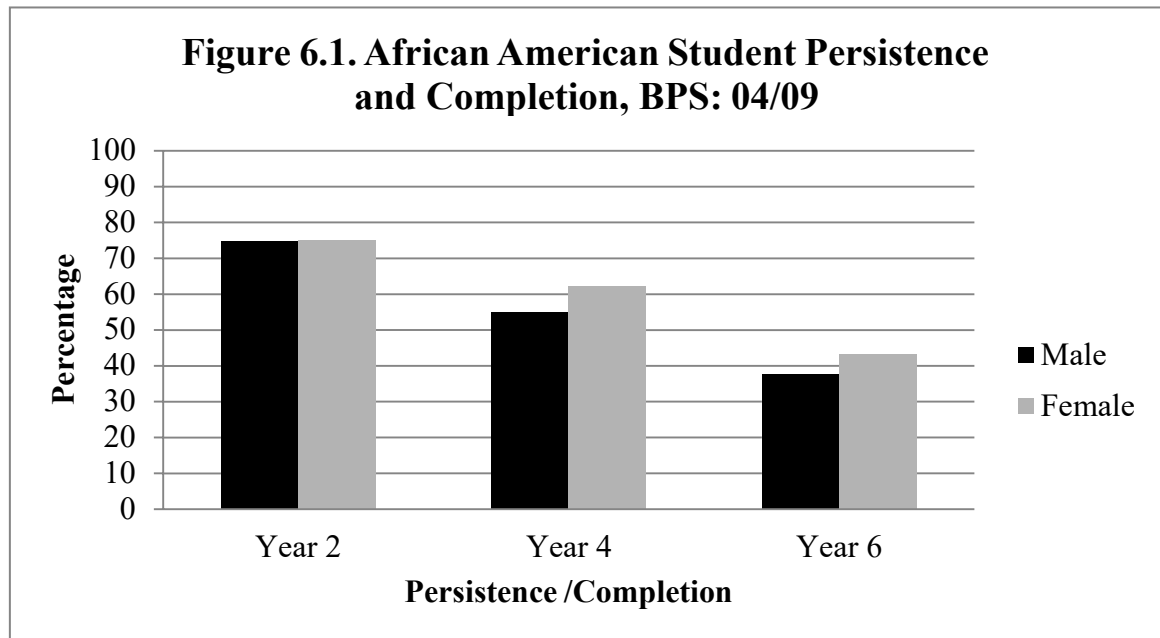
“The militant girl, in adopting new patterns of conduct, could not be judged by traditional standards. Old values, sterile and infantile phobias disappeared.” – Frantz Fanon

Findings that address the third research question of the study about the differences and similarities in the factors influencing college persistence and completion for male African American students and female African American students are reported in this chapter. Descriptive statistics were employed to describe the characteristics of the sample. This is followed by the results presented per the four categorical variables (background, psychosocial, collegiate performance, and collegiate environment), and across periods: second-year persistence, fourth-year persistence, and sixth-year completion. Within each category, resemblances and differences in the multivariate analyses are presented. The final section summarizes the findings.

RATES OF COLLEGE PERSISTENCE AND COMPLETION: MALE-FEMALE COMPARISON

The sample used for research question two consisted of 2,200 African American first-time beginning (FTB) college students. Male respondents comprised about 36 percent of the total sample or 804 cases. Female respondents represented 64 percent (N=

1,396). This section compares the rates of college persistence and completion between male and female African American students. As indicated in figure 6.1, differences in persistence and completion rates varied across the study's six years. Male and female persistence is nearly identical in year-two (Male = 74.8 percent; Female = 75.1 percent), was higher for female students (Male = 54.9 percent; Female = 62.2 percent) in year-four, with a similar pattern (Male = 37.6 percent; Female = 43.2 percent) in year-six.



DETERMINANTS OF COLLEGE PERSISTENCE/COMPLETION: MALE-FEMALE COMPARISON

The final research question was explored through three separate dichotomous dependent variables: *second year persistence*, *fourth year persistence*, and *sixth year completion*. The previously identified independent variables for this study were employed. To answer this question, African American male sixth year completion was

examined through several analyses. Next, I compared the findings with the results of regression analyses for female respondents' second year persistence, fourth year persistence and sixth year completion. The findings for both male African American students and female African American students are the results of the best models for predicting second year persistence, fourth year persistence, and sixth year completion of students.

Table 6.1 displays the best models for predicting the second-year persistence, fourth-year persistence, and sixth-year completion of African American students. Each model comprises 25 explanatory variables derived from the four predictor variable categories. The following model-fit statistics will highlight findings for female sample, because identical guidelines were employed, and each model's fit-statistics have previously been discussed for the male sample in chapter five. Compared to the three previous models examining each dependent variable, these models have the largest Chi Square (χ^2) value (Year-two: 165.5; Year-four: 215.0; Year-six: 1679.5) and the smallest -2 log likelihood (Year-two: 1294.9; Year-four: 1636.5; Year-six: 1679.5). The models displayed in Table 6.1 also explain nearly 18 percent; 19 percent; and 20 percent of the variance in the likelihood of second-year persistence, fourth-year persistence, and sixth-year completion of Black female collegians, respectively.

Categorical Determinants

Background factors. In year-two the effect of age on college persistence was similar for both genders but only significant for female students. Federal financial aid had

a significant and greater positive effect on college persistence for females but an insignificant and smaller effect for male students. Also, in year two, being a first-generation college student and/or from a low wealth background, (Table 6.1) were significant at the .05 level or better for female students but not for male students. What is more is that being a first-generation student has a more dramatic effect on female persistence than male persistence. Being female and a first generation college student decreased the odds of persistence by 60 percent, whereas this figure was 37 percent for male first-generation students. Parents' education level and parental financial assistance did not have a significant effect on persistence for both males and females.

The effect of background factors shifted in year four. Age was the only significant predictor and had similar effects for both males and females. Being a first generation college student or from a low-wealth background and parents' education level negatively affected the persistence of both males and females but insignificantly. However, whereas receiving financial assistance from parents decreased the odds of persistence for male students, it increased the odds of persistence for female students; the effects of parental financial assistance show a reverse pattern; it should be emphasized that none of these effects was statistically significant at the .05 level.

Unlike the previous years, none of the background factors were statistically significant for male or female respondents in relation to six-year completion. Being a

Predictor	Year 2		Year 4		Year 6	
	Persistence		Persistence		Completion	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Background						
Age	.788	.797*	.676**	.707***	.929	.952
Federal Financial Aid	1.338	1.845***	.884	1.178	.980	1.122
First-Generation Student	.635	.399***	.953	.788	1.124	.750
Parent's Education	1.017	1.026	.960	.984	.977	.981
Parental Assistance	1.131	.937	1.254	.905	.962	.951
Psychosocial						
Married Student	.820	.995	.804	1.234	.701	.987
Dependent Children	1.218	.897	1.603	.829	.897	.751
Employed	.712	1.098	.838	.830	.793	.846
Altruism Motivation	.936	1.049	.844	.947	.895	.911
Community Involvement	1.114	.940	1.844	.858	1.372	1.115
Lifestyle Motivation	.888	.935	1.061	.942	.970	1.168
Degree Expectation	1.100	1.107	1.038	1.041	.902	1.010
Collegiate Performance						
Full-Time Student	1.328	1.064	1.587**	.946	3.376***	1.848***
GPA (4.0 Scale)	1.254	1.084	2.097***	1.466***	2.150***	1.376***
Remedial Courses	1.995*	1.105	.707	.983	.696	.637***
Study Groups	1.085	.960	1.535**	1.530**	1.589**	1.167
Meets with Faculty	1.456	1.817***	1.211	1.073	1.158	.835
Meets with Advisor	1.037	1.052	.670	.969	.710	.903

Continued

<i>Collegiate Environment</i>						
Four-Year Institution	2.702***	1.482*	1.517	1.272	1.634**	1.214
Attends HBCU	.885	.663	.863	.818	.581	.664
Lives on-Campus	1.459	1.801	1.688	1.799**	1.609	4.581***
Participates in Clubs	1.159	1.111	1.358	1.937***	1.300	1.813***
Participates in Sports	.954	1.626	1.360	.918	1.379	1.187
Participates in Fine Arts	1.080	1.109	1.012	1.111	.970	1.032
Socialize with Faculty	1.585*	.978	1.431	1.658***	1.245	1.687***
Constant	.566	1.617	.091***	.569	.027***	.179***
-2 log likelihood	689.26	1294.9	926.67	1636.524	899.142	1679.531
Model χ^2	155.32	165.5	180.32	215.096	165.162	229.796
Pseudo R ²	.278	.177	.269	.194	.253	.204
Degrees of freedom	25	25	25	25	25	25
N	804	1396	804	1396	804	1396
*p ≤ .05 **p ≤ .01 ***p ≤ .001 Notes: The odds ratio is the antilog of the B.						

first-generation college student and/or from a low wealth background was the only factor in this category that positively affected male degree completion, and federal financial aid was the only factor that positively influenced female degree completion, but insignificantly for both. The other variables negatively affected degree completion for both males and females, albeit insignificantly.

Psychosocial factors. It is important to note that positive relationships exist between some psychosocial variables and persistence and/or completion for African American college students; however none of these factors are statistically significant (Table 6.1) across the six years examined in this study. More specifically, in year two being married decreases the odds of persistence for both male and female students. Interestingly as Table 6.1 shows, having dependent children positively affects persistence for males in years 2 and 4 and negatively for female students. This is also the case with community involvement which increases the odds of male persistence and decreases female persistence. Being employed decreases Black male second year persistence , while increasing the odds of female persistence. The degree to which the role of degree aspirations play is different, yet minimum, and again not statistically significant for male or female students.

In year four, being married, and having high degree expectations increase the probability of persistence occurring for female students. The factors in this subcategory negatively affecting persistence for female respondents are having dependent children, and being employed, followed by community involvement and altruistic and lifestyle

motivations. Comparatively, Table 6.1 indicates, lifestyle motivations, altruistic motivations, and having dependent children increase the likelihood of fourth year persistence for male undergraduates.

Results for year-six reveal lifestyle motivations, and being involved in the community are statistically insignificant but positively relate to the likelihood of degree completion for female students. This is also the case for community involvement for males. Table 6.1 shows that being married, having dependent children (which has inhibited second and fourth year persistence for female respondents), being employed, and having altruistic motivations are statistically insignificant and negatively affect the odds of six-year completion for both male and female students.

Collegiate performance factors. Participation in study groups is the only factor in this category that slightly decreased persistence for female respondents only in year-two. Having ever enrolled in remedial courses, meeting with faculty to discuss academic progress, being a full-time student, and higher Grade Point Averages increased the odds of second year persistence for both male and female students. Moreover, remedial course work was the only factor that significantly impacted the odds of persistence for male respondents. The only significant factor predicting the persistence of female students in this subgroup is meeting with faculty to discuss academic progress, which is significant at the .001 level.

Two factors were common determinants of year-four persistence in this category for both male and female students. One was participation in study groups, which

increased the odds of persisting for both males and females. GPA was the other common predictor of persistence for both genders. For every point increase in GPA on a 4.0 scale, the chances of persistence increased about 110 percent for males, and 47 percent (Odds Ratio= 1.466) for female students. Enrollment status affected the odds of persistence differently for males and for females. For female students who were enrolled full-time the probability of fourth year persistence only decreased 5 percent, but for men it increased almost 59 percent.

In year six, the common determinants of degree completion for both male and female students were full-time status and GPA, and both increased the likelihood of completion. Participation in study groups increased the odds of completion for both males and females but only significantly for males. Remedial courses decreased the chance of completion for both genders but only significantly for females probably because of the larger sample size of women. Meeting with academic advisors and meeting with faculty had no significant effect on six year completion for both genders.

Collegiate environment factors. Attending a four-year postsecondary institution is very important in predicting year-two persistence for both male and female African American students. The odds of persistence increases 170 percent for male students, which is highly significant at the .001 level, and 48 percent for female students which is significant at the .01 level. Social interaction with faculty significantly increases the chances of persistence for male students, but slightly and insignificantly decreased the odds of year-two persistence for female students. Living on-campus; participating in

student clubs/organizations, fine arts activities, or sports, and attending an HBCU had no significant effect on the odds of persistence for both.

In year four, no collegiate environmental factor had a significant effect on persistence for male students. Participation in campus clubs and organizations, living on campus, and informal social interaction with faculty significantly increased the chance of persistence for female students probably because of their larger sample size. Attending an HBCU had no significant effect on the odds of year-four persistence for both genders

For college completion in year six, there was not a common determinant for both genders in terms of statistical significance, although the effects of most predictors were similar. Attending a four-year postsecondary institution was only significant predictor for male students but not female students. For female students, living on campus, participation in school clubs/organizations, and socially interacting with professors were the significant predictors of completion for female students. In particular, African American female students who lived on campus were about 4.6 times as likely as their female counterparts who lived off campus to attain a college degree. Similar to previous years, paradoxically attending an HBCU had no significant effect on completion for both genders.

SUMMARY

The findings in this chapter reveal that factors predicting the persistence and completion for African American male and African American female college students vary. Results show male African American college students share many of the collegiate

performance determinants of persistence and completion with their female counterparts. For an example, full-time enrollment is statistically significant for both male and females in year six. GPA is highly significant at the .001 level for both male and female fourth-year persistence and sixth-year completion. Study group participation is another similarity; it is a moderately significant predictor of four year-persistence. Attending a four-year postsecondary institution (collegiate environment predictor) is highly significant for males and significant for females in year-two. Finally, age being moderately significant for males and highly significant for females negatively affects the odds of persistence in year-four for both groups.

The results of this study show whereas the determinants of persistence and completion for African American students may resemble in latter time periods there are unique differences in year-two for males compared to females. For example, being a first-generation college student and/or from a low-wealth background insignificantly affects males, but is a highly significant predictor negatively affecting the odds of female year-two persistence. In contrast, receiving federal financial aid and meeting formally with faculty members positively leads to the likelihood of second-year persistence for males but not to the degree of the significance (.001) they contribute to the odds of female persistence. Ever having been enrolled in remedial coursework is another statistically significant collegiate performance predictor for males; increasing the likelihood of second year persistence. Though positive, its effect on the odds of female second-year persistence is not significant. Findings also show the level of significance for informal

social interaction varies between males and females. Social interaction with faculty is highly significant and positive for male students in year-two, while it—albeit insignificant—decrease the odds of female persisting in year-two.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

“I am black, not because of a curse, but because my skin has been able to capture all the cosmic effluvia. I am truly a drop of sun under the earth.”-Frantz Fanon

This dissertation has examined the determinants of second-year persistence, fourth-year persistence, and sixth-year completion among male African American college students. Germane literature and theoretical frameworks pertinent to college persistence, and college completion were presented. This study used longitudinal data from the BPS: 04/09 and a modified version of traditional college student attrition models first broadly developed by Tinto (1975), then specified for nontraditional student groups by Bean and Metzner (1985), and specifically focused on Black males at community colleges by Mason (1998) to test a series of logistic regression models of persistence and completion of African American male first-time beginning college students. This chapter summarizes the findings that address the three research questions guiding this study. First, what factors influence the persistence and completion of male African American college students? Second, what are the most important factors in college persistence and completion for male African American college students? Finally, how do the determinants of college persistence and completion resemble or differ between male African American college students and female African American college students? The implications and relevance of findings to male African American students, scholars, and

policy makers are discussed. Limitations and contributions of the study are included in this chapter along with recommendations for future research.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Determinants of Persistence and Completion

What factors influence the persistence and completion of African American male college students? To answer this question a summary of findings from each of the three periods will take place, where *background, psychosocial, collegiate performance*, and *collegiate environment* factors will be examined.

Year-two persistence. The majority (75 percent) of male students persisted to their second year of college. During this time period, having ever enrolled in remedial courses; attending a four-year institution; and informal social interaction with faculty were significant and positively related to the outcome variable.

Year-four persistence. Almost 60 percent of male students persisted to their fourth year of college. During this time period, being a full-time student; having a higher GPA; and participating in study groups were significant and positively related to the odds of year-four persistence. Age was statistically significant and negatively affected the odds of persistence during this time period.

Year-six completion. About 38 percent of male students completed a degree program within six years of study. The factors that were positive and that significantly influenced the odds of year-six completion were full-time enrollment; GPA; participation in study groups; and attending a four-year postsecondary institution.

The core argument presented in this study is the interrelationship of the four dimensions of persistence affects Black male collegians in different ways.

Background. The assumption that older African American male college students are less likely to persist in college than younger African American male college students (H1) is rejected in year two and year six, and met in year four. For each level increase in age group (as reported in 2003), the odds of fourth-year persistence decrease 32 percent.

The hypotheses African American male students with more educated parents and those from higher income families are more likely to persist in college than those with less educated parents and lower-incomes (H2, H3) were rejected in each of the three time periods.

Similarly, the assumption African American male students who receive federal financial aid are more likely to persist in college than their counterparts who do not receive federal financial aid (H4) is unsupported in each of the three time periods.

Psychosocial. Findings reveal the ideas that being married (H5), having dependent (H6) children, being employed off-campus (H7), having altruistic or lifestyle motivations (H8), or having high degree expectations (H9) is associated with a lower degree of persistence for male African American college students are not supported in any of the three time periods.

Collegiate performance. It was hypothesized that African American male students who are enrolled full-time are more likely to persist in college than their counterparts

who are enrolled part-time (H10). The finding supports this hypothesis only in year four and in year six.

The assumption that Black male students with a higher level of academic integration are more likely to persist toward degree completion than male students with a lower level of academic integration (H11) is rejected in year two and partially supported in year four and year six. The findings in year four and year six provide mixed evidence; whereas study group participation is statistically significant and positively affects persistence, other variables' effect is insignificant.

The belief that African American male students with a higher GPA are more likely to persist in college than African American male students with a low GPA (H12) is rejected in year-two while it is supported in year-four and in year-six.

It was hypothesized that African American male students enrolled in remedial courses are less likely to persist in college than African American male students not enrolled in remedial courses (H13). The finding does not support this hypothesis for year two. Remedial coursework was statistically significant and affected the odds of persistence positively.

Collegiate environment. The finding from this study supports the hypothesis that African American male students enrolled in four-year institutions are more likely to persist towards degree completion than those enrolled in two-year postsecondary institutions (H14) in year two and year six. This hypothesis is rejected in year four.

The hypothesis that African American males who attend historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) are more likely to persist than those enrolled in non-HBCUs (H15) is unsupported in each of the three periods.

The findings in each of the three time periods do not support the hypothesis African American male students who live off campus are less likely to persist in college than those who live on campus (H16).

The hypothesis that African American male students with a higher level of social integration are more likely to persist toward degree completion than those with a lower level of social integration (H17) is partially supported in year two and rejected in year four, and year six.

Relative Importance of Predictors

What are the most important factors in the persistence and completion of African American male college students? To answer this question, a summary of findings from each of the three periods will be presented. The core argument presented in this study is the interrelationship of these four dimensions of persistence affects Black male collegians in different ways. Among this sample of Black male collegians, best model fit statistics for the study's regression analyses shows collegiate performance and collegiate environment factors primarily emerged as positively related to persistence and completion.

Year-two. Noteworthy factors influencing African American male second-year persistence include attending a four-year institution, which has the highest Odds Ratio of

the three periods (Odds Ratio = 2.702). Remedial coursework (Odds Ratio = 1.995), and informal social interaction with faculty (Odds Ratio= 1.585). Having ever enrolled in remedial course is the most important factor in male African American year-two persistence.

Year-four. Full-time enrollment (Odds Ratio = 1.587), GPA (Odds Ratio = 2.097), and study group participation (Odds Ratio = 1.535) are key factors influencing fourth-year persistence. The most important factor during this time period for Black male persistence is full-time enrollment.

Year-six. Similar to year-four, central factors influencing six-year completion includes full-time enrollment (Odds Ratio= 3.376), GPA (Odds Ratio = 2.150), and study group participation (Odds Ratio =1.589). In addition to these factors, attending a four-year institution (Odds Ratio= 1.634) was found as the most important factor in six-year completion for male African American students.

Determinants of College Persistence and Completion: Male-Female Comparison

The final research question for this study sought to answer how the determinants of college persistence and college completion resemble and differ between African American male college students and African American female college students. The assumption that factors predicting the persistence and completion for African American male and African American female college students vary is met.

The results show distinct differences in year two for males compared to females. The additional support male students receive while enrolled in remedial courses, and the

ability to informally interact with faculty serve as unique enhancers of male persistence during year two. Being a first-generation college student and/or from a low-wealth background significantly and negatively affects female persistence during this time. Likewise, receiving federal financial aid and formally meeting faculty to discuss progress both have a significant and positive effect for female African American students.

Resemblances in the determinants of persistence and completion for African American college students are primarily found in year four and year six. However, in year two, attending a four-year postsecondary institution is significant and positively relates to both male and female persistence. In year four, age is significant and negatively affects male and female persistence. GPA and study group participation are significant and positively affect male and female persistence during this time period. In year six, full-time enrollment and GPA are significant and are positively related to male and female persistence.

The results show that parents' level of education, financial assistance from parents, meeting with an academic advisor, attending a HBCU, and campus fine arts and sports team participation, and each of the psychosocial variables, were non-determinants of persistence and completion for both male and female students.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

This section discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the findings from this study. It is evident from the findings there is a need for a theoretical model that realigns the assumptions, and redistributes the importance of academic and environment

factors put forth in previous models about their influence on student persistence and completion. In place of a conventional view—that assumes these factors compete for influence in predicting the odds of student persistence, when discussing male African American students in particular—these factors should be reconfigured as working in tandem to reflect Black male collegians’ unique college experiences. A model that discusses the percentage of minority students enrolled at a respective institution, along with the racial/ethnic make-up of faculty is needed. In addition, categories of student clubs and organizations an institution offers in its extracurricular milieu would be appropriate and expand the environment grouping of variables per critical race theory and status construction theory tenets on the role status has in shaping micro and meso-level interaction. Based on CRT’s idea of culturally responsive programming, the findings suggest that many traditional academic variables present as static, and an expanded range of academic variables are needed that reflect not only the students’ views of the utility of the degree they are pursuing, per Bean and Metzner (1985) and Mason (1998), but its value to them individually and culturally. New academic variables should include: student learning styles, and faculty teaching style and pedagogical practices. Because status construction theory discusses the phenomena of exclusion based on social distinctness and CRT advocates for social inclusion of marginalized groups, the above suggestions may be germane to predicting the persistence and completion of twenty-first century college students in general.

The interrelationship of *background, psychosocial, collegiate performance*, and *collegiate environment* factors affects African American male college persistence and completion in different ways. However, as demonstrated in this study, many background factors which are over-studied and psychosocial which are understudied have a negative effect on Black male persistence whereas collegiate performance factors which are established in the literature and collegiate environment factors which require a closer reexamination in scholarship positively affect persistence and completion.

Practical Implications

Remedial coursework. Taking one or more remedial courses was positively related to year-two persistence for male African American students. This however, was not the case for fourth-year persistence, or sixth-year completion. These findings suggest that remedial coursework may be helpful for the persistence of Black male collegians in their first two years of enrollment as they transition into college-level/credit-earning coursework. However, sustained enrollment in remedial courses serves as a disadvantage to persistence and completion. Whereas, the initial enrollment in these courses may directly and explicitly address, and resolve known factors presented in prior scholarship (Hirschy, Bremer and Castellano 2011; Thayer 2000) about many African American male students—at the intersections of being first-generation college students and/or from low-wealth backgrounds—and the stated academic under-preparedness, the status generally affords.

Previous research supports the idea that early academic success is important to future persistence. Traditionally, this is conceptualized as high GPAs, and earning college credit (Tinto 1975, 1993; Warburton, Bugarin, and Nuñez 2001), yet this study defines and advocates for postsecondary institutions adopting a more broad definition of early academic success to include perseverance. This would include continued enrollment in spite of noncredit earning hours remedial courses garner for many students, not just African American males. This normally is believed to weaken students' institutional commitment (Bean and Metzner 1985) and perceptions of degree utility (Mason 1998). In other words, remedial courses have been stigmatized in college culture amongst students, and seen as a disadvantage to future persistence and completion for scholars.

This study finds early remediation can be advantageous for Black male collegians because of the manifest function of the additional guidance received in respective subject-areas, and the latent function of access to more supportive services many institutions may overtly provide, categorizing these students “at-risk” of unsuccessful matriculation. This is illustrative of expanding literature on the value of college remediation (Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum 2002; Keller 2011; Paulson 2012). Furthermore, if institutions of higher learning want to continue on the path of holistic diversity and access they must acknowledge that persistent underclasses of people exist in society and academic under-preparedness is an unfortunate side-effect. Secondly,

institutions must make strides to systematically address the issue, with non-stigmatizing remediation programming.

Grade point average. There is a bevy of evidence that holds grade point average as a leading predictor of persistence and completion (Belcheir and Michener 1997; Ishitani 2006; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991; Xiao 1999). GPA coupled with standardized test scores has served as a lynchpin for academic success in the secondary and postsecondary arena for years, and continues to carry the same weight. Findings from this study are partially in line with prior research that suggests when controlling for other factors such as socioeconomic status, and first-generation status, students with higher GPAs are more likely to persist in college. Because this is a known and unsurprising factor, per its statistical significance and positive relationship to year-four persistence and year-six completion further attention will not be given to elucidate this point established in the last 40 years of studies (Tinto 1975; Bean and Metzner 1985; Mason 1998; Cohn, et al. 2004). However, it is important to discuss, unlike prior studies, this study shows the importance of GPA increases over time for Black male collegians. GPA is insignificant in increasing the odds of persisting in year two. Its importance is dwarfed by other factors that speak to pertinent tasks such as social inclusion and cultural embeddedness required in the early years in their collegiate careers.

Full-time enrollment. Enrollment status presents a different vista for Black male persistence and completion. Challenging course loads, financial considerations, the care of dependent children or full-time employment are a few of the numerous reasons

students may decide to enroll in college part-time. However, hours enrolled and hours successfully completed have long been considered a feature of persistence (Bailey et al. 2010; Fike and Fike 2008). Comparatively, part-time students leave in earlier semesters of their collegiate careers more than full-time students (Fike and Fike 2008; Johnson 2006). Furthermore, according to Cohen and Brawer (2008) students attending two-year institutions are more likely to enroll part-time than students attending four-year schools.

This is of concern if male African American students are currently overrepresented in two-year institutions and findings of this study show they are less likely to persist and complete if they attended school part-time. This study's results show that full-time enrollment status is important to African American male persistence and completion in year four and year six, which is consistent with previous research (Hensley and Kinser 2001). Interestingly, results from this study show that full-time enrollment was not statistically significant in year two. Outside of the *external/environmental pulls* Bean and Metzner (1985) discuss, what is more is an exploration of other status sets male African American students have that may prevent or compete with full-time enrollment is needed. Current statistics and what has become classic persistence models show more nontraditional college students are attending college. Yet colleges are slow to adjust their environments to accommodate these students. I believe reasons for this are multi-fold: (1) there is an absence of literature that employs a nationally representative sample of nontraditional college students; (2) ad-hoc and narrowly focused theoretical models are still prevalent in the literature; and (3) because of the former reasons, colleges even when

controlling for race and gender, still revere traditional aged, unmarried, childless, residential students from middle class backgrounds—per reflection of the collective undergraduate experiences of many of the faculty and administrators. Historically, studies that have discussed the consequences of being working-class on college persistence have viewed it from a structural standpoint. I assert there is much efficacy in viewing it as a status/identity issue, per expectation states theory in going forward.

Four-year institutions. Low-wealth communities in general, African American and Latino American students in particular are underprepared for collegiate life, and overrepresented in enrollment at two-year public institutions (Flowers 2006; Wood 2012) seeking its open-access and affordability as an avenue into opportunity (Hensley and Kinser 2001; Wood and Williams 2013). Yet many community colleges are staffed by part-time instructors who may be employed full-time in industry or at other colleges which may limit student access to faculty and mentorship. Most of these institutions are not residential and have multiple admission entry points throughout an academic year versus the traditional cohort of incoming freshmen students in the fall of each year at four-year institutions. The high numbers of part-time faculty, absence of institution-wide onboarding that occurs through new student, and first-year experience programs, with a lack of solid cohort bonding many first-generation college students lack the institutional support and guidance research suggests is needed for persistence towards degree completion. This may limit institutional integration and commitment.

According to Flowers (2006), African American males at two-year colleges experience lower rates of integration than African American males attending four-year institutions. If integration has long been cited as a key component of persistence and completion the access that community college provides for many socially diverse students may unintentionally be reproducing social inequality (Anderson, Alfonso, and Sun 2006; Cohen and Brawer 2003; Dougherty and Kienzl 2006). Illustrative of this, Esther and Mosby (2007) report only 16 percent of Black males will complete a degree or certificate program within a three year period of enrollment at a two-year college. Moreover, findings from this study show that African American males who attended two-year postsecondary institutions were less likely to succeed at each of the three time periods.

These results are in line with prior research that suggests students attending two-year colleges dropout more often compared to those attending four-year institutions. Research shows that first-time beginning college students who start their collegian careers at four-year schools are more likely to complete a degree than those who start at two-year schools (Astin 1975, 1977, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991, 2005). Therefore it is important to evaluate the reasons for the increase enrollment of Black male students at two-year colleges.

Social interaction. Overall, findings from this dissertation show study group participation to be statistically significant and positively associated with persistence and completion. This study posits the role of study group participation for Black male

collegians supersedes conventional wisdom and prior studies on the positive effects of studying and academic preparation. More directly, while studying and course preparation may serve as the activating event, its outcome includes a host of other constructive features. Primarily, the role of social support and peer-to-peer interaction is of value. In a 2001 study, Spradley (2001) found that support from peers in the form of classroom interactions and study groups outside of the classroom were great facilitators of male African American student success. In order to participate in a study group, relationships must be developed or an environment that nurtures the potential for the development of relationships must be present. More plainly, peers have to feel comfortable to study with Black male students, and Black male students have to be comfortable enough with peers or their larger environment to participate in such activities.

Beyond empathy and cordialness, study group participation suggests a mutual respect for the academic skills all participants offer, especially African American males. This ability to connect and contribute is a feature of what is traditionally considered as social integration. While the ability of study group participation as a variable to aid in academic integration and social integration is apparent in previous literature (Bailey and Alfonso 2005; Flowers 2006; Tinto 1975, 1993), this study focuses on its performative value for Black male students.

Similarly, the importance of informal social interaction with faculty was found to be positively associated with second year persistence for male students in this study. Other studies have also found that a student's institutional commitment can be enhanced

through positive interaction with faculty, staff and the college campus as a whole (Astin 1993; Mayo et al. 1995). Beyond academic pursuits, diverse and healthy social relationships are an important aspect of collegian life (Meaders 1998; Quinnan 1997). Students who develop these relationships tend to persist and complete college at higher rates. According to Meaders (1998) and Watson et al. (2002), the opportunity to engage in discussions and social interaction with diverse individuals inside and outside of the classroom should be a feature of any postsecondary institution's milieu.

According to Stikes (1984) and many others, social interaction with faculty plays a significant role in the status development of individuals as college students. Yet, Mayo et al. (1995) explain faculty's engagement with students outside of the classroom is primarily through advising and student organization sponsorship. Black male collegians have reported a reluctance to interact with peers and faculty outside of the classroom setting for fear of perceived and/or actual experiences of discrimination, and microaggressions (Allen 1992; Davis 1994; Fries-Britt and Turner 2001; Jones 2001; Spradley 2001). Critical race theory and expectation states theory are of importance because of the lens each provides to examine the implications of implicit bias and the everydayness of race on the college persistence and completion of male African American students. To begin altering status beliefs more opportunity for informal interaction should be created by colleges and universities. This should be coupled with an organizational culture that expects faculty to support and mentor students.

Financial aid. Receiving financial aid is not a statistically significant predictor of persistence for male students in year four and year six. These findings call into question the assumption in the educational literature that suggests students who receive federal financial aid assistance are more likely to persist in college than students who do not receive federal financial aid (Nora 1990; St. John, Kirshstein and Noel 1991). The scarcity of data sets with comprehensive financial aid data including but not limited to institution-specific aid and federal aid have created a space where few empirical studies on the effects of financial aid on persistence exists (Gross et al. 2007). An ever-evolving understanding of the implications of financial aid suggests that contrary to wide belief, receiving financial aid can negatively impact student motivation and commitment, which are features of persistence. Bettinger (2007) suggests students receiving financial aid may not fully engage because the initial financial investment required of college was not personal, but provided by the government. This may explain this study's findings. He further states that certain types of federal aid eliminate "The 'sunk cost fallacy' which suggests that people often devote greater resources and more effort in areas where they have already made an investment". Yet and still it may be the long-range view of the investment which may deter students who receive financial aid from persisting towards degree completion (Cabrera, Nora and Castaneda 1995). In other words, many American students who receive federal financial aid do so in the form of low-interest loans, they are required to pay back at the completion of their degrees. Bleak employment prospects and

the steady rise in the cost of college now call into question the return-on-investment for many undergraduates (Brezina and Winder 2003; Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin 1998).

Historically black colleges and universities. The findings of this study counter previous research (Allen 1992; Davis 1994; Rodgers and Summers 2008) on the efficacy of HBCUs aiding in the persistence and degree completion of Black male students through their development of social and cultural capital. The results show that at each time period, students attending these institutions were less likely to persist and/or complete. This requires further examination. These findings may be explained by a lack of resources at the disposal of these institutions. Financial aid has both positive and negative consequences on student persistence (Bettinger 2007; Cabrea et al. 1999; Cabrera, Nora and Castaneda 1995). Many HBCUs do not receive public state dollars because they are private institutions, which may limit attending students' access to adequate funding. Also with the focus on diversity at predominantly White institutions (PWI) and the rise of two-year college initiatives from the U.S. government, many HBCUs now directly compete to attract and retain African American students.

Dependent children. Findings regarding this variable are interesting for a number of reasons. First, this factor negatively affects female respondents and positively affects male respondents' odds of the outcome variable occurring, yet the effect is not significant. This casts doubt on scholarship (Bean and Metzner 1985; Shannon 2006; Stewart 2009) discussing the adverse effects of parenthood on education. Perhaps in the

twenty-first century with the diversity of students entering into postsecondary education this factor does not enhance or inhibits persistence.

Secondly, dependent children increase the likelihood of male African American students persisting in year-two and year-four is surprising. Male students may feel a sense of personal responsibility to provide for offspring through work that requires specialized skills and/or education (Mincy, Lewis and Han 2006; Smeeding, Garfinkel and Mincy 2011) which may provide ample motivation for persistence towards degree completion for male students with dependent children compared to their child-free counterparts. The fact that the same—in the scope of the findings—may not be said for Black female students again, is interesting. This could be in-line with, and the implications of traditional gender roles. The breadwinner system is a unique feature of American patriarchy that requires males to work, without the expectation of family support beyond fiscal responsibility. On the other hand, women may be expected to provide the entirety of emotional care and support to men, dependent children, and extended family members (hooks 2003; Janssens 1997; Lorber 1993). Yet the consequences of said care may negatively affect the individual first personally (Hochschild 1983), and then academically (Shannon 2006; Stewart 2009). What is more is the heightened value society tends to place on fatherhood—whether he serves as custodial or noncustodial parent—is not shared with mothers. As this study shows, the cultural ideas about parenthood may be stable, but implications of dependent children on education are slowly shifting.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This study contributes to the current literature by providing a systematic analysis of male African American college persistence and college completion. It examines the effects of four distinct dimensions of factors on persistence and completion, including background, psychosocial, collegiate performance, and collegiate environment variables. In addition, it uses the most recent quantitative data that is nationally representative, allowing for generalizations of findings to all Black male collegians in the United States. Each category of determinants is measured by a group of indicators, which have been previously examined by scholars to explore college persistence. This dissertation not only includes standard variables established in the literature, but uses a modified model that improves the understanding of male African American college persistence. This modified sociocultural model provides a theoretical foundation for future research on African American college students, other students of color, in addition to being germane to diverse twenty-first century college students.

This study challenge assumptions on the importance of what have become well-worn predictors of success in college. Findings provide evidence for the reexamination of the role collegiate environment plays on the persistence and completion of Black male students. Attending racially homogenous schools can no longer be seen as an intuitive indicator for success. Similarly, the value of attending a residential college must not be taken for granted if such status does not afford male African American students the

ability to comfortably interact with peers and faculty, or is too expensive and requires off-campus employment to defray costs.

Although this study offers a comprehensive analysis, it is not without limitations. Even though to date BPS: 04/09 offers the only and largest nationally representative sample of African American first-time beginning college students, the number of African American cases (2,200) in general, African American males in particular (804) is still relatively modest. The dataset did not include returning students, only beginning first-time students. With an increasing number of students returning to complete their undergraduate education, this project could have benefitted from an examination of the diversity of experiences, expectations and role the four categories of determinants of persistence play on different categories of male African American students. In addition, the dataset employed for this study did not include variables for a full examination of particular dimensions. A lack of student motivational factors, additional supporting factors (outside of the financial assistance), or perceptions/experience factors limited the development of the psychosocial indicators.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The misnomer of *universal* male privilege may explain the current state of scholarly inattention and why the gender issue has not been thoroughly addressed in the college persistence literature on male African American college students. Consequently, there are countless directions for future research on this population. The social position of African American men is as much gendered as it is racialized (Bush and Bush 2013;

Crenshaw 1991; hooks 2004). This permeates all facets of their collegiate experience from the initial expectation and/or decision to attend college; to choice of institution; to familial and community support garnered; to social interaction with peers and faculty. Future research should focus on the role gender plays in social interaction between students and faculty, with race at the intersection. An examination of the implications of the rapid diversification of college students, and seemingly sluggish diversification of college faculty is warranted. In the same vein, future research should also examine the role historically black colleges/universities play in the twenty-first century for African American students, and in the context of a prematurely designated post-racial America.

None of the psychosocial variables of interest in this study, including being married, having dependent children, high degree expectations, altruistic or lifestyle motivations or being employed off campus held an uninterrupted statistical significance or were continuously positive in relation to the persistence and completion of male African American students across each of the three time periods in this study. This is why they require further examination. If some of these are features of nontraditional students, and more nontraditional students are enrolling in college, research that examines these identities and status sets from a strengths-based perspective is needed. Much of the current literature addresses students with diverse sociocultural histories from a deficit perspective. Therefore future research needs to broaden the theoretical frameworks employed to look at male African American student success and experiences. An example is Bush and Bush (2013) who developed an African American Male Theory

(AAMT) that they describe as “a theoretical framework that can be used to articulate the position and trajectory of African American boys and men in society by drawing on and accounting for pre-and post-enslavement experiences while capturing their spiritual, psychological, social and educational development and station”. More culturally responsive and inclusive frameworks are needed to guide future research.

It is important to expand scholarship on the experience of African American males in general, and Black male college students in particular. African American men are seen as perpetual outsiders, especially in the worlds of academia and industry. This status in turn creates the status beliefs that Black boys are delinquent, dangerous and disinterested in their own education, which shapes how they are treated inside classrooms, and ultimately manifests into their societal status as men. Social interaction is framed by status beliefs about groups one belongs to, as well as beliefs about groups one does not. These beliefs are agentic in nature, because they are created by culture, help to sustain culture, and have capacity to reshape culture (Ridgeway and Correll 2003). The racialization of gender places Black male students at multiple disadvantages because the status beliefs about their capacity as college students are rooted in sociohistorical ideas about Black males in larger society, and do not situationally adjust to account for sheer enrollment as an indicator of civility, character, or cognitive ability; all widely held status beliefs about American college students.

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