ABSTRACT

TITLE: A CASE STUDY APPROACH TO THE IMPACT OF

        ACADEMIC ADVISING ON AFRICAN AMERICAN

        MEN AT THREE COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN

        GEORGIA

        Philip M. Cody, Doctor of Education, May 2019

Dissertation Chair: Leah P. Hollis, EdD

        Community College Leadership Program

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine how African American men at three community colleges in Georgia perceive the academic advising process and how the academic advisor influences their retention. A declining number of African American men are attending and completing college. This trend is troubling not only because of its implications for the men themselves, but also because of the long-term economic, political, and social effects for the African American population.

The qualitative case study examined African American men's views of academic advising, and its impact on their academic persistence and achievement will thus address the problem of declining African American male enrollment in higher education and suggest the services or resources colleges can provide to combat the issue. The researcher used Wood and Harris's (2014) Socio-Ecological Outcomes Model coupled with

Schlossberg's (1989, 2011) Theory of Marginality to assess student outcomes and how those outcomes affect African American male retention rates. All of the participants chosen for this study were African American male students, attending one of three community colleges in Georgia. There were twelve participants selected for this study. The researcher found that African American male students' academic advising experiences had a considerable influence on their retention rates at community colleges. The researcher also discovered that poor academic progress, lack of support, from both the institutions and their families, and a lack of positive role models at their prospective institutions often influenced their futures and their retention

A CASE STUDY APPROACH TO THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC ADVISING ON

AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN AT THREE COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN GEORGIA

by

Philip M. Cody

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2019

A CASE STUDY APPROACH TO THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC ADVISING ON

AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN AT THREE COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN GEORGIA

by

Philip M. Cody

has been approved

December 2018

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE APPROVAL:

_____, Chair
Leah P. Hollis, EdD

_____
Joseph Drew, PhD

_____
Michael Parsons, EdD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

    Background of the Study 3

    Theoretical Framework 8

    Statement of the Problem 10

    Research Questions 11

    Significance of the Study..12

    Limitations and Delimitations 12

    Definition of Key Terms 13

    Summary...14

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

    Major Retention Theories...16

    Theory of Marginality 18

    Longitudinal Student Retention Model 19

    Nontraditional Undergraduate Student Attrition Model.................................20

    Academic Advising and African American Men 21

    Student Persistence..25

    Student-Faculty Interaction 28

    Early Alert Systems...29

    Programs Tailored to Improve Academic Success Outcomes.........................29

    Student Support Services..31

    Minority Advising Program 32

Appendix A: Research Questions (For African American Males)

Appendix B: Research Questions (For Academic Advisors)

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

African American men at community colleges are not retained and not graduating at levels equivalent to their counterparts in other student demographics (Bush & Bush, 2010). According to Wood and Harris (2014), 81 percent of all African American men enroll at two-year institutions for their first year of college. After their first year of community college has ended, 11 percent of African American men will drop out or transfer from their institutions (Wood & Harris, 2014). After attending community college for one year, 48 percent of African American men will leave without achieving their intended certification or degree (Wood & Harris, 2014).

Twenty-first century community colleges enroll a large number of African American men. Wood and Williams (2013) noted that 54.9 percent of students admitted to community colleges are African American men. Given the number of African American men in community colleges, it is particularly unsettling that African American male students are often treated unequally and denied the same opportunities to persist as their counterparts (College Board, 2010). Therefore, community colleges need to generate methods and create services that support African American men in persevering. The methods and services provided by the students' respective institutions will assist in the effective retention of African American male students.

These students require support and resources equivalent to the ones from which their counterparts benefit. For example, the Student Support Services Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, provides low-income, first-generation students with

services that help to combat the retention problems in community colleges and in higher education more broadly. Research has shown that many community colleges are struggling to reduce the high dropout rates among African American men (Wood & Williams, 2013).

While community colleges play a significant role in bringing together students from diverse backgrounds, the retention of African American men through program completion has proven to be a significant hurdle (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). Research shows persistent inequities between African American men and other demographic groups on measures of academic success, retention, and community college completion, with White and Asian male populations persisting at twice the rate of African American males (Wood & Williams, 2013). Such findings are evident across post-secondary education. However, they are particularly troubling in community colleges, because the majority of African American men begin their post-secondary education at these institutions.

Many U.S. institutions, and educational institutions in particular, have neglected to serve the needs of African American men (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012; Bush & Bush, 2010; Crookston & Hooks, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2012), many social disparities exist that lead to challenges for African American men in community colleges. For example, this population may include a disproportionate percentage of low income and/or first-generation students (AACC, 2012). Previous studies have identified several variables, including faculty/student interaction and

engagement, that may affect African American men's academic achievement and persistence in higher education. However, virtually no research has examined African American men's perceptions regarding the impact of community college academic advisors on their academic persistence (Bush & Bush, 2010; Harper, 2006; Wood & Harris, 2012).

This qualitative case study will examine how African American men perceive the community college academic advising process and how the advisor influences their retention (Ledermen, 2012). This study also highlights factors that help to promote African American men's engagement in the community college environment. Research shows that students who are actively engaged in academics (attending and participating in class regularly, participating in clubs, and other extracurricular activities on campus) have higher retention rates than those who are not (AACC, 2014; Astin, 1982; DeWitz, Woolsey, & Walsh, 2009; Dukakis, Duong, Velasco, & Henderson, 2014).

Background of the Study

Community colleges in particular suffer from student retention and persistence problems (Bush & Bush, 2010; Habersham, 2013; Wood & Williams, 2013). Moreover, African American men's retention rates in higher education are lower than those of non-minority students, due to a lack of consistent educational participation and attainment at the high school level. Although community colleges play a substantial role in uniting students from diverse backgrounds, the retention of African American men remains a significant challenge (AACC, 2012).

While research shows that retention among students rose between 2004 and 2012 by one and a half percent in higher education, over that same period a decline in retention of 10.7 percent occurred among students in community colleges, where most African American men start their post-secondary education (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). While Wood and Williams (2013) recognize a variety of factors, such as socioeconomic status, work/life balance, and family dynamics, as some keys to academic perseverance for African American men, this study examines academic advising and its relationship to African American men's academic persistence and achievement.

Community colleges have assumed a considerable role in uniting students from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. Stephens (2012) notes that first-generation African American male students tend to have weaker academic performance than students whose parent(s) attended college. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), students whose parent(s) have college degrees are more likely to efficiently navigate a post-secondary environment, whereas first-generation students may feel disoriented. Community colleges regularly attempt to compete with technical schools and universities by offering programs for first-generation college students that provide academic counseling in areas such as major selection, time management skills, and other key aspects of college.

This study will provide insight into the phenomenon of African American men's academic persistence, academic advising, and how the two complement each other. Earl (2014) explains that academic advising is action-based, engaging students, and inspiring them to pursue help when needed. Academic advisors are trained to identify students'

specific academic and social crisis points, provide a listening ear for students to discuss their issues and needs, and guide them along their ideal career/major tracks by furnishing them with the help they require.

One of the objectives of academic advising is to help students establish a sense of belonging on campus (Wood & Williams, 2013). Academic advisors can assist in fostering a sense of belonging through the use of programming and other advising approaches that keep students engaged. Also, the academic advisor should encourage students to participate in campus life outside the classroom, maintain continuous contact with their professors, and maintain a balanced academic outlook. Moreover, academic advisors help students identify resources that provide academic support, such as tutoring or faculty mentoring. These services support retention and help students engage with the institution. The goal of academic advising is to prepare participants for graduation and post-graduate opportunities, whether graduate school, professional school, or the workforce.

Beginning the academic advising process gives students a sense of accomplishment and acceptance within the college environment. Research shows that many incoming college students are underprepared academically (Humphreys, 2012; Jalomo, 2001; Marklein, 2012). Understanding the connection academic advising has on the retention of African American male students offers one possible avenue to address the lack of preparation among African American male students. Wood (2012a) notes that effective programming increases retention and persistence among African American men in community colleges and other institutions of higher education. Although there is an

array of research on effective advising practices, this research often fails to address the concerns of African American men. Programs such as Student Support Services, as discussed later, are put in place to help address issues like retention.

One program designed to provide educational support to students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds is the Student Support Services program (SSS), an entity of the Federal TRIO Programs. Student Support Services is the third of the TRIO programs (along with Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search) funded by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) in 1968. Shortly after 1968, the DOE created other programs, such as the Ronald E. McNair Program and Gear Up, to assist in preparing low-income and first-generation students for graduate-level work.

The SSS program offers academic support through individual or group advising, supplemental tutoring, and remedial services geared towards helping colleges increase retention and graduation rates (DOE, 2013). These programs include an Early Alert System that tracks students' academic progress via their instructors. The system permits instructors to advise SSS staff of a student's progress, providing information about attendance, academic performance, and any interventions that may be needed. Such interaction aligns with Hollis's (2016) finding that the relationship between students and faculty is essential for student success. Upon receipt of information about a student's progress, SSS staff can devise an individual advising approach intended to support that student's academic success.

Bettinger and Baker's (2011) research examines the impact of advising on students' academic outcomes and identifies advising as a vital resource that helps students overcome obstacles to their academic well-being. They argue that advising also helps students create better work/life balance and assists them in making informed educational decisions about appropriate class sequences and registration. In Bettinger and Baker's (2011) study, African American male SSS students did not have the benefit of seeing or working with other African American men in advising or counseling roles. On numerous occasions, the African American participants in Bettinger and Baker's (2011) study stated that the absence of African American men in positions of influence at their institution bothered them, noting that this lack of positive role models increased their fear of the unknown and left them unsure of who or what they might become.

Male researchers of color such as Xiong, Allen, and Wood (2016) have proposed advising models to help male students of color more effectively confront personal difficulties while raising their awareness of various resources available on campus. African American men need to be able to identify the challenges they may confront in higher education to be better able to overcome them. Also, African American men need to keep an open dialogue with their advisors regarding the services offered by their institutions that can contribute to their retention and academic success.

Similarly, community college administrators must recognize that the resources and services necessary to meet students' needs will vary based on each student's background and level of preparation. African American men should be able to interact with influential staff members who are familiar with underserved and underrepresented

populations. Given that the presence of consistent full-time faculty is waning as more colleges rely heavily on adjunct faculty (Hollis, 2015), strong academic advising can provide a consistent source of support for students. The ability to interact with someone they can personally relate to is vital to African American men's academic success (Wood, 2012a). With an influx of African American male role models, African American male students will believe they are also valued in academic settings and society.

Theoretical Framework

Wood and Harris's (2014) Socio-Ecological Outcomes (SEO) model will serve as the conceptual framework for this study. Wood and Harris (2014) stated that pre-college considerations (factors and experiences influencing student success that occur prior to matriculation to college), including students' goals and academic backgrounds, and societal norms shape student success outcomes in college. My goal is to gain insight into the impact of academic advising on retention in college.

Wood and Harris's (2014) SEO model states that input variables that exist before students begin college, including demographic variables (e.g., disabilities, age, or generational status) and societal factors (e.g., prejudice, economic conditions, and stereotypes), strongly affect the college experience for most African American male students. Figure 1 highlights the interactions and influences of non-cognitive factors (e.g., action control, locus of control, and self-efficacy); academic factors (e.g., faculty/student interaction, commitment to a course of study); environmental factors (e.g., commitments to family, commitments to work, stressful life events); and campus ethos factors (e.g., campus resources, sense of belonging, and validation). These domains provide means to

predict student success (e.g., persistence, achievement, and attainment) in community colleges, which is influenced by the inputs (background/defining factors) and socio-ecological domains (non-cognitive, academic, environmental, and campus ethos). Moreover, Harris and Wood (2012a) suggest that a bi-directional stimulus between non-cognitive, academic, and campus ethos domains has a direct connection with non-cognitive and academic domains.
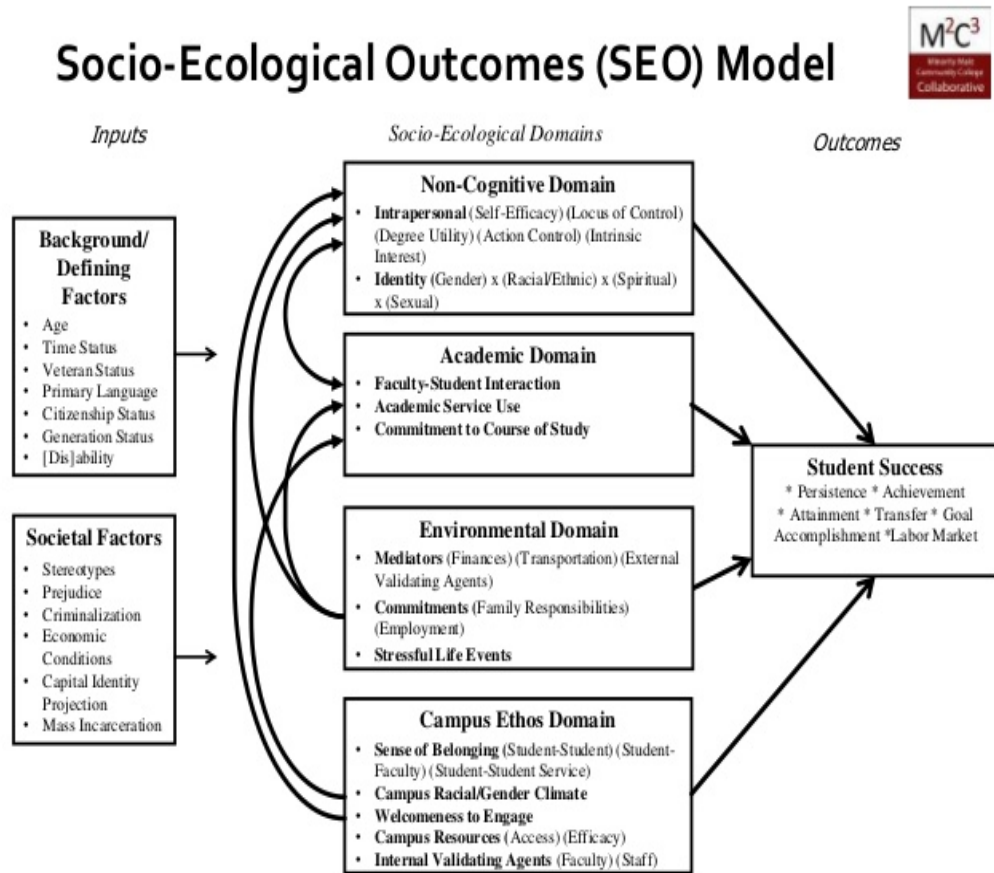

Figure 1. Wood and Harris's (2014) Socio-Ecological Outcomes (SEO) Model.

Coupled with Wood and Harris's (2014) SEO model, Schlossberg's (1989, 2011) theory of marginality states that students who do not feel they belong in—or are a legitimate part of—the college environment are more likely than others to have adverse academic outcomes. These outcomes usually involve lower retention rates. This study will use evidence offered by the African American male participants to discover the outcomes of academic advising among a particular population of African American men. This theoretical framework will be used to focus on the African American men's involvement in and overall perceptions of campus life, including advising.

Statement of the Problem

In 2013, about 48% of African American men ages 25 and older had attended college at some point in their lives—the same percentage as in the year 1976 (Harper, 2006; Strayhorn, 2010). According to the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE; 2015), African American men at community colleges have a graduation rate of 40 percent, while White males graduate at a rate of roughly 70 percent. In light of this data, this study will explore the role of academic advising in catalyzing the retention and achievement of African American male students.

Academic advisors seek to provide services that align with each student's academic needs (CCCSE, 2015). According to Earl (2014), advising includes establishing a secure connection or bond with students. This connection should occur when the student first enters any advising office, and not merely if the student becomes troubled.

Research has exposed a continuous gap between African American men and other student groups on measures of retention and community college completion (Wood &

Williams, 2013). These inconsistencies exist across post-secondary education; however, they are most disturbing in community colleges, as most African American men begin their post-secondary education at two-year institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The goal of this study is to enrich the existing research with a case study focused on African American men attending three community colleges in Georgia who are enrolled in a federally-funded Student Support Services academic advising program. This research study will examine how these African American male students perceive their academic advising experience and how academic advisors influence these students' retention. Little research has been conducted on advising and its influence on African American male students. Understanding advisors' influence on the persistence and achievement of this student population is critical to identifying the potential of academic advising to support better outcomes for African American men in community colleges.

Using a qualitative case study approach, the purpose of this study is to understand African American men's perceptions of the influence of advising and advisors on their academic persistence and achievement. This study provides a voice for an underserved and underrepresented population by eliciting the narratives and examining the lived experiences of twelve African American male college students. This study also elicited feedback from six academic advisors regarding the resources and services available to the African American male students and the role those services play in the students' academic persistence. Thus, this research extends the basis of Wood and Harris's (2014) SEO model by investigating the lived experiences of African American male community college students. Harris and Wood's study focused on the experiences of pre-college

students, while this study considers students' experiences in transitioning from high school to community college.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- How do African American men perceive the experience of receiving academic advising in community college?
- What resources and services provided by the community college do African American men believe are associated with their retention and achievement at the institution?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to existing research by examining the academic persistence and achievement of African American men at three community colleges in Georgia. Higher education has been an avenue through which African American men can improve their livelihoods and increase their socioeconomic status over time. The findings of this study will provide useful information from which to develop educational support services and intensive programming to help African American men reach their full academic potential.

The findings from this study will also provide pertinent information on how to improve persistence levels among African American men. This study will identify other factors, in addition to those already heavily researched, that may hinder these students' academic progress. The study will also identify mechanisms that support African American men's success in higher education by increasing faculty/student engagement

and accessing existing resources. Finally, this study provides an opportunity for an underserved and underrepresented group of students to give voice to their lived experiences as African American male community college students.

Limitations

The nature of social science research limits a researcher's ability to study all possible variables related to a single topic. The researcher is tasked with understanding these restrictions and addressing them appropriately. The limitations of this study included self-reporting, as data will be limited to students' self-reported perceptions regarding the impact of advising. This study was also limited to results of a survey about academic advising that were collected at a single point in time. Advising data can change continuously because students themselves change over time, as do their needs. Thus, their perceptions of the degree to which their needs are met will also differ at various points in time.

Delimitations

In case study research, recruiting a homogenous population of participants is essential (Creswell, 2007). Recruiting participants who share similar experiences allows the researcher to describe the essence of their experience as it relates to their group. For this reason, and to make this study more controllable, the focus was narrowed to twelve African American men at three public community colleges in Georgia. All students recruited for this study were participants in the Student Support Services advising module, which is defined by the Department of Education (2013) as a program that

specializes in helping disadvantaged, low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities navigate through successful postsecondary degree completion.

Definitions of Key Terms

Understanding the following terms is essential to comprehending the operational approach of the study:

Academic Advising: An interactive process in which the advisor helps students set and achieve academic goals, acquire relevant information and identify useful services, and make responsible decisions consistent with their interests, goals, abilities, and degree requirements (Earl, 2014).

Student Engagement: The degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education (Hidden Curriculum, 2014).

Retention: A measure of how many students continue their studies from year to year (FAFSA, 2016).

Student Support Services (SSS): A Federal TRIO program geared toward retention and graduation efforts (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Summary

Using a qualitative case study approach, this research elicited the experiences of twelve African American male Student Support Services participants attending three community colleges in Georgia. The findings of the study may be of value to all three Student Support Services programs in the University System of Georgia community

college sector. The results may also demonstrate the value of student interview feedback for informing assessment processes.

Variables which have an impact in this study included elements of the environmental domain (factors outside the academic setting that influence African American men's academic performance) as well as the academic domain (the educational setting and African American men's experiences within that setting). Data from the SEO model will help community colleges establish a campus atmosphere that is most conducive to the academic persistence and achievement of African American men.

This chapter established the justification for this research and identified the primary research questions that will guide this study. Chapter II will review the scholarly literature related to Wood and Harris's (2014) SEO model, Schlossberg's (1989, 2011) theory of marginality, and the need for and best practices of academic support programs, as well as literature on student engagement in higher education and the role of advising assessments. Chapter III will describe the methodology used in the research study. Chapter IV will present an analysis of the data collected and discuss the quality of the research. Chapter V will present and discuss the conclusions of the study, examine its implications, and finally, offer recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter examined the existing literature on African American men's retention in college as it relates to academic advising. First, the chapter reviewed the major theories that describe the challenges facing African American men as they strive to increase retention. Next, the chapter provided an overview of the research literature on this topic, encompassing empirical data as well as practitioner-based articles. It discussed quantitative studies to irradiate the enormity of the problem of African American male retention, as well as qualitative studies that demonstrate varied approaches to African American male students' academic success and their participation in the academic advising process.

Major Retention Theories

Tinto's (2007) interactionalist theory provides a model that addresses student departures from institutions of higher education. The model proposed that for students to persist at their institutions, their academic experience must incorporate social integration as well as informal faculty and staff interaction, which together lead to academic success. The model stated that students also need both formal (extracurricular activities) and informal (peer-group interaction) social systems to support their persistence (Tinto, 1993). Tinto's research both defined the students' needs and highlighted the importance of institutionally-provided structures and resources in improving student retention.

Tinto (1993) argued that integration into the college community is necessary for academic achievement. Tinto also stated that only through social and intellectual

interactions with other students would academic success be achieved. As integration among students increases, students' commitment to both the institution and their own success is strengthened (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).
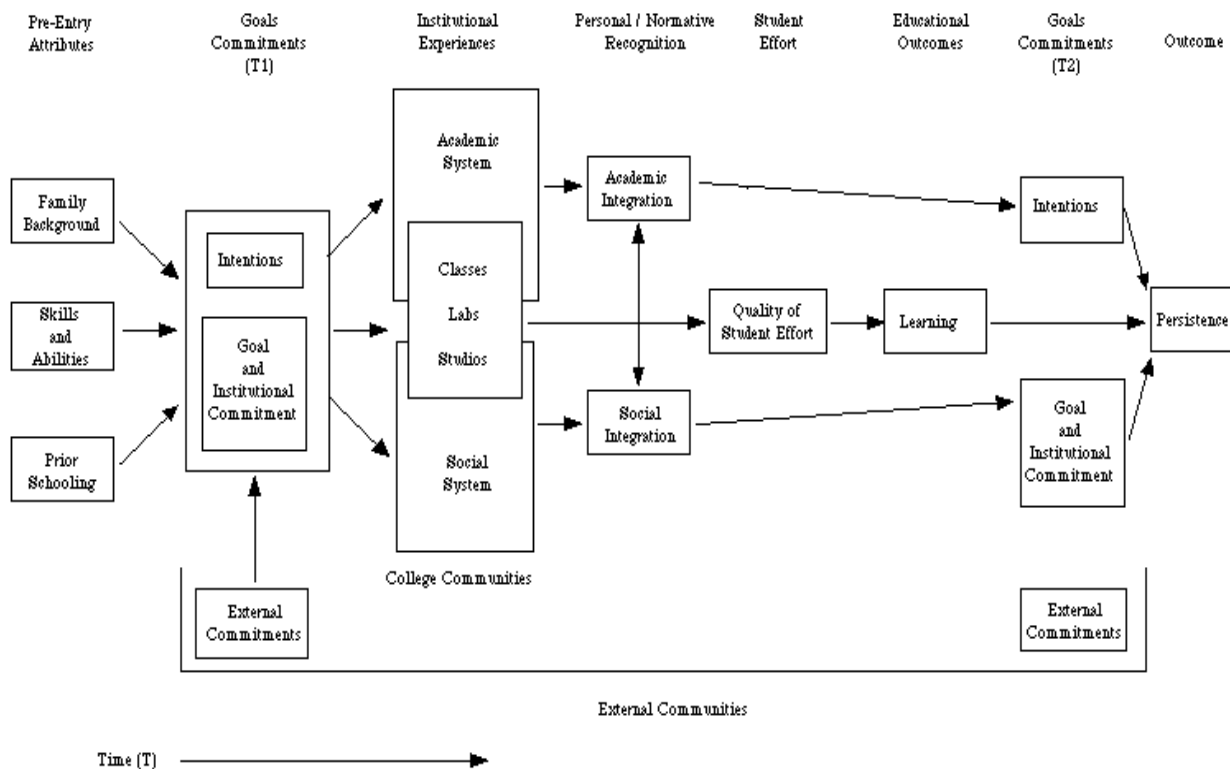

Figure 2. Tinto's (1993) Interactional Theory of College Student Departure.

Schlossberg's Theory of Marginality and Mattering

Schlossberg's (1989) theory of marginality versus mattering addresses individuals' ability or inability to become integrated into their communities. Schlossberg described *marginality* as "a sense of not fitting in" and *mattering* as "beliefs people have, whether right or wrong, that they matter to someone else, that they are the object of someone else's attention, and that others care about them and appreciate them"

(Schlossberg, 1989, pp. 1-5). Schlossberg investigated four distinct aspects of mattering, then added a fifth one of her own:

1. Attention: the feeling that one is noticed

2. Importance: the belief that one is cared about

3. Dependence: the sense of being needed

4. Appreciation: feeling that others appreciate efforts

5. Ego extension: the feeling that someone else will be proud of what one does or will sympathize with one's failures.

Schlossberg's (1989) theory emphasized that the more students feel like they matter to someone—whether faculty, staff, or peer—the more invested they become in the community. Schlossberg further stressed that institutions of higher education need to help individuals feel like they matter. She saw this goal as a precursor to students becoming involved in activities and academic programs that would facilitate development and learning. This is significant because many African American men at institutions of higher education express feeling marginalized as a minority on campus (Wood and Williams, 2013). Any new student on any campus can feel marginalized, but the absence of substantial groups with which they can identify may make it more difficult for African American men to integrate into the college environment.

Bean and Eaton (2000) implemented a model that links retention with students' academic and social integration. As in Tinto's theory, Bean and Eaton's model states that students who integrate social interaction, that is working with other students, asking questions in class, and interacting with faculty, into their academic experience are more

likely to persist. Bean and Eaton's (2000) research also incorporated attitude-behavior theory, which states that attitudes lead to intentions and those intentions lead to behaviors. Attitude-behavior theory helps to explain students' academic and social development. In their research, Bean and Eaton (2000) identified the needs of students in an academic environment and argued that institutions must provide resources to support student retention.

Figure 3 provides a detailed look at what Bean and Eaton (2000) refer to as the Psychological Model of College Student Retention. The flow of the model indicates that individuals enter their respective institutions with particular psychological attributes that help shape their specific experiences, abilities, and self-assessments. The students interact with the institution and its representatives such as faculty, staff, counselors, advisors, while also interacting with outside entities such as parents, employers, friends. However, the interaction that takes place in each realm doesn't necessarily equate to academic and social integration.
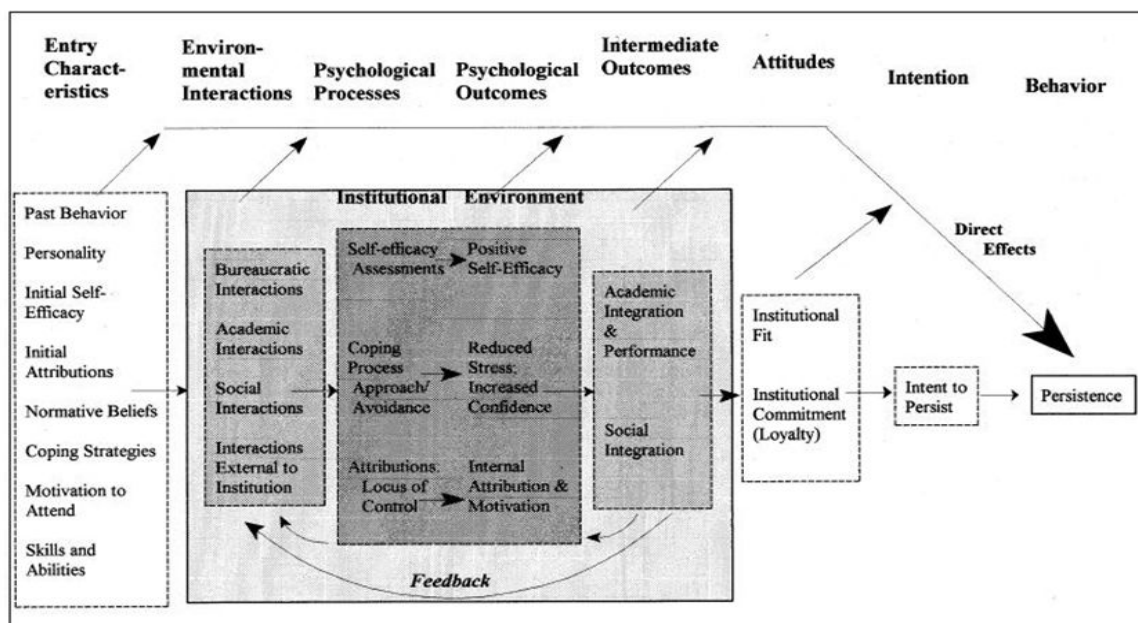
Figure 3. Bean and Eaton's (2000) Psychological Model of College Student Retention.

Nontraditional Undergraduate Student Attrition Model

Bean and Metzner (1985) created a Nontraditional Undergraduate Student

Attrition model. Most students who enroll in community colleges are older than

traditional age students, defined as students 18-24 years of age (National Center for

Education Statistics, 2012; NCES, 2017). According to the AACC (2012), the average

age of students who enroll in community college is 29, compared to an average age of 21

for students enrolling in four-year institutions. Bean and Metzner (1985) found that

community college students are also more likely to be part-time and commuter students.

According to Bean and Metzner (1985), nontraditional students do not persist at

the same rate as traditional students often because of, difficulty with work-life balance,

financial concerns, and lack of motivation, among others. The researchers also found that

nontraditional students' persistence is more affected by external influences like family,

the economy, their jobs. In contrast, traditional students are more affected by the social

integration variables that influence persistence rates. Bean and Metzner's (1985) research

may be useful in understanding the challenges that face African American men enrolled

in community colleges.

Academic Advising and African American Men

Research shows that when students enter higher education their levels of

readiness differ, thus affecting retention (Reynolds, 2012). College preparedness is one of

the top political and educational anxieties of colleges and universities in the state of

Georgia (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2013). As expressed in an

article from *Essay UK* (2013), family background plays a substantial role in how well a

student performs academically. According to Bird (2018), first-generation students are

much more likely to drop out of college than those whose parents attended college.

Moreover, the majority of students arriving in higher education today are underprepared,

and academic preparation is thus a crucial element influencing student success (Bird,

2018). In addition, there are often other factors—including cultural influences, financial

problems, and the student's readiness to advance to the next level of learning—that

contribute to a student's likelihood of dropping out.

To understand why some African American men do not persist in college, Brooks

and Burt (2013) implemented academic systems to help support and retain these students,

specifically through academic advising. Tate (2017) stated that one in twelve African

American male students who begin at community colleges will eventually progress to

attend a four-year institution, compared to one in five of their non-African American

counterparts. Tate (2017) also states that 44.6 percent of the African American male students will drop out before completing their two-year degree, compared to 22.6 percent of their counterparts. Given the disproportionate number of student departures among African American men, community colleges need to formulate strategies to help this student population persist in the academic environment. One approach that may help African American men persist in their education is the introduction of an advising model that specifically incorporates their needs (Allard & Parashar, 2012; Brooks & Burt 2013; Habley, 2004; Varney, 2007).

Academic advising has significant potential to impact the academic outcomes of black male students. In the context of the many demands placed on institutions to graduate students, academic advisors play a crucial role (Cheung & Shek, 2018; Earl, 2014). The relationship established between advisor and student can help to promote student retention and successful academic outcomes. Yet despite the implementation of academic advising services on nearly every college campus, except for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, none exhibit a system with which African American men could identify. At virtually every predominantly White institution, White (Caucasian) women fill the vast majority of academic advising positions (New, 2016). As with any other student population, African American men need to see professionals with whom they can identify (Brooks & Burt, 2013). Often, however, men of color typically do not occupy positions of influence to serve as role models for African American male students. Drake (2013) argued that academic advising should be not merely a standard service, but instead the focus of institutions' educational missions. Increased

understanding of students' experiences with academic advising may lead institutions of higher education to place a greater emphasis on the potential of academic advising to address the social, personal, financial, and academic factors that impact retention.

Advising is action-based, engaging students and inspiring them to pursue help when needed. Examples of advising models include prescriptive and developmental advising. *Prescriptive advising*, based on the advisor's expertise, demonstrates a consciousness of student needs and the effort to address these needs through the delivery of structured programs. *Developmental advising*, in contrast, focuses on establishing a more holistic relationship that addresses a student's total needs.

Additionally, advisors who utilize *intrusive advising* have the capacity to understand students' specific crisis points, inform them of their issues, and guide them along their ideal track by furnishing them with the help they require. The intrusive advisor looks for roadblocks, concerns and other issues that could potentially get in the way of a student interacting in courses and being successful. (Herget, 2017). Intrusive advising utilizes interpersonal connections to cultivate students' self-understanding, thereby permitting them to make improvements in their own lives (Devi, Devaki, Madhavan, & Saikumar, 2013). Within any given intrusive advising session, students discuss not only academics but also an array of other issues from inside or outside of school that may influence their academic success. For example, intrusive advising may also address roommate issues, commuting issues, strategies for working with faculty, and managing bullying and other social issues in college (Hollis, 2017).

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013), in 2013, 65.9 percent of students enrolled in a two-year institution after graduating from high school. The number of African American men seeking four-year degrees has increased from 35 percent to roughly 38 percent within a two-year period 2014-2016 (Cooper, 2017). However, African American men are denied access to the opportunities to persist that are afforded to their non-African American counterparts. According to an article by Douglas-Gabriel (2015) of the *Washington Post*, African American male students are often overlooked and are not made to feel a part of the academic environment, and the lack of diversity at many predominantly White institutions can lead to increased marginalization for students of color.

Consequently community colleges need to generate comprehensive strategies that support African American men in persisting to graduation (Brooks & Burt, 2013; Reynolds, 2012; Strayhorn, 2012). African American men need access to resources equivalent to those available to their peers. Harper (2012) has spoken candidly about how often misguided policies and unfair practices have created a lack of resources for young minorities in education. Once these policies and practices are identified, institutions must create real solutions for these students that are consistent with those available for their non-minority counterparts.

Other researchers have analyzed the role of the faculty in influencing the success of African American college students (DeWitz, Woolsey & Walsh, 2009; Harris & Wood, 2013; Keller, 2008). The study of academic self-concept, or the degree to which students are committed to learning and confident in their own academic abilities, has

focused attention on the impact of faculty-student interaction. Komarraju, Musulkin, and Bhattacharya (2010) found that student-faculty interaction helped to mold academic self-concept when students perceived faculty as approachable, respectful, and readily available outside of class (i.e., during office hours). These students Bhattacharya (2010) studied, were more apt to feel confident about their academic skills and to be motivated to higher academic achievement. Bhattacharya (2010) also found that when students can enjoy meaningful conversations inside the classroom, they are more likely to experience a true learning process.

As more students enter community colleges, these institutions must be able to define what the roles and responsibilities of the academic advising office will look like, both now and in the future. The office of advising must possess the characteristics of a quality advising program and must utilize various methods of advising to meet the needs of the students. When students meet with advisors, the students expect to receive relevant information that is both accurate and consistent as they matriculate through their prospective institutions. The students must also consider their advisors as one of the main entities that can help guide them both personally and academically. When advisors meet the needs of the students, the students have a better experience at their prospective institutions.

Roles and Responsibilities of Advisors

One of the recurring themes that transpired from the literature concerning advising involved the roles and responsibilities of the academic advisors. The National Academic Advising Association [NACADA] (2004) helped to set standards for advising.

NACADA established The Statement of Core Values of Academic Advising. Those values state that advisors are responsible

- To present themselves as caring individuals by building relationships.
- To become committed to students, colleagues, institutions, and the profession.
- To empower, motivate, encourage, and support students and the community.
- To respect, engage, and value supportive culture for diverse populations.
- To be professional always and to act in accordance with the values.
- To respect and honor the inherent value of all students.

These core values of the academic advisor serve as the framework for the advisors and the advising activities they perform. The National Academic Advising Association has provided the tools needed to assist advisors in their roles and has affirmed the importance of advising and the impact that advising can have on individuals, society, and their prospective institutions.

Student Persistence

In 2018, U.S. society has begun to see the importance of academics, driving an increase in student retention and persistence that ultimately led to a college completion rate of more than 52.5 percent in 2016 (NSC Research Center, 2018). Retention and transfer rates are broad concepts that involve the educational experiences of a large number of students. Some factors that contribute positively to a student's educational experience include a campus climate that fosters inclusion, a feeling of safety, support for the student's academics, and the maintenance of respectful and caring relationships throughout the school (Habersham 2013).

Habersham (2013) found that a positive school environment is critically related to retention and transfer rates and ultimately influences academic success. Wood and Harris (2014) also identified several predictor variables that have the potential to increase the retention of African American men at community colleges. These include faculty-student interactions and the students' commitment to their course of study. According to Lee and Rawls (2010), significant efforts have been made to influence the retention and transfer rates of African American men, but there is much more research to be done.

The academic advising policies and procedures within the Georgia community college system have stimulated positive trends related to the success of African American men (Fishman, Ludgate, & Tutak, 2017). However, at many institutions African American men do not enjoy interaction with influencital figures who look like them or emerge from their culture. Bandura (1977) has reported that self-efficacy, seeing similar people persevere helps and encourages that student to persist. Women applying for academic advising roles have outnumbered male applicants by a 6:1 ratio (Marcus, 2017), creating a problem for African American male students, who also need relatable advisors who can help create a more welcoming atmosphere for them.

Persistence and degree attainment have become crucial concerns for institutions of higher education. Wood (2012) offers insight into initiatives designed to support the persistence and degree attainment of underrepresented male students. Wood and Williams (2012) identified variables that helped to predict the persistence of African American men enrolled in community colleges. Their longitudinal study gathered information from four categories: academic variables, environmental variables, variables

that help to define the men's backgrounds, and social variables. Wood and Williams (2012) concluded that of the four categories, environmental variables were more suitable in predicting persistence for African American male students than for any other group.

Harper (2012) reported that between the years of 2008-2011, a wide variety of groups, from foundations to think tanks to national leaders, collectively advanced an aggressive agenda focused on improving college completion rates and increasing post-secondary degree attainment rates among African American males. Goals articulated by these and other stakeholders are unlikely to be realized in the absence of a more significant policy emphasis on supporting students from populations with the highest college dropout rates. Harper and Harris (2012) made the compelling argument that high school is a critical pathway to post-secondary education, yet Black male students have the lowest high school graduation rates in most states. In 2008, national statistics state that 47 percent of Black male students graduated from high school on time with their entering cohort, compared with 78 percent of their White male peers. If African American men continue to face these and other challenges in their secondary schooling contexts, fewer of them will likely enroll in college.

Jalomo (2001) proposed five institutional policies to promote retention and persistence and improve success rates at community colleges: educational attainment, remedial education, workforce development, general education, and fiscal pressure. All five are essential to the betterment of an institution. They also contain the critical component of academic advising, which can be used as an intervention strategy to promote success among African American men. Jalomo (2001) stated that new and

innovative approaches to improving student persistence among African American men at community colleges must continue to be developed at both the academic and political levels.

Student Support Services

Student Support Services (SSS) is a federal program funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and referred to as a TRIO Program (so named because initially it included only three programs). SSS funding is administered through the U.S. Department of Education, which provides grants on a competitive basis to institutions of higher education. Students involved in the SSS program must meet at least two of the following criteria: (a) be a first-generation college student (neither parent graduated from a four-year college), (b) the family's taxable income does not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level set by the federal government, or (c) the student has a disability and is registered with the college or university's Office of Disability Services.

Student Support Services carefully conduct retention and transfer rate research via an annual performance report (APR). This research is beneficial to the overall functioning of each program. With information from the APR, SSS can efficiently assess the needs of the students and create programming that will boost retention and persistence not only within the program itself but also within the institution as a whole (FAFSA, 2016). The SSS program provides an array of services, including tutoring, academic advising, cultural awareness programming, mentoring, and counseling, that help combat the high departure rates among African American men (Woods & Williams, 2013).

Student-Faculty Interaction

Retention and transfer rates play a huge role in student outcomes, but the information available on this topic is extremely slim. Perry, Steele, and Hilliard (2003) suggested that the standard against which achievement gaps are assessed should be some measure of excellence for which all students should be striving, rather than the performance of a norm group, which may be mediocre. College students have been asked to take on a more challenging and rigorous academic environment (Harris & Wood, 2013). In this context, academic perseverance is crucial, as is the creation of a campus climate that can sustain and nurture African American men. According to the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (CCSR; 2012), both education policy and practice have sought ways to increase students' academic perseverance to improve academic performance and persistence.

Chickering and Gammon (1987) highly encouraged faculty-student interaction, which they believed to be one of the most critical pieces in student involvement and a significant influence on students' academic success. A bad experience involving faculty-student interaction could potentially alter the overall academic mindset of African American men (Baker, Grant, & Morlock, 2008). Conversely, academic advisors who assist students in actively engaging in their learning and social environments can have a positive impact on those students' academic and social outcomes. These outcomes are essential not only for the students but also for the trajectory of the school (Habersham, 2013).

Early Alert Systems

Used as an academic support strategy that provides feedback from instructors to academic advisors, early alert or early warning systems help students who are in academic jeopardy at or before midterms. Early alert systems inform the advisor of the student's attendance and academic performance, as well as whether any intervention is needed. Upon receipt of the information, the academic advisor can create an individual advising strategy specifically designed to support the student's success in the classroom. Tinto (1993) warned of the risks of disseminating grades too late in the term for the information they provide to be optimally effective.

Programs Tailored to Improve Academic Success Outcomes

Harper (2012) discussed the challenges confronting African American males in higher education and listed five actions student affairs professionals could proactively take to improve the overall success of African American male students. These five crucial factors are:

1. Start with standards.

2. Recognize that students are not all the same.

3. Remember they, too, are men.

4. Seek inspiration, not replication.

5. Form consortia and alliances.

Many past and present theories have evolved from Tinto's (1993) theoretical model of persistence to identify the factors that influence a student's academic success. Harris and Wood (2013) stated that academic, cultural, and social integration are

important determinants of student retention and success in higher education. Reynolds

(2012) provided insight into the many different programs implemented to address

retention and graduation among African American men and other minorities, including

the Student Support Services program and the Minority Advising Program (MAP).

Many programs have been designed to combat the dangers of poor retention and

high transfer rates not only for students but also for institutions. These programs have a

significant task at hand but are provided with the resources to handle the job. The Student

Support Services program is one example of a Federal Educational Opportunity Program

designed by the U.S. Department of Education to help combat issues like poor retention

and high transfer rates that have plagued education for years among minorities, especially

African American men (Dukakis, Duong, & Velasco, 2014).

Male researchers of color such as Woods, Williams, and Harris have expressed

confidence that institutions that execute a well-designed and inclusive advising model

can help African American male students confront academic difficulties. They also

explained that academic advising can make African American male students more aware

of the various resources available on campus. Administrators must become conscious of

the fact that, while all students have needs that institutions must meet for them to

succeed, African American men's needs vary with each student's background and level

of academic preparation. Furthermore, the administration should be aware of the

importance of presenting African American men with advising staff who can relate to

them and bring value to their educational experience.

Minority Advising Program

The Minority Advising Program (MAP) was designed by the University System of Georgia in the early 1980s to help address the ever-growing issues faced by minority students within Georgia's university and community college systems. This program was also put in place to assist the University Systems Steering Committee for Increased Minority Participation in Public Higher Education. MAP targets first- and second-year students but is open to all minority students who could benefit from its services. MAP is only a supplement to, not a replacement for, a student's regular academic advising (University System of Georgia, 2017). The MAP program provides experiences that minority students can relate to, such as programming on subjects that affect minorities (i.e., financial management, time management, academic success, relationship building with faculty and peers)

African American Male Initiative

According to the University System of Georgia (USG) (2017), the African American Male Initiative is a statewide initiative that is designed to "increase the number of African American males who complete their postsecondary education from any of the University System of Georgia institutions (universities and community colleges)." The African American Male Initiative assists the students in adopting a healthy and academically centered mindset to complete classes, increase their overall grade point averages, and to matriculate through each level of college and graduate successfully.

My Brother's Keeper

According to the work of Noguera (2008), African American males comprise a relatively small amount of the U.S. population, roughly six percent. The concern that has presented itself in America has overshadowed the positive attributes that most African American males present to society. Most African American males value their academic achievement and many are workers and active contributors to their communities. With an initiative created under the Obama administration, young African American males receive the opportunity to unlock their full potential. The initiative, entitled "My Brother's Keeper" (MBK) has been a staple for many African American males at universities, colleges, high school, and communities around the United States. My Brother's Keeper can provide support for African American males that allows them to think about their futures and helps them build onto what works for them (Johnson, 2016). My Brother's Keeper initiative also assists students in being productive in their communities and schools so that they can begin making a difference for other young African American males.

African American male culture and the differences that it contains, is not valued by American society. The images created of African American males in our society have often confined African American men to environments reflective of crime, drugs, academic failure and a host of other negative attributes. My Brother's Keeper seeks to change the negative perspective that American society has painted of African American males. America must change the public perception of the African American male as an academically inferior being, to one more positive (Harper & Davis, 2012, p.103). These

perceptions are structural barriers, and if heard enough, they begin to become embedded into the psyche (Johnson, 2016).

Future of Higher Education

In an article from the College Board Advocacy and Policy (2011), former U.S. President Barack Obama challenged every American to complete at least one year of higher education or post-secondary training (Marklein, 2012). With this movement, which President Obama labeled the "completion agenda," he established a new goal for the country: by 2020, the U.S. will once again have the highest percentage of college graduates in the world. According to the U.S. Department of Education, President Obama called for an additional five million graduates from community colleges. However, President Obama's recommended efforts have been presented with many roadblocks under President Donald Trump and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. President Trump has even questioned the importance of community colleges altogether (Freightbaum, 2018).

To increase President Obama's vision of community college enrollment, community colleges will need to develop methods to support students who are underprepared for higher education. President Obama's completion agenda would hold these institutions to higher standards than ever before. Humphreys (2012) and Adelman (2004) have argued that the completion agenda will permit college students to graduate without gaining success in crucial areas of learning, such as critical thinking and what Adelman calls global knowledge. They have suggested, moreover, that the completion agenda would put massive pressure on community colleges to admit, retain, and graduate

their students within a precise time period. Humphreys (2012) argued that getting a significant number of students who are at risk of dropping out of college to enroll in community colleges has the potential to negatively affect a school's retention and achievement levels if the delivery-of-service models remain in their currently inadequate state.

The issue of academic underpreparedness has become a significant challenge for both the student population of many colleges and the institutions themselves. Underprepared students can hurt an institution's retention and transfer rates. Being underprepared for the next stage of education is one of the reasons students drop out, along with financial issues and the lack of a sense of belonging. Cohen and Brawer (2010) stated that community colleges were founded in unique times, constructed for the needs of students who are different from those who enroll in four-year colleges, and thus possess fundamentally unique missions.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2012), by the year 2060, African American men will represent 17.9 percent of college enrollees. Student retention has become a significant concern in recent years due to the drastically low number of college graduates among people of color. According to Lee and Rawls (2010), only 30.3 percent of African Americans ages 25-34 in the United States had completed an associate's degree or higher, compared to 49.0 percent of White Americans and 70.7 percent of Asian Americans. This crisis exists in part because African American men feel as though they cannot relate to the norms of institutions of higher education (College Board, 2012). Furthermore, the literature consistently shows a disparity in the

achievement of African American men compared to White and Asian male students (Bush & Bush, 2010; Harper, 2006; Lee & Rawls, 2010; Strayhorn, 2012).

Conclusion

A variety of research has addressed the need to reconstruct the organizational systems governing higher education (Keller, 2008; Lee & Rawls, 2010; Marcus, 2017). Community colleges will have to change in accordance with segmentation, which Keller (2008) described as the process of restructuring U.S. colleges and universities to respond to the country's single-minded emphasis on general admittance to some form of collegiate or continuing education. According to Keller (2008), community colleges must build their capacity to acclimatize adult learners, echoing Cohen's (2001) call to rethink the organization of departments and disciplines in community colleges.

In 2012, the 21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges released a report entitled *Reclaiming the American Dream*. The report, which examined various issues influencing community colleges, reprimanded these colleges for failing to adapt to the times and live up to the guidelines and standards of four-year institutions. The report urged community colleges to focus on the issues of workforce expansion; underprepared students; the struggle of transferring to four-year institutions; and the danger that low-income, first-generation, and minority students could be left behind. In addition, the commission detailed many difficulties in restructuring a community college: student success rates are low, students face challenges when transitioning from a two-year to a four-year college, and community colleges are underfunded and face increasing enrollment without increased funding support. These challenges disproportionately affect

middle-class and minority students because these are the populations that attend community colleges in the greatest numbers.

With the availability of services and programs such as academic advising, Student Support Services, and faculty-student mentoring and other interaction, higher retention and lower transfer rates seem more obtainable. As stated above, programs like Student Support Services can be used as a reference point to garner critical information on student performance. The information gathered from APRs and similar reports can be used to address issues within the program and sometimes to reveal institutional trends. This information will allow program staff to create compelling programming to help support retention and increase persistence (FAFSA, 2016).

Various programs and initiatives have allowed researchers and institutions to gather pertinent information that can be used to keep student retention and transfer rates more stable. Institutions are beginning to efficiently combat the issues of low retention and high transfer rates through the use of tracking systems such as APR and early alert, as well as through their academic advising services. As a result, institutions are demonstrating an upward trend in retention and graduation rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Chapter III presented the case study research methodology, including assumptions

concerning the case study approach, the research questions, and a rationale for using the

case study approach for this research, as well as a description of how the data was

collected and analyzed. Further, this chapter presents a discussion of the reliability and

validity of the research, the process of participant and site selection, and ethical

considerations. This study was intended to examine African American men's perceptions

of the role of academic advising in their academic persistence and achievement.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

- How do African American men perceive the experience of receiving academic

  advising in community colleges?

- What resources and services provided by the community college do African

  American men believe are associated with their retention and achievement at

  the institution?

Assumptions about the Case Study

According to Creswell (2013), a case study is similar to narrative studies.

Narrative research examines a single life occurrence told from the viewpoint of one

individual, whereas a case study examines a person, place, event, or phenomenon for the

purpose of identifying key themes and results that help predict trends. This research

methodology allows the researcher to identify those things the participants have in common (Creswell, 2013). Yin (2003b) stated that a case study is the best method for answering all research questions in a bounded system; its strengths outweigh its limitations.

The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. It provides insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences. These insights are tentative hypotheses that help construct future research. A case study is a particularly appealing design for applied fields of study such as education, social work, health administration, and many others (Creswell, 2013). Unlike other qualitative methods, case studies do not necessarily focus on cultural aspects of a group or its members. Because minimal research has been conducted on African American male students, learning from the experiences of these men through exploratory interviews and focus groups could provide insight into the phenomena of retention, persistence, and academic achievement and the ways academic advising can influence students' outcomes.

A case study research methodology was appropriate and practical to use for this study for several reasons: (a) it contributed to providing a factual account and story elicited directly from African American men who are engaged in academic advising; (b) it provided a "voice" for the often-marginalized target population (African American men in community colleges); (c) it used a realistic approach to research, incorporating thoughtfulness and caring/nurturing traits; (d) it allowed African American men to express their ideas and opinions concerning the advising process and their overall success

and; (e) it drew upon the researcher's strength of using oral recordings to convey the target population's stories.

Yin (2003a, 2003b) presented a suitable basis for conducting a multiple case study design. Therefore, this case study explored the lived experiences of African American male students at three community colleges in Georgia, examining how their academic advising experiences affected their academic persistence and achievement. The data collected from their shared, lived experiences offer a preliminary step in what could result in a more in-depth, descriptive case study.

Much of the information gathered relied on the subjects' ability to recall an experience and tell their stories with truthfulness. This study focused on the academic advising experiences and perceptions of twelve African American male students at three community colleges in Georgia. This study used a qualitative inductive analysis design to record each participant's recalled perceptions of experiences in the community college environment that led to their academic persistence and achievement. Qualitative inductive analysis is a systematically generated theory grounded in specific instances of empirical observation (Gabriel, 2013). The African American male students' accounts provided information about the community college environment, academic advisors, and other factors that contributed to their academic persistence and achievement.

This study provided an opportunity for African American male students to voice their perceptions, feelings, and opinions about the strategies and practices that promoted their academic persistence and achievement. The use of qualitative methodologies engaged the subjects in discussions about their feelings regarding relationships,

belongingness, self-efficacy, and academic achievement. Creswell (2007) argued that a case study is an appropriate method of inquiry when research focuses on questions such as "how" and "why." I chose the case study as my design because my research questions primarily focused on the "how" and "why."

The case study approach presented a means to study the organization and content of an academic advising system and describe how this system provided a platform that supported the academic persistence and social integration of men of color attending community colleges. I am also interested in describing and exploring advisor and student interactions, as well as investigating how these interactions influence the academic achievement of African American men in the Student Support Services program at three community colleges in Georgia.

Data Collection Method

This study examined African American men's perceptions of the role of academic advising in their academic persistence and achievement at three community colleges in Georgia. The primary method for this study was a case study approach, which allowed individuals with shared interests or characteristics to provide a factual account of their stories in the presence of an interviewer who collected qualitative data (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Data collection methods included face-to-face interviews, observations, questionnaires, and phone/recorded interviews. These methods of collecting data elicited specific details concerning the students' perceptions, feelings, and attitudes towards their academic experiences. The interviewer used open dialogue with individual

students as an avenue to gather information about the advising programs and the students' outcomes.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews, digital recordings, aggregate data, and typed notes to gain a greater understanding of the perspectives and attitudes of African American male students. Understanding those attitudes and perspectives was achieved by interviewing twelve African American male students and six academic advisors (both professional and faculty advisors) at three community colleges in Georgia and analyzing the transcribed data to formulate themes and patterns. In addition, the researcher studied aggregate data collected by one of the three institutions, due to insufficient data from the remaining two.

Following each interview, participants were informed that they would receive a transcribed interview shortly after emergent themes had been analyzed. All participants received emailed transcripts for approval. Both an open coding process (i.e., identifying meanings that emerge from the data) and axial coding process (i.e., looking for relationship identification amongst open codes) were used to capture each theme.

To understand the actions of individuals, one must truly understand the meanings such individual attribute to those actions--their feelings, opinions, values, attitudes, and assumptive worlds. Therefore, the researcher intended to comprehend the broader perspectives of the African American males on the advising process and their academic success captured through face-to-face interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In-depth recorded interviews provided valuable information for this study. The detailed recorded discussions served as a primary source of data to pinpoint developing themes, patterns,

and categories. The overarching purpose of the interviews was to allow the participants to reflect on characteristics of the academic advising experience that they perceived as useful to their academic persistence and achievement.

Research Sites

The researcher used three community colleges in Georgia as host sites for this research. The schools were selected for their location, size, and student population. Recent surveys given to students and faculty at one of the participating community colleges revealed that size was a key consideration among students when choosing a college. Carter Community College, located in an urban area of Georgia, enrolls just under 3,200 students. Paine Community College, also located in an urban area in Georgia, has 3,526 students enrolled. Wilson Community College has campuses in two different cities in a large urban area in Georgia. It is a feeder school, providing a flow of students to two separate universities, with a combined enrollment of over 50,000 students. Each institution has an African American male student enrollment of less than 20 percent.

Research Environment

To protect the privacy of the students and staff in this study, the actual names of the colleges and study participants have been replaced with pseudonyms. Below are the research environments for this study.

Carter Community College. Located in Atlanta, Georgia, this institution serves nine surrounding counties with over 3,200 students enrolled in 46 academic programs.

The college offers transfer opportunities to over 50 public and private colleges and universities throughout Georgia.

Paine Community College. This institution sits between Savannah, Georgia, and Jacksonville, Florida. The college originated in 1961 and serves 3,526 students enrolled in 39 academic programs. The college offers transfer options to 28 universities and 22 colleges in the state of Georgia. The institution also provides on-campus residential life for its students.

Wilson Community College. This institution serves Newton, Clarkston, and Fulton counties, and it hosts a University Transfer program with Atlanta State University. This collaboration gives Wilson students access to over 200-degree programs. Together, the two institutions serve over 50,000 students and offer multiple housing options for every level of student, from community college students to doctoral candidates. This transfer program is relatively new; it was established in early 2017. With the current merger of the two institutions, bachelor degree programs are now offered.

Summary

The study under consideration was conducted using a qualitative, case study method. The researcher obtained appropriate approvals from Morgan State University's Institutional Review Board and three participating community colleges. The researcher used a sample of twelve African American male students and six academic advisors from those perspective community colleges. The individual interviews lasted for approximately 30 minutes to an hour and a pre-determined protocol is shown in Appendix A and B. The interviews were transcribed and identified for coded themes

manually, using Microsoft Word. The participants were emailed copies of their

perspective transcriptions for validity and to provide more information if needed. There

was no potential harm to the participants or institutions, and the researcher maintained a

high level of confidentiality. For the researcher to protect the students and staff in this

study, the actual names of the colleges and study participants were replaced with

pseudonyms.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how African American men perceived their academic advising process and how the academic advisor influenced their academic persistence and achievement. The study examined the experiences of twelve African American male students and six academic advisors at three community colleges in Georgia. While the majority of studies concerning the academic advising process and its effect on African American male students have considered students enrolled in a university setting, this study focused solely on community college students. The researcher used three data sources:

1. Interviews of twelve African American male students

2. Interviews of six academic advisors

3. Aggregate data of feedback from students on their academic advising experiences collected by one of the three participating community colleges

To protect the identity of the research participants, all names of individuals and institutions used in this study are pseudonyms.

The purpose of this study is to understand African American men's perceptions of the influence of advising and advisors on their academic persistence and achievement:

- How do African American men perceive the experience of receiving academic advising in community colleges?

- What resources and services provided by the community college do African American men believe are associated with their academic persistence and achievement at the institution?

These research questions were essential to identify the needs of the students and examine the services being rendered to support the academic persistence of this underserved population. The researcher utilized an interview protocol designed to elicit responses that addressed the research questions. Answers to the research questions have been presented in each participant's own words; each transcribed interview was analyzed using Microsoft Word to pinpoint themes and patterns that emerged from the data. In analyzing the data, for a theme to be present, there had to be nine or more of the student participants state something for it to become a recurring theme. Also, with the academic advising participants, if nine or more stated something, it then became a recurring theme.

Qualitative Findings

Data collection methods for this study included semi-structured interviews, digital recordings, aggregate data, and typed notes. The researcher collected demographic information identifying participants' age, academic year, major, and possible career interests. An interview protocol was used to establish order within the semi-structured interviewing process.

The interview questions were designed to elicit information regarding the participants' personal, academic, and family experiences; their relationship with the academic advisor; their experiences with academic advising; their course loads; and their overall engagement with the institution in which they were enrolled. During the interview

process, the participants were able to speak openly and candidly about their unique experiences, describing their academic journeys in great detail and sharing their feelings about and perceptions of the advising process as well as their thoughts on how the advising department could be improved. They explained where they felt they belonged or fit within the college environment, affirmed by Wood and Harris's (2014) SEO model coupled with Schlossberg's (1989, 2011) theory of marginality.

This theoretical framework presented the importance of student success outcomes in shaping their overall college experience, including student goals, academic backgrounds, and societal norms that shape perceptions of African American men. These aspects of the African American male students' experiences have been found to influence the students' sense of belonging and fitting into the academic environment (Wood & Williams, 2013). The interviews created an open door for the students to speak candidly about issues they encountered daily.

Description of Participants

The researcher selected twelve participants for the research study, and each of them participated in individual interviews. The selection criteria stipulated that participants must be male, African American, currently enrolled at the institution, between the ages of 18 and 25, and a first- or second-year student in the fall of 2017 or the spring of 2018. Participants also had to qualify for Student Support Services. The interviews conducted for this study lasted from 30 to 45 minutes.

All of the students can be described as low income, first-generation college students. All participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identities and

ensure that the information they shared remained confidential. Table 1 provides

additional information about each participant.

Table 1
Student Demographics

Participant (Pseudonym)	Age	Classification	School	Major
Kris	20	Second Year Student	Paine Community College	Biology
Emanuel	20	Second Year Student	Paine Community College	Business Administration
Chris	25	Third Year Student	Carter Community College	Business Administration
Daniel	23	Second Year Student	Carter Community College	Communications
Dennis	25	Second Year Student	Paine Community College	Sociology
Jamel	22	First Year Student	Wilson Community College	Business Administration
Antonio	20	First Year Student	Wilson Community College	Criminal Justice
Shawn	22	Second Year Student	Wilson Community College	Business Administration
Victor	21	Second Year Student	Carter Community College	Biology
Zackery	19	First Year Student	Paine Community College	Political Science
Lamar	20	Second Year Student	Carter Community College	Business Administration
Lenny	21	Second Year Student	Wilson Community College	Biology/Radiology

Participants' Backgrounds

Kris

Kris is a 20-year-old, low income, first-generation college student at Paine

Community College. The product of a single-parent household, Kris is a second-year

student with a self-reported 3.2 GPA. He stated, "I have maintained above a 3.0 because

of my academic counselors. I have built a rapport with them, and they are willing to assist

me, and they expect great things from me." Kris is actively involved in many different

activities outside the classroom. He is a member of the Student Support Services program, a member of the cheerleading squad, a peer tutor, the Student Government Association treasurer, and a member of the Medical Association program.

Kris aspires to become a veterinarian and has set several goals for himself, stating, "I want to graduate with my associate's degree and move on to a bachelor's program at the University of Georgia within the next year." Kris expressed great confidence in his ability to succeed based on his own academic planning, assisted by his academic advisors:

> My academic advisors are very nurturing, and they are there when I need them. If it is something that I am struggling with understanding concerning my classes, they are there to assist me in gaining clarity. Also, they have been assisting in my preparation to leave the college within the next year, helping me to clarify how to meet my goal of getting into the University of Georgia to complete my bachelor's degree, once I have received my associate's.

Emanuel

Emanuel is a 20-year-old, second-year student at Paine Community College with a GPA of 3.12. Emanuel stated:

> I am a decent student, but I admit that I need a little more attention academically than most students. I depend on my academic advisor to help me choose the correct courses so that I can finish with an appropriate amount of time with my associate's. My mom, who is a single parent, is not collegiately educated, so it is hard to ask her questions concerning school and my classes. My academic advisor

is a huge help, and he wants to see me achieve academic success, both inside the classroom and outside. He is more nurturing and understands where I am coming from because he, too, is a product of a low income and first-generation household.

Emanuel is very active in the classroom as well as outside of school. Emanuel has been a member of the baseball team since entering the institution and lives with some of his teammates. Emanuel is also involved with the college debate team, the Student Support Services program, and the Business Club, and he serves as a peer mentor.

When asked if he found it challenging to maintain a balance between being prepared academically and being involved socially on campus, Emanuel responded,

It has not always been easy to balance my schedule, but I know that it will make me a well-rounded student and individual. It also looks good when I graduate with my associate's and move on to the university of my choice. My advisor helps to lessen the burden by giving me a balanced workload that allows me to be more flexible inside and outside the classroom. I also have access to online classes if I need them.

Chris

Chris is a 25-year-old, second-year student working on his second associate's degree at Carter Community College. Chris feels that he is not quite ready to tackle a four-year degree. Chris stated, "I am more accustomed to the smaller class size at the community college." While attending the community college, Chris has been very active in extracurricular activities. He noted that "both of my parents attended the same

institution and had encouraged me to be more involved, but at the same time staying on top of my grades was going to be super important."

While in many ways he is much like the other students I interviewed, Chris is the only participant whose parents were both present in the household and play a very active part in his education. Chris has been up front and honest about his academic advising experience. He stated, "My academic advisors are not always friendly and inviting. There have been times when I've set appointments, and they were nowhere to be found. Then when the advisor sees me, it's almost as if I am at fault."

Chris is active in baseball and the honor society for biology majors. Chris has maintained a GPA of 3.56 but does not attribute any of his academic success to his advisors. "My parents have advised me throughout most of my college career, and we've designed an education plan to help with class selection. My goals are to follow in my parents' footsteps and attend Vanderbilt University in Tennessee upon completing my second associate's."

Chris stated, "I set several goals for myself that I have achieved, and I believe that it was because of the small class setting and my constant engagement outside of the classroom. My very first academic advisor was super-accommodating and very helpful, but he ended up leaving, and it was just tough for me to connect with my female advisors for various reasons."

Daniel

Daniel is a very independent 23-year-old, second-year student. He was reared in a single-parent household and always aspired to attend college. Daniel was more

accustomed to the smaller class sizes and more nurturing environment that he found at Carter Community College. "I made plans to go to college early on because I knew that was my only way out of the everyday life situations that I had to endure," he explained. "Luckily, my community college offered on-campus housing because I was able to move up out of my environment for a little while."

Daniel is a Mass Communications major and has a goal of becoming a journalist. Describing his advising experience, he stated:

I made frequent trips to and from my academic advisor's office on a weekly basis because I wanted to make sure that I stayed abreast of every opportunity. My goal was to make sure I graduated and that I was able to explore every other possible opportunity there was after my associate degree. I would go to my advisor's office so much that they became familiar enough with me that they would provide job leads and they encouraged me to pursue a bachelor's degree in journalism.

Daniel's experiences with his academic advisor were a highlight of his academic career. He stated that "without the devoted help of my academic advisors and the nurturing environment that they provided, I would not be graduating in May of 2018. I also would not have applied to Howard University to pursue a bachelor's degree in Journalism." Daniel is very active on campus and has created a name for himself. He runs the college radio station, served on student government, and was active on the campus debate and journalism clubs.

Dennis

Dennis is a 25-year-old, second-year returning student from Kingston, Jamaica, attending Paine Community College. A very independent and determined individual, Dennis has been living in the U.S. since age 20 and has no family in Georgia. Neither of his parents attended college; in fact, neither of them graduated from high school. Dennis depended upon his academic advisors to guide him academically. "I came to college knowing that I wanted something better than what my parents have given me. My counselors in high school didn't prepare me for college, and it was as if you graduate and maneuver through life on your own," he recalled.

Dennis was fortunate to have family in New York, so he decided to move to the U.S. shortly after high school and begin researching colleges.

> I called the college in Georgia and spoke with the academic advisor shortly after I applied. She was very accommodating to my needs and understood that I was coming into this entire situation lost. She informed me that she would be my primary contact upon arriving at the institution. As soon as I purchased my bus ticket, I went down for orientation, and I was able to meet with Mrs. Stuckey. She was extremely nice and accommodating. She also informed me that we would be able to do an education plan that would help me decide my direction. I knew I wanted to major in biology, and she directed me on the path that would best suit me.

Dennis, who has maintained a 3.67 GPA throughout his time at the institution, has not been involved in as many extracurricular activities as he would have liked. He was

only active in the biology club and became a peer mentor. He explains, "I wanted to focus more on making good grades because I want to become a doctor, and my goal right now is focusing on obtaining my associate's degree and moving on to get my bachelor's from Morehouse College in biology/pre-med."

Jamel

Jamel is a 22-year-old, low income, first-year, and first-generation college student at Wilson Community College. He lives with his dad and is a very active student. Jamel decided that he would not enroll in college immediately after high school. "I felt like I was not prepared for college shortly after high school. My high school counselors never really pushed me to apply for school and so I never really thought that it was vital," he explained. Jamel's determination to get a job in a factory just like his father became his goal. His dad told him one day after a long conversation, "Jamel, you need to get serious about life and your career goals."

Jamel stated:

At this point is when it hit me that it was important for me to at least give college a try. So I did some research on a few community colleges in Georgia, and I found one that would fit my needs. I knew I wanted a smaller institution with smaller class sizes, but I needed it to be an institution that was more accommodating to my needs.

Jamel decided to enroll in the local community college and major in Logistics Management. "After meeting with my academic advisor for my program, I knew that I made the right decision," he stated. "Dr. Gamble was very approachable, and throughout

my first semester and now into this second semester, he has steered me in the direction

that he thought would be more beneficial to my overall career and education goals."

On several occasions, Jamel noted that:

The academic advising that I received from Dr. Gamble will be one of the

determining factors of my returning next semester. Dr. Gamble has been very

helpful in this process and is one of the reasons I have done so well this year. I

know that he expects a lot from me, and I don't want to disappoint him or myself.

Jamel, who has maintained a 3.85 GPA, noted, "Dr. Gamble has even gotten me excited

to look at other possibilities, such as exploring a bachelor's degree from his alma mater,

Georgia Southern University, in Logistics and Supply Chain Management."

Antonio

Antonio is a 20-year-old, first-year student at Wilson Community College. He is a

low income and first-generation college student. Antonio is in his second semester at the

institution and has gotten well acquainted with the college environment. Antonio became

actively involved in several organizations because of an advisement session with his

academic advisor:

After enrolling at the institution, I was advised by Ms. Jacky, who was very open

and made me feel at home. She always made it known that I could come to her for

assistance at any time and that she would be glad to assist with my needs while at

the college. My first semester, I fell below the mark in my college algebra class,

and before I could go to her for assistance, she was calling me to set up a meeting

because she had seen my test grades via the Early Alert system. I was placed in

tutoring and paired with a peer mentor. The contact from my advisor was very effective because it showed me that Ms. Jacky cared for me as a student at the institution, and I wasn't just a number.

Ms. Jacky instructed Antonio to engage in activities outside the classroom as well. "I know the importance of your engagement inside and outside the classroom," she informed him. Antonio became active in the history club, Student Government Association, and Habitat for Humanity. After being redirected and placed on the right path, Antonio achieved a 3.5 GPA his first semester and looked to finish the spring semester strong. "It is all because of the assistance that I have received from Ms. Jacky that keeps me motivated to achieve more."

Shawn

Shawn is an active 22-year-old, second-year student. He stated that he had been a member of the Wilson Community College basketball team. He also acknowledged that he had recently come off academic warning because of low grades in his Fall 2017 classes. Shawn is a low-income and first-generation student whose primary focus had not been on his courses:

> I have been focused on perfecting my craft on the court so long that I forgot about my classes and their importance. After being confronted by the academic advisor, she warned that I was on the verge of not being able to play basketball if I didn't get my grades up. The academic advisor ended up setting up a meeting with myself and my coach to inform us both of what dangers lay ahead of me if I

didn't get things together. She insisted that I have mandatory tutoring, and I had

to meet with her twice a week for the rest of the fall semester.

Shawn has goals that he wants to accomplish, and he plans to play basketball for Auburn University after receiving his associate's degree. He stated:

I am more active in the classroom and beginning to see my errors from the

previous semesters. My academic advisor has been very persistent when it comes

to meeting my obligations and has also paired me with a peer and a faculty

mentor. My grades are beginning to rise, and I am hoping for at least a 3.5 GPA at

the end of spring 2018. According to my academic plan, I will finally graduate in

December of 2018 with my associate's in Business Management.

Victor

Victor, aged 21, is a low-income student at Carter Community College. Victor

will be graduating in May 2018. He followed in the footsteps of his mother, who is also a

Carter Community College graduate. Victor is an excellent student with a self-reported

3.89 GPA. He is full of life and vigor and aspires to become a pharmacist.

Victor expressed gratitude for all the academic advisors he has come in contact

with thus far, noting,

The academic advisors have been nothing but helpful to me and they have met

every expectation that I have had for them. They have been nothing but nurturing

and very persistent, and they are one of the main reasons why I stayed at the

college.

Victor believes his hard work and dedication to his academic endeavors will enable him to enter one of the top pharmacy schools in the country.

While at Carter Community College, Victor has been active in the debate club, chemistry club, Minority Medical Association, Student Support Services, and Student Government Association. Victor attributes his success to his mother, who worked hard to show him the importance of education, and his advisors, who prepared him academically and made sure he had everything he needed to persist. Victor's resilience has allowed him to advance beyond his peers.

Zackery

Zackery is a 19-year-old, first-generation, low income, first-year student at Paine Community College. He lives with his mother, who is a single parent. Zackery has had a difficult upbringing, but he is very resilient and recognizes his fantastic opportunity:

Because of my determination and willingness not to give up, I have been able to connect with great people who have assisted me along this tedious journey. Starting off my journey here at Paine, I encountered an academic advisor that was not so helpful because she couldn't understand my needs. I transferred to Mr. Coney due to my previous advisor's inability to reach me as a student. Mr. Coney was someone that I could relate to, and he was someone that understood where I was coming from and where I was trying to go in life. Mr. Coney nurtured me and told me that it was okay to be smart, and it was okay to be a proud African American male.

Zackery has significant goals in life. He plans to pursue a career in law, stating, "I have seen the injustices that have reigned among African American men and women, and it is my goal to lend a helping hand to resolve some of the issues we face as a race." Zackery earned a perfect 4.0 GPA his first semester and is well on his way to getting his associate's in criminal justice. He plans to go on to pursue his bachelor's degree in political science from Emory University. Of his advisor, Zachary said, "Mr. Coney is an excellent role model who provides the wisdom and knowledge to assist us students in various ways. It's good to have this experience with someone who gets me as an African American male and as a student."

Lamar

Lamar is a 20-year-old, second-year student who is also a low income and first-generation college student. Immediately before his interview, Lamar opened up about being a new father and his difficulties in school the past two semesters. Before having a child, Lamar was very active on campus, stating, "I have served as the treasurer for the English club, played on the baseball team, and actively volunteered with the local YMCA."

Lamar constantly struggles to understand his life at this moment and how he can connect every piece:

> I meet with my academic advisor on a weekly basis because I feel lost and I find a sense of what is going on in life when I can speak with her. She has given tools to help me navigate through the things that I have going on at this very moment.

This change with the baby and not having the support at home that I need is beginning to conflict with my work and school schedule.

Lamar has goals and is very passionate about learning:

After speaking with my advisor, we have been able to create an educational plan that works for me. I didn't anticipate having to take more online courses, but having that option is great because I will not get behind as it relates to staying in line for graduation.

The resilience Lamar displayed during my conversation with him is evident when he states:

I understand the situation that I am in at this moment as it relates to my work-life balance, and I am extremely honored to have my support system. My academic advisor at Carter Community College has been extremely helpful and very nurturing. She has been open and honest in every sit-down meeting that we've had, and her advice is something that I take and follow. I also have the Upward Bound counselors that continuously allow me to come and get information on life in general. My support system outside of my home is the best, and it makes me push 100 times harder.

Lenny

Lenny is a 21-year-old, second-year student from a small, rural town in Georgia. The product of a single-parent household, Lenny is also a first-generation, low income student with aspirations of becoming a radiologic technologist and then a radiologist.

My goal is to graduate Wilson Community College with my associate's degree in radiological technology. I have had the opportunity to speak with my academic advisors concerning my career goals, and they have been very instrumental in assisting me with my classes.

When asked why he chose the institution, Lenny reported that "the class size and being able not just to be a number on campus are super important to me. I also need to be able to have my advisors accessible whenever I need them."

Lenny has been very active on campus and in the classroom, participating in the Student Government Association, the NAACP, and the baseball team. He reports that his academic advisors played a significant role in his decision to become more active:

My advisors made me aware that once I decided to return to school, my involvement in extracurricular activities is important and heavily looked at when schools view our applications. My advisor allowed me to feel at home, and I was able to feel that I belonged here at the institution.

Lenny is projected to graduate at the end of Fall 2018 and plans to apply to several pre-med programs at various institutions around the country.

Coding Paradigm

Data gathered and transcribed from the twelve student interviews are presented in this section. Over 40 coded elements were displayed and grouped into six categories. After analyzing the collected data, six themes emerged. When nine or more of the twelve students stated an element, it was then that a viable code was established. The codes are:

1. Students' expectations of advisors

2. Students' contact with advisors

3. Relationships built with advisors

4. Advising factors

5. College experiences

6. External influences

These themes and patterns emerged eleven times each and are displayed in further detail in Figure 4.
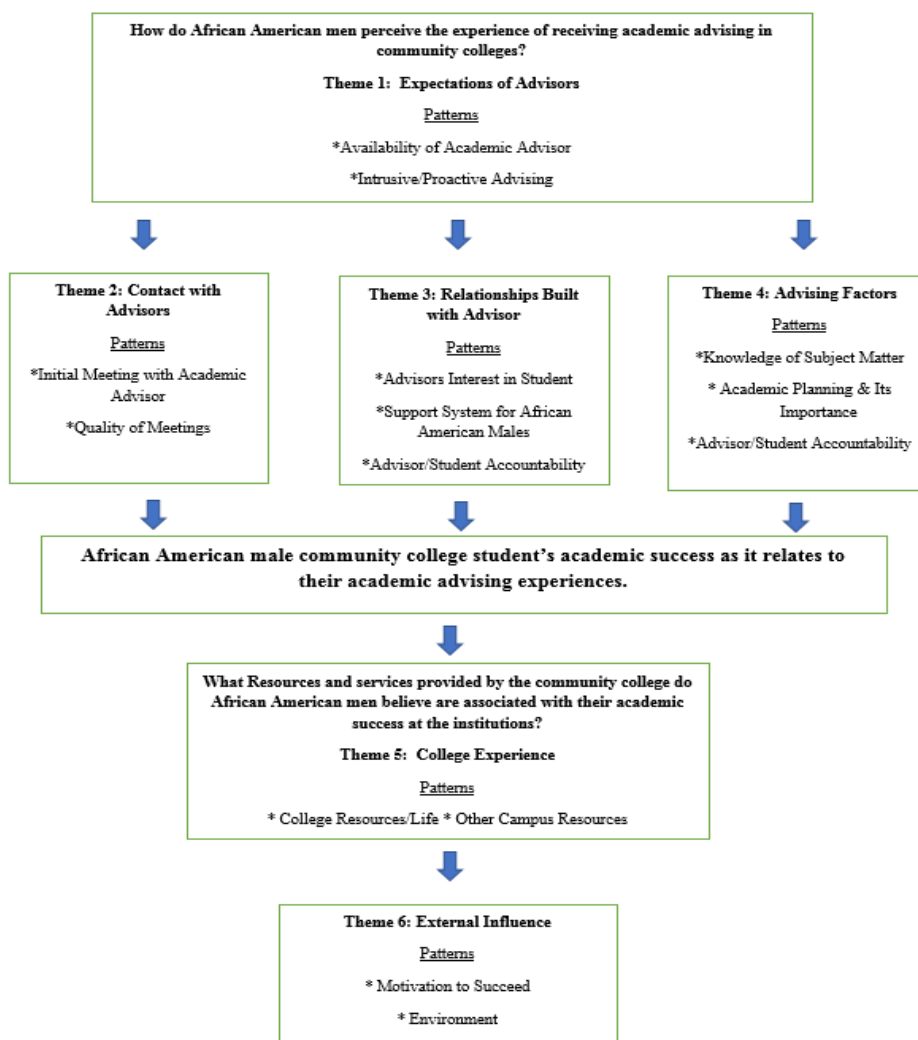
Figure 4.
Student themes and patterns.

The themes revealed that the African American male students were able to discuss clear expectations for the advising process, define their own academic success and describe what part advising plays in their academic persistence and achievements, and identify the importance of interactions and relationship building in contributing to their academic success.

Summary of Codes/Themes

During the interview process, some participants credited the academic advising department for their academic success. These participants believed that to be academically successful, they needed reassurance from their academic advisors that they were on the right track, that the advisors would meet their expectations, and that they were taking the appropriate courses for their career paths. Most participants attributed their academic success to a combination of helpful academic advising and self-motivation.

Theme 1: Students' Expectations of Advisors

The first theme to emerge from the participants' responses was the students' overall expectations of their academic advising experiences. All twelve students had previous advising experience before enrolling at their respective institutions. This contact means they were advised, effectively or not, by a post-secondary advisor or counselor. Ten of the twelve students stated that they were pre-advised by their respective college academic advisors before the semester began. This interaction resulted in the students being familiar with the academic advising process and able to understand the primary requirements for their majors.

Previous interactions with academic advisors or persons similar to an advisor had a significant impact on all the participants' views of and overall expectations for their later encounters with academic advisors. When asked, "What were your expectations of your academic advising meetings with your advisors?" the students were able to speak

candidly about their expectations of the advising process. Generally, the students understood the purpose and importance of the academic advising process and recognized that the advisor was there to assist them in navigating their academic experiences at their institution. The students' overall expectations focused on the completion of their associate's degree and their smooth transition to a university to further their career aspirations.

Availability of academic advisor. The availability of their advisors was one of the more prominent categories expressed by the twelve participants. This theme surfaced when the researcher asked, "What were some of your initial feelings about your academic advising experience?" The participants expressed the importance of having one-on-one contact with the academic advisor. The participants were not pleased with over-the-phone advising sessions. As Daniel stated, "Having to speak with an advisor via phone doesn't make this experience personable."

The students were able to experience advising from both a professional advisor and a faculty advisor. Eight of the twelve students praised the availability of their academic advisors and/or faculty advisors. Students who previously indicated that having readily available academic advisors was significant seemed to make an association between the advisors' availability and the nature of professional advising. Because of the rapport built with the advisors and the nature of the advisors' position, eight of the twelve students interviewed felt they didn't have to worry about the advisors' availability.

Kris's words accurately captured the eight students' overall perspective:

My advisor has always been there any time I felt that I needed them. There [has been maybe one or two times they were away from the office because of] an emergency or lunch. Also, one of my advisors gives out their work cell phone number any time we have an emergency and they aren't available.

Jamel provided further information that confirmed the students' expectations of their advisors:

Dr. Gamble and crew are usually readily available when I need them. I can [only recount once or twice when I wasn't able to see my advisor] due to personal or work-related duties. The office is always open.

Not only was availability a significant factor for students, but it was a necessary factor for the advisors as well. All six academic advisors interviewed stressed the importance of having an open-door policy for students to come and seek assistance.

Many of the students who saw either a professional advisor or faculty advisor reported having the opportunity to visit their advisor throughout the day. Emanuel stated,

I never really had an issue with seeing [my advisor] because there is an open-door policy. Any time I needed to vent about school or other personal matters, [my advisor] was there to listen. There were certain times of the term that we had to set appointments, and that was during advising season.

Seven of the twelve students described the difficulties they encountered trying to see their advisors during the actual advising season. Chris stated, "During the advising season it is challenging to see anyone during the mornings, but they always allow time in the afternoons (two hours) to see walk-in students."

Students who were advised by faculty advisors also emphasized the importance of their faculty advisors' availability. Unlike their peers who were advised by professional advisors and reported a more positive advising experience, this small group opened up about their displeasure at having to utilize faculty advisors. Dennis sarcastically stated, "[My advisor] is almost never available when you need him." He showed disdain for the subpar treatment he received from his faculty advisor. Lenny also spoke candidly about his advisor, stating, "She is not as available as most faculty advisors. I have set several appointments throughout this year alone, and she has missed two out of the four appointments without any excuse."

Another difficulty the students reported related to conflicting schedules for those who were mandated to see a faculty advisor. They noted on several occasions that scheduling conflicts were the most significant problems they encountered. The faculty advisors often had an overload in course assignments and were required to participate in other faculty-related activities throughout the day and week. Dennis noted, "I would have to wait on my faculty advisor for some days, and even once, a week before he could see me. I waited so long only to have a five-minute conversation, and he rushes off to some other scheduled obligation."

During those peak times of the year (the beginning and middle of the semester for pre-registration for the next term), regular professional advisors could also experience some scheduling difficulties. Due to a shortage of team members to assist during busy advising periods, students are sometimes neglected. In several instances, as Lamar noted, "There are so many students here to see one advisor during those peak advising times it

makes it difficult to see anyone." Chris recalled, "[My advisor's] schedule became extremely hectic during the advising season and we almost never got in our advising sessions on time or got out on time." These difficulties posed problems for many of the students due to other obligations, such as family and/or work-related responsibilities.

Many of the students felt drained and incredibly overwhelmed by the entire advising process at times. First-year students frequently fell victim to this overwhelmed feeling because the whole process was new, and often they lacked knowledge about the advising process. All twelve students entered their advising appointments with a number of expectations; for example, they expected their advisor to be proactive in sharing information and to be able to provide a "road map" to the things they would need to do along the way.

Intrusive advising. Students expressed their desire for a more proactive advising experience. When asked, "How could the advising process be improved?" Lamar responded, "Being able to have a more in-depth conversation about classes, majors, and personal issues and having the advisor as an accountability partner would be great and would help to influence success." Lamar's quote summed up the views of 10 of the twelve participants.

Interacting with an advisor who displayed a more intrusive or proactive advising style gave students greater confidence in their ability to succeed and enhanced their motivation. Students noted that during intrusive advising sessions, the advisors showed more interest and involvement in them not only as students but also as individuals. Dennis candidly stated, "When advisors were more proactive in their advising, we the

students received everything that we needed to succeed. The advisor was more proactive in their advising approach, assisting the students before situations developed." Emanuel was also open in expressing his desire to engage in a more proactive experience. Emanuel stated, "My advisor, for the most part, is proactive and is very detail-oriented. She goes over every detail needed for me to be successful each semester."

Many students' expectations of their academic advising sessions differed from their actual advising experiences. Ten of the twelve students observed a definite lack of assertiveness from their academic advisors. Lamar recalled, "It was confusing in my advising sessions some of the time because I was the one in the session saying what I think I should take, and my advisor would be very laid back and not offer much explanation or thought on what I should have taken. It felt like I was on my own sometimes."

Some of the students suggested that their advisors might not always have been knowledgeable about the areas in which the students needed information. Often advisors would not volunteer information to them, which sometimes caused them to find out information just by luck. Many of the students also reported increased pressure from their advisors to take a more hands-on on approach to their own academic advising. This forced many of the students to make educational decisions about choosing their classes. The students felt unprepared to make these types of decisions and didn't feel comfortable doing so. In some cases, the students made mistakes, choosing classes they didn't need. These additional classes added to the many other stressors they already had to overcome.

Theme 2: Relationships

All the participants believed that it was essential to build a healthy relationship with their academic advisor. In response to the question, "How would you describe your relationship with your advisor during your first year?" the students viewed their advisor and the relationship they had established as outstanding. Building and maintaining this relationship became a primary goal of each student interviewed.

In establishing a student/advisor relationship, four of the twelve participants noted that the fact that their advisor was male was significant in strengthening the relationship. Kris stated, "My experience with having an African American male advisor has assisted me greatly. Mr. Coney gave me advice on not only academics but assists with teaching me life lessons."

Emanuel also stated,

My experience with having an African American male advisor has been a great one. I have experienced both male and female advisors. Being able to look up to someone that looks like me is important to me, and I have that in Mr. Coney. Mr. Coney takes time to mentor and groom us as young black men and has helped me with my self-esteem and confidence, both socially and academically.

Dennis reiterated the importance of seeing someone who looks like him in an influential role, stating,

Mr. Coney has been a support system for us all, and he knows the importance of keeping us motivated and engaged. I look up to him as a successful African American male. I honestly believe that it is important for African American males

to see other black males in positions like advisors, deans, professors, and other

positions of power. Seeing other African American males in positions of power

gives us hope for our futures.

Zackery was very vocal in expressing the importance of African American males

receiving guidance from other African American males. Zackery stated:

My relationship with Mr. Coney has been one of empowerment, mentorship, and

sometimes even chastisement. He cares about my well-being, not only as a young

black man but as a young black scholar as well. I feel comfortable speaking with

Mr. Coney about certain things that I didn't feel comfortable speaking about with

my female advisors.

Overall, the students valued the relationships they established with their advisors.

With the majority of the African American males interviewed coming from low-income,

first-generation, and sometimes one-parent households, these advisors, either male or

female, became very influential in their lives. All twelve stated that if they had the

choice, they would rather be advised by someone who looks like them, who can

adequately relate to them as young African American males, and who can address their

specific physical, emotional, social, and academic needs.

Advisor interest in student. Advisors' interest in their students can play a

substantial role in the perception students have of their experiences with the advisor and

the advising process. In response to a question about students' perceptions of their

advisor's overall interest in their academic success, Emanuel stated, "It is crucial for

advisors to show a vested interest in me as a student. It makes me feel a small sense of belonging."

This sense of belonging resonated in the hearts and minds of several other participants as well. Shawn expressed this idea adamantly:

> When I meet with my advisor, I don't want it to seem like I'm just another student coming for help within the advisor's busy 9-to-5 workday. I want to feel wanted in the academic community and see that all of my academic needs are met. When I feel as though I am wanted and accepted in the environment, it makes me feel as though I belong in this community.

Students strongly alluded to needing their advisors to show a genuine interest in them and their college experiences.

All twelve students desired to receive a high level of investment and interest from their academic advisors. When establishing a relationship, advisors and students must develop trust. When academic advisors showed that they were genuinely interested in a student's academic well-being, they established trust in the advising relationship. Antonio stated:

> I developed trust in my advisor after our initial meeting when she first asked me about me as an individual. She wanted to know more about me and my areas of interest both academically and career-wise. I rarely can open up to female advisors because I feel I can relate more to most males, but my advisor made it easy to talk to her.

Support system for African American males. Having adequate support from their academic advisors was something the African American males discussed in detail. In response to the questions, "Do you feel that your advisor adequately supported you as an African American male student and provided you with resources to aid in your success? Why or why not?" the students stated that they desired help from their academic advisors because they were not always supported at home. They viewed their advisors as part of their overall support system and as a significant catalyst for their academic success.

Several of the young African American men were products of single-parent households in which the parent they lived with had no formal education beyond high school. All six of the advisors interviewed expressed that the students with minimal support from home desired the most assistance and nurturing from their advisors. The African American male students viewed their advisors as a respected resource who would be there to support them academically, personally, socially, and professionally.

When they needed assistance, the students needed to know they had someone they could count on for support. Dennis candidly stated:

> I have had a couple of advisors, one female [advisor] who didn't understand my needs as an African American male student and was unable to provide me with the support needed. The school presented me with another advisor, an African American male who was able to relate to me and knew my background story. He supported me at honors awards, my induction into the National Honor Society, and invested the time to make sure I had everything that I needed as a student.

Zackery echoed these views:

I honestly felt my advisor cared about me as a person and my struggles as a young

black man. He supported me at any event that I asked him to attend if he was

available. His support showed me that he cared, and it helped to build trust in our

relationship. My advisor knew the struggles I faced as a fairly new student and

helped me overcome them.

Mr. Coney, one of the advisors at Paine Community College, stated that "many students

enter college confused and overwhelmed, and it is our job as advisors to make sure that

they have every resource needed to overcome the higher education hurdle. The support

that we show makes a difference in every student's life that we come in contact with."

Advisor/Student accountability. The students were asked, "Who were the

primary individuals accountable for advising you before enrolling at your respective

institutions and who is semi-responsible for your academic success?" The students

expressed a need for their academic advisor to be held responsible for providing the

necessary resources to assist in their academic success. Victor shared his thoughts

concerning the accountability process:

I know that because this is my future that I have to take a measure of

accountability for my success, but I also expect my advisor to take a certain

measure of accountability for my success in his or her role as my advisor.

Zackery echoed some of these sentiments, emphasizing the importance of being

accountable for one's own success:

As the student, we have to take full ownership of our success, but also hold our advisor's feet to the fire when it comes to providing the resources needed for us to succeed. I consider those actions are holding both parties accountable.

Students often acknowledged the need to have one person—an academic advisor, professor, or peer—who helped them maintain accountability. Kris stated:

When I have someone that is there to help keep me on the right path and making sure I remain accountable for all actions, it helps me to manage my academic plans better. We [students] are fairly new to college life and are still adapting to the environment, so we need that guiding light to help steer us in the right direction.

The students acknowledged that there were certain times they encountered difficulties when meeting with the advisors. Lenny stated:

There have been a couple of times I knew my advisor was stressed with the pressures of the institution and overwhelmed with the caseload, but just as we as students need a reminder of accountability and what we expect from our advisors, so does the advisor.

Gloria, an academic advisor, accurately captured the students' perceptions:

There are times when we as advisors are overwhelmed with work, family, and life in general. I have witnessed advisors not giving 100 percent at this career that requires 100 percent of your best work. Just as we expect a certain level of accountability from our students, they expect an even higher level of accountability from their advisors.

Theme 3: Advisor/Student Contact

Student contact with their academic advisors was another theme that emerged

from the participants' responses. Eleven of the twelve students had some previous

advising experience before entering their respective institutions, and all twelve have had

contact with their advisors at their present institution, whether a professional advisor,

faculty advisor, or both. The students and advisors provided commentary on the

importance of effective contact between the advisor and the student. Today, when more

and more studies are indicating the importance of utilizing technology for communicating

with students, schools will have to start incorporating new ways for advisors to reach

students. The students interviewed for this study preferred face-to-face advising and were

opposed to Skype sessions or phone conversations.

Initial meeting with the academic advisor. When asked to describe and rate

their first advising meeting, students identified some critical factors that helped their

overall success. Being able to schedule their advising sessions promptly was very

important to these students. Many of them remembered feeling nervous about their initial

academic advising meeting, but they also expressed a surge of excitement and

anticipation about what was to come in the meeting.

The students shared the experience of meeting with their advisors for the first

time during early registration, right before school began. Chris stated:

The initial meeting with my advisor was pretty nerve wracking and pretty intense,

but she asked questions about me as an individual and as a student. The fact that

she took the time to lay everything out on the table made it that [much] easier for me when it was time for other meetings with her.

Students felt the initial meeting was the most important meeting for them. Shawn declared, "Some of the most valuable information you will receive about your classes, prospective majors, and various other resources on campus [is] expressed in this meeting." According to Dr. Gloria, an advisor at Carter Community College,

Students are usually nervous about their first meeting with the advisor because they don't know what to expect. This is a good place for advisors to ease some of the tension and worry from the students. The sessions are used to prepare the student for what to expect in the next couple of sessions.

Quality of meetings. In examining the effectiveness of the advising meeting, students spoke candidly concerning each session and its quality. Emanuel stated,

There are times when I have gone into meetings with my advisor, and I felt that the service was subpar. This treatment was during the times when advising is high, and everyone is trying to get the classes that they want. However, for the most part, I've had fairly decent sessions with my advisor.

Many of the students felt that the quality of the sessions was better when the professional advisor, rather than the faculty advisor, was doing the advising. Jamel stated, "My professional advisor's sessions are top quality advisement sessions, but whenever I have to meet with my faculty advisor, the sessions are horrible. The faculty advisor makes me feel rushed, and I never get to select the classes that I want."

Lamar reiterated the sentiments of many other students:

I feel like faculty should never advise students because they already have so much

on their plates dealing with classes and other college assignments. The quality of

work is always piss poor. Often, I bypass my faculty advisor and set up meetings

with my old professional advisor because she gets me as a student.

The students made it evident that having the advisor listen to their needs and

provide adequate feedback is important to their success. All of the participants shared

identical views of "quality" related to the advising sessions. Dennis stated:

Quality sessions are sessions where the advisor shows sincere concern about me

and my academic, social, and emotional well-being. The advisor listens to my

concerns and can address them in the best way possible. We want to know that

our advisor cares and that he or she shows it.

According to the results of the survey distributed to the students at Paine

Community College, 10 percent of students are meeting more with their faculty advisors

than with the professional advisor. Dr. Gamble stated:

When students are mandated to see their faculty advisor, it frustrates me because

the faculty advisors are not providing the adequate level of service that is needed

to help the student propel. I have students who will bypass their faculty advisors

to come and see me because I take the time to research their class history

adequately. I take the time to study the classes that they have already taken and

the classes that they still need for graduation. I make sure to check the students'

comfort level when it comes to the classes that they are taking. I never want a

student to become overwhelmed and stressed with classes. I try to teach them

work/life balance. Attention to details is something missing in the faculty advising

sessions.

Theme 4: Advising Factors

Several specific attributes related to the advising sessions were heavily discussed

in the interview sessions and deemed essential by both professional advisors and student

participants. These factors set the tone for most if not all of the advising sessions, helped

prepare the students to be academically successful, and helped academic advisors prepare

for the advising appointment.

Knowledge of subject matter. The students identified knowledge of the subject

matter as one of the top two most important characteristics their academic advisor needed

to possess. Kris stated:

> If I am a new student and looking for guidance and possibly needed assistance
>
> with classes and possibly selecting the best major for me, I would want an
>
> academic advisor that has the adequate knowledge of the subject matter at hand. If
>
> it is something that needs researching, then that is fine, but be honest, and we can
>
> research together.

> Academic advisors have to be honest and up front with students when choosing

classes or majors. As Shawn explained, "Sometimes it may require the advisor involving

other departments, such as career services, for helping us [students] choose majors.

Whatever it takes to ensure that the student is successful should be the key." Being up front and honest is also a key element in building trust in the advising relationship.

The importance of academic planning. When asked how advisors help students plan academically and how important it was to create an academic plan, Chris stated:

It is crucial to have the advisor assist us as students with academic planning and creating ways to stay on top of those classes needed for graduation. My academic advisor is consistent when it comes to mapping out my academic plan. We have everything mapped out until my last semester.

Academic planning takes a great deal of time and effort from both advisors and students. Planning is essential for all students, and it is the responsibility of every advisor to ensure that each student has an appropriate and effective academic plan. Jamal stated:

There have been times where I have been confused on what classes to take next, and I feel that if my advisor helped me map out my classes, it would make it much easier for them. I could register myself and have them approve it later.

This process of academic planning could help alleviate some of the stress on both entities if the process began in a manner that was beneficial to both parties.

Theme 5: External Influences

Some people and events in life can positively or negatively influence a person's outcomes. They can even affect whether a student returns to his or her respective institution. External influences (i.e., jobs, family issues, financial concerns) were a recurring theme in the interview sessions, becoming one of this study's most important topics of discussion. Students spoke candidly about their concerns and about the

influences that positively affected their academic success. Eleven of the twelve students indicated that their academic advising experiences had a significant influence on their decision to return to their respective institutions.

Motivation to succeed. External and/or internal motivation was a frequent topic in the interview sessions. The students discussed their overall thoughts on motivation, whether internal or external, and their experiences with motivation. Kris stated, "I was never motivated to go to college, and in fact, my mom only has a high school diploma. It was when I saw my mom struggling to provide for my siblings and me that I decided that I wanted better for my family." Expanding on this statement, Kris recalled:

It was not until college when I met my advisor that I knew that I was in the right place. The motivation that [my advisor] gave helped to fuel my desire to learn. I was always a good student; it was just that I did not have the support system that I desired, but I knew it was because that was something that my mom did not grow up with either.

Lamar echoed this view, stating, "There were certain influences that I encountered that were very positive outside of my home. These influences came from friends and mentors and later from my advisors." Also a single parent, Lamar felt his support system of mentors, advisors, and friends kept him motivated and influenced his decision to return to the institution. Other students identified the impact of their relationships with roommates, fellow organization members, teammates, or faculty/staff on their decision to return to the institution. Antonio reported, "I had a few of my closest

friends from high school come here, too, and it was not that far from home. We all are still here and enjoying our experience."

Not every student felt that their advisor motivated them to stay at their present institution. In those cases, it took intrinsic or self-motivation to stay on track. Dennis spoke about an unpleasant early experience:

My advisor became very frustrated with me when I first began at my current institution because she felt as though she could not understand me. She didn't take the time to get to know me as an individual. She quickly forwarded me to another advisor because she couldn't understand my accent, being from Jamaica. It was upsetting, but I was determined to succeed with or without her.

Dennis also explained that his advising experience was not a factor that made him return to the institution: "I was self-motivated to return because I wanted something better for my family and me."

Environment. Of the twelve students, 11 identified the environment as a determining factor in their decision to return to their respective institutions. A majority of the students in this study have been at their current college between one and three years, with just a few currently enrolled in their second semester. 11 out of twelve of the students acknowledged that their environment played a significant role in their choice to return each semester. Emanuel noted that "the environment here at the school and my environment at home play a major role in my return each semester. I love the environment here because the people have embraced me and I have become a leader on campus."

Lenny echoed Emanuel's sentiments, noting that:

the environment and those in it have accepted me as a part of it, and it makes it

that much easier to cope with being here at the institution. I am excited to come to

school each day. Everyone has embraced me in a manner that has helped to create

a great sense of belonging.

However, not all of the participants felt accepted into their college environment at

first. Dennis stated,

It took me almost two semesters to warm up to the environment, or for the

environment to warm up to me. I felt as though the people didn't understand me

or my needs because I was culturally different. My advisor and the people from

the Student Support Services program helped me feel at home. They [SSS

advisor] also helped me to become acclimated to my new environment.

Students also reported a connection between the environment and their

performance. Kris stated, "My instructors treated everyone the same and never made any

of us feel less than the other." Lamar remarked, "I was flourishing here. My professors

understood that I was a single father, and the support that they gave was so important. My

professors did not cut corners with me and encouraged me to do my very best." Many of

the African American male students felt a sense of support from their professors that

helped them succeed academically.

Theme 6: College Experience

The last theme to emerge from participants' responses was students' college

experiences. All twelve students had experiences at their community colleges' that were

motivators for staying at their respective institutions. The students reflected on how and why those experiences contributed to their academic success and their motivation to persist.

College resources/life. The students also identified their college resources as a factor that contributed to their decision to return to the institution. After spending a significant amount of time away from their familiar environments at home and becoming immersed into the college environment, many of the students came to rely on college resources. Kris confirmed that the most apparent reason for his return was "The resources provided to me, like being a part of the cheerleading squad and serving on the Student Government Association's board. I met a group of people that accepted me for me, and we established a bond."

Lenny echoed similar sentiments:

Being active in other clubs and/organizations where I can interact with other students and faculty and staff gives me a true sense of belonging in a world [college] not specifically designed for me. It drives me to come back each semester.

Students also referenced the academic aspects of the college resources, including the opportunity to participate in organizations and pursue other opportunities directly related to their majors. For instance, Chris observed, "The history department has organizations that I can actively be a part of, and I get to apply for specific scholarships in my major."

Other campus resources. The students discussed other resources they felt aided their overall academic success. Lenny stated, "There were numerous times that I was able to venture over to the writing center or the math lab to get assistance. Even if the staff is unavailable, I can still access online tutoring for all subjects."

Chris had a similar experience:

In meeting with my advisor during our initial meeting, she informed me of the importance of seeking assistance from other departments on campus. I expressed my disdain for math and because of our meeting I was able to connect with the math lab.

While Dennis felt that he had an excellent opportunity to seek out other resources, he stated that "not having someone available after hours was difficult. I was not as savvy doing tutoring over the Internet. Overall, that did not stop me from achieving my goal of graduating."

Academic Advising Participants

Table 2 presents the demographics of the six academic advisors interviewed for this study.

Table 2
Advisor Demographics

Name	Age	Gender	Race	School
Connie	64	Female	White	Paine
Timothy	34	Male	Black	Paine
Gloria	56	Female	Latino	Carter
Joy	26	Female	Black	Carter
Dr. Gamble	29	Female	Black	Wilson
Jacky	60	Female	Black	Wilson

Connie

Connie, a 64-year-old African American woman, has been working as an academic advisor for the last 29 years at Paine Community College, a predominantly White institution (PWI). Connie has been an advocate for making sure that all students receive the services they need to excel academically and socially. Connie has experience in advising a diverse range of students from their first year to those entering their last semester. Connie is tasked not only with being an academic advisor but also with serving as one of the leads for her school's Black Male Initiative program, a program designed to

increase retention and graduation rates among underrepresented and underserved African American male students.

Connie spoke passionately and candidly about her work as an academic advisor:

I have worked in my position as an academic advisor long enough, and I have seen so much that goes on behind the scenes. It saddens me when advisors have the opportunity to serve and influence an underserved population, but because they are unable to relate to the hardships of said population, the advisor is unable to meet the students and their needs.

Connie is an advocate for making sure African American males are engaged in the classroom setting as well as in their social setting:

In my research, I have been made well aware that for our young African American males to succeed, they have to remain engaged in all settings of the learning environment. Being engaged in their academics is how our students can become and remain successful. They have to feel as though they belong in the environment that we are placing them in. If young black men do not feel as though they belong, the dropout rate increases.

Connie has made an impact at her school and in her community with her many efforts to ensure that African American males are afforded the same opportunities as other student populations.

Timothy

Timothy, otherwise affectionately known as "Mr. Coney the Great," is a 34-year-old academic advisor at Paine Community College. He is a 2002 graduate of Paine

Community College who later earned a bachelor's degree from Georgia Southern

University. He gave credit to his own advisors, who often pushed him because they saw

the potential he possessed:

> It was academic advisors like myself and others that I have encountered that
>
> helped to get me to where I am now. I grew up low-income and was a product of
>
> a first-generation household. My parents knew the importance of getting an
>
> education, and because they did not pursue the opportunity, they pushed me to
>
> succeed.

Timothy serves as the director of the Black Male Initiative program at Paine

College. He explained:

> The Black Male Initiative program is geared to address the needs of the African
>
> American male and allows them to view life from a different perspective. These
>
> students get to experience talks and lectures from successful African American
>
> male leaders in the community and around the country. The interaction shows
>
> underserved populations that truly, "what they see is what they can become."

Timothy also noted that his role in the initiative has allowed him to advise a

majority of the African American males on the campus.

> Being able to advise these students academically and reassuring them that they
>
> can stay engaged in the classroom is a plus because I get to shape and mold these
>
> young minds. The time spent with these students shows them that people do care
>
> and causes a stronger sense of belonging. I've seen these behaviors catapult

retention and academic success among African American males at Paine

Community College.

Gloria

Gloria, or as her students affectionately know her at Carter Community College,

Dr. G, is the director of academic advising. She is a 56-year-old Latina who has served at

Carter for the past 10 years. She explained, "I started out college at the largest

community college in the United States, Miami Dade College. Each department had

several academic advisors who cared for their students, and it often showed."

Gloria has served as an academic advisor for the last 25 years and has seen the

good and the bad of each advising department in which she has served:

I have experienced some of the best times in advising and also some meager

times as well. I have had the opportunity to speak with and advise multiple

African American males and the majority of times here at Carter, this population

of students is underprepared, lacks motivation, and often lacks a sense of

belonging. When I encounter this type of student, I often find that it is harder to

connect with them.

Gloria has expressed an interest in knocking down those barriers (retention and

graduation rate increases) that the community colleges face, particularly with African

American males. Gloria feels that she can often relate to this population of students.

Gloria also entered college underprepared because of the lack of resources available to

her, felt unmotivated because there was little emphasis on education in her household,

and never really felt accepted within the college environment, even though the majority of the students at her institution were Latino American.

> I had an academic advisor that turned things around for me, allowed me to see the importance of having a quality education, and showed me how far I could go as it relates to school. That was the push I needed and every day I try to give that same push to every student I encounter.

Dr. Gamble

Dr. Gamble is the newly appointed director of academic advising at Wilson Community College. She is 29 years old and has served as an academic advisor for the last five years, since receiving her bachelor's degree. She went on to earn a master's degree in higher education. Dr. Gamble is a Caucasian female serving at a PWI. She has not had much experience advising African American male students because she worked at an all-female Catholic school before she was hired by her current institution. Dr. Gamble is not familiar with some of the struggles the African American male population encounters either in the college system or within their own homes.

Dr. Gamble has expressed significant interest in learning more about what affects the success of students of all races, saying, "it has been a challenge to understand every aspect of this position and to understand the needs of all students." She is currently doing research that she believes will assist in her daily work activities. The administration has told her it is essential, both for her sake and for the college, that she starts attending NACADA academic advising conferences and immersing herself in the environment within which these students reside. She noted, "The students have been patient with me

and my abilities to understand what they need. I am learning to meet the students right

where they are, but I am trying to push them to greater heights."

Jacky

Jacky, a 60-year-old African American woman, has been working in academic

advising at Wilson Community College for over 30 years. Being an academic advisor is

just one of the many "hats" that requires Jacky's full-time attention at the college. She

has seen how advising students has evolved from the early 1980s into what now needs to

be a full-time, stand-alone role. She observed that "students are now technologically

savvy, but not necessarily well-versed when it comes to choosing a major, knowing the

required classes for the particular major, and selecting and scheduling classes." Most

students have not done their "homework" before scheduling an appointment or just

dropping by for assistance.

Over the years, Jacky has learned that before you can advise a student, you must

make that student comfortable with you, and hopefully then they will be receptive to

candid advice from you—for example, pointing out that a student who wants to major in

chemistry but is not very good in math might not be making the best choice. Offering

advice under those conditions would require special attention to and understanding of a

student's career aspirations and readiness to handle the selected program of study.

Often, Jacky has found her role shifting from academic advisor to mother,

counselor, restaurant owner, and taxi cab driver, to name just a few! Working at a small

institution, her role changes hourly, sometimes minute by minute, adapting to meet the

students' needs. First-time, first-year students are especially vulnerable at any college or

university; they need someone to take them under their wing and help them make the

critical transition from high school to college, navigating financial aid; housing, including

roommate issues; homesickness; etc. Over the years, Jacky has done it ALL, but she is

still not burned out. The highlight of her year is graduation day, when the "I-don't-think-

I-can-make-it" Marys and Johns receive their degrees and decide to pursue further

degrees.

Joy

Joy is a 26-year-old African American woman and a new employee of Carter

Community College. She came on board as a first-year academic advisor and is now

approaching two years in her position. Joy immersed herself in advising and deems

herself relatable to most students:

> I have been able to connect to the African American male students that I come in
>
> contact with after sitting down with them and getting to know not only their
>
> interests but also their backgrounds. Many of us come from similar settings; I,
>
> too, was a first-generation and low-income college student trying to find my place
>
> in the academic environment.

Joy said that she has encountered many African American male students who

come in lost and not knowing what to do.

> These students are unprepared in more ways than one. In talking with them, I find
>
> that they express the fact that their counselors back in high school never really
>
> prepared them for college even when they expressed interest. I have even

encountered some that said their advisor or counselor suggested that they find a

job and not worry about college right now.

Joy expressed her disdain for the secondary educational system and its failure to

adequately prepare African American students for post-secondary education.

Coding Paradigm

Data gathered and transcribed from the six academic advisor interviews is

presented in this section. Over 30 coded elements were displayed and grouped into four

categories. After analyzing the collected data, four themes emerged:

1. Expectations of African American male students

2. Advising experiences

3. Campus resources

4. Building a support system

These themes and patterns emerged 10 times each and are displayed in further detail in
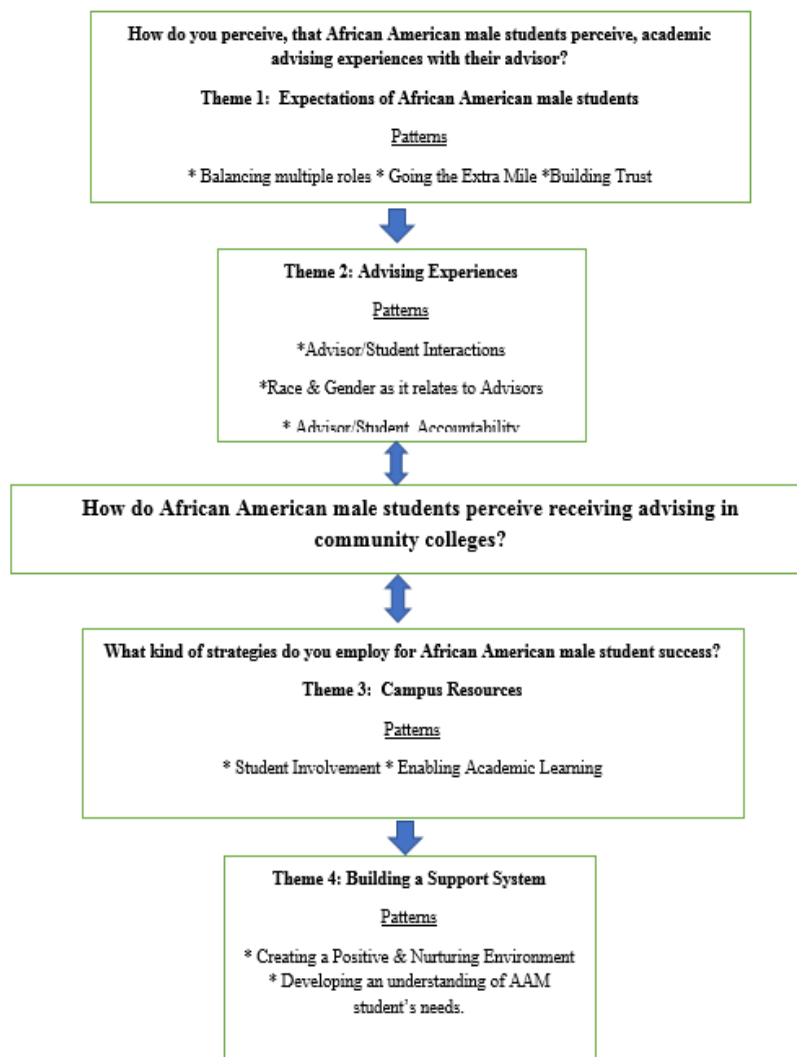
Figure 5.

How do you perceive, that African American male students perceive, academic advising experiences with their advisor?

Theme 1: Expectations of African American male students

Patterns

* Balancing multiple roles * Going the Extra Mile *Building Trust

Theme 2: Advising Experiences

Patterns

*Advisor/Student Interactions

*Race & Gender as it relates to Advisors

* Advisor/Student Accountability

How do African American male students perceive receiving advising in community colleges?

What kind of strategies do you employ for African American male student success?

Theme 3: Campus Resources

Patterns

* Student Involvement * Enabling Academic Learning

Theme 4: Building a Support System

Patterns

* Creating a Positive & Nurturing Environment
* Developing an understanding of AAM student's needs.

Figure 5
Academic advisors' themes and patterns

The themes revealed that the academic advisors were able to adequately identify the student's expectations of the advising process, define what the African American males saw as success, and describe the role they as advisors play in the students' success. The advisors also recognized the importance of social and academic interactions and relationship building as contributors to the students' academic success.

<div align="center">**Research Question One**</div>

The first research question was: *How do African American men perceive the experience of receiving academic advising in community colleges?* In response to this question, the academic advisors cited several factors involved in the advising process. These factors included the expectations of African American male students, advising experiences, campus resources, and the importance of being able to build a strong support system. These factors played an important part in the advisors' role with the students they served.

Theme 1: Expectations of African American Male Students

Academic advisors have high expectations for all students. In these interviews, the advisors spoke about the expectations they set forth for their students. All six advisors stated that their expectations for their students were designed to promote the students' academic success. Joy stated:

> The expectations that are set forth for every student is consistent each semester. We as advisors expect students to show up and be attentive, play an active role in the decision-making process, and making sure the contact level is consistent.

Jacky also discussed the expectations she conveys to students in every advising session she conducts:

It is important for me to inform every student of the expectations set forth by the institution and the advising department. When these expectations no longer exist, it is often difficult for us to adequately provide the services that the students need.

The advisors also opened up about the students' frequent failure to meet the established expectations. According to Connie:

Often students will make appointments that they sometimes do not show for without having an adequate explanation. African American male students are sometimes the most notorious for this behavior because they are usually dealing with family issues or other personal issues like not having adequate transportation, were called into their jobs, or other external issues that they often have to take on.

Balancing multiple roles. Often the advisors must balance multiple roles in relation to the African American male students they assist. They identify the challenges of balancing those roles to effectively serve their low-income and first-generation male students. Dr. Gamble spoke about the roles she has had to play on several occasions that influenced the advising experience of the students:

Working with the African American male students is sometimes very difficult at times, yet very rewarding. These students more often than others need more nurturing and more time to open up about what they want/need out of this

advising/student partnership. I have found myself becoming more of a therapist at times, a mother, and their academic advisor.

Timothy offered a slightly different perspective:

Being able to balance between the roles that I play in the lives of the African American male students has been rewarding. It is easier for me to get the students to open up about things that they've told me are more difficult to discuss with my female counterparts. I have been called a mentor, father figure, counselor, and academic advisor.

Academic advisors wear numerous hats and having to balance every aspect of the advising process can often be difficult. Gloria explained:

We as advisors have to be aware and very cognizant of our time spent with each student, and we have to know our limits. There are certain things I cannot do, like provide counseling because I am not certified to do that. So, I think it is healthy for us to refer the students to the appropriate departments often when it is something we do not feel comfortable handling and know that it is okay.

Going the extra mile. Going above and beyond to ensure that all students are taken care of was essential to every advisor interviewed. When the students they worked with knew and met their expectations, advisors were more apt to go above and beyond for each student. Connie stated that "when students show initiative, it makes going the extra mile for them much easier."

Students often overlook the important work that has to go on behind the scenes to ensure that each student is taken care of and that they are on the path to academic success. According to Joy:

> when students know that you are willing to go that extra mile to ensure that they are academically successful, they give more, they try harder, and they are more motivated to succeed because they feel like they have genuine people who care and are looking for them to do everything necessary to walk across the stage.

Building trust. Being able not only to build trust in the advisor, but also having the advisor build trust in the students was a theme mentioned throughout the sessions. Building trust is part of establishing an open relationship, which is one of the expectations of both advisors and students. Connie stated:

> Being able to open up and talk with the students about who we are as a person, and allowing them to do the same, helps to establish a sense of trust and shows the student that you have a vested interest in learning about them as an individual.

Theme 2: Advising Experiences

This theme recognizes that all students are different, and each student's needs will vary depending on the student and their background. Previous and current advising experiences appeared to have had a significant impact on the advisors as well as on the students. Through their candid responses, the advisors indicated that they had some basic ideas as to what to expect with most students, but with the African American male students, it was difficult to pinpoint what services outside of advising they desired. Five of the six advisors spoke about the difficulties they experienced in their advising sessions

with African American male students. Some advisors also reflected that if there were more males to adequately handle more of the male-related issues in the educational system, the job would be a little easier to handle.

Race and gender of advisors. The six advisors interviewed included one Latino female advisor, one Caucasian female advisor, three African American female advisors, and one African American male advisor. Throughout the interviews, the advisors discussed how to better prepare the African American male students for academic success. In these discussions there was a resounding call to provide more male role models and male advisors in higher education.

Timothy, the only African American male advisor in the group, spoke candidly about the African American male students he has encountered. "It is not easy to deal with this population of students, and once you add on low-income and first-generation that makes it even more difficult, especially if you are not able to relate to them personally."

Connie stated:

In comparing race and gender and how well we can break down those barriers that stand between us to reach our African American male students, I have found that it is much more difficult for me as a female to reach this population right away. Once I let my guard down and allow the student to do the same, then and only then am I able to reach the African American male student slightly.

All six advisors stated that regardless of the difficulty of reaching African American male students, they will continue to have open communication with those students to help alleviate their fears. Dr. Gamble stated:

We want the overall experience of the student to be an enjoyable one, and we

want them to ultimately get out of each session what they intended on receiving.

We want them to leave with a better understanding of the advising process, of us

as advisors, and the importance of them as students following through and doing

everything needed to be successful. This has nothing to do with advisors being

male or female, black or White, but it is the success of each student that we

desire.

Advisor/Student interactions. All six advisors stated that the interaction they

had with their students was a vital element in the students' success. They felt that the

interaction should be intentional, meaning that it needed to have a distinct purpose and

the students must have an understanding of that purpose. Gloria stated, "It is always my

goal to provide the most effective interaction with my students. It is important to me that

the student feels comfortable interacting with me, as I with him." Connie also spoke of

the importance of interaction between advisors and students, saying, "The consistent

interaction is important to the overall success of the student. We are like gatekeepers

making sure that they have everything that they need to reach graduation and pairing

them up with the resources needed."

Advisor/Student accountability. The need to hold students accountable for their

own academic success was a theme that was echoed in each interview. According to Joy:

It makes my job a lot easier when I see students who hold themselves accountable

for making sure they are academically prepared. It is often easy for them to solely

depend on their advisors, and yes, we have a level of accountability, but it is up to

them to take the wheel and steer the academic ship and use us as guides along the

way.

Timothy echoed some of the same sentiments, stating that "once students begin to take

ownership of their academic success, then and only then will they fully feel an assured

level of accountability."

Other advisors agreed to a certain extent, but Dr. Gamble also reflected,

Yes, we want the student to take a level of accountability. Before we expect them

to do so, we as advisors have to accept accountability for the task of steering them

in the way in which they should go and explain to them the level of accountability

needed to be successful academically.

Research Question Two

In response to the second research question, *What resources and services*

provided by the community college do African American men believe are associated with

their academic persistence and achievement at the institution? the advisors identified

several factors they saw as related to the academic success of African American male

students. These were broadly defined as (a) utilizing campus resources, including campus

organizations, student involvement, and academic learning; and (b) creating an adequate

support system, which includes a positive and nurturing environment and developing an

understanding of African American students' needs. The advisors also noted that it was

imperative that both the advisor and student agree on a definition of success as it relates

to the student's academic progress.

Theme 3: Campus Resources

With the number of campus resources available to students, students should remain continuously engaged with their coursework, student organizations, and the various academic societies offered by their major departments (Wood & Harris, 2014). All six academic advisors in the study stated that numerous resources are provided for the students, noting that they have seen drastic academic improvement in those students who are involved in their campus community, compared to those who are not involved or who rarely interact with others. These students understand that in addition to the clubs and organizations, other campus resources are also available to help them succeed academically. Offices such as disability services, the tutoring center, student support services, career services, health services, and counseling services, to name only a few, are embedded in the institution and offer valuable assistance.

Student involvement. All six academic advisors described their jobs as more than helping students with their class schedules and offering occasional advice. According to Joy, "It is our job to encourage the students to become involved both inside the classroom and outside, because we know that student involvement is crucial to their academic success." Students have a plethora of opportunities to become more active in their campus communities.

Timothy recalled, "I have presented opportunities to students that allowed them to flourish as scholars and it was all because they decided to become active and involved on campus." Dr. Gamble described what is at stake in student involvement:

I've watched students who failed to become involved both academically and socially, and their attendance gradually declined until they no longer showed up for classes. It is imperative that we get students acclimated to the college environment via our discussions with them. That is the time to provide them the importance of becoming involved.

Gloria summed the matter up, stating, "It is up to us as advisors to present the bait [involvement opportunities], but it is up to the fish [the student] as to whether or not he wants to take the time to engage the opportunity."

Enabling academic learning. An active engagement in learning is essential to the academic well-being of every student. As Jacky stated:

Because of academic learning's importance to each student, it is important for advisors to encourage a holistic approach to involvement and engagement. This holistic approach allows us as advisors to inform the student of the importance of not only being involved outside the classroom, but the greatest success occurs when students become involved in the classroom.

Timothy emphasized the importance of such engagement for African American male students, saying,

It is imperative that I inform every student of the importance of being involved in the classroom. A lot of times I deal with African American male students who often feel as though he does not belong in the classroom setting. When speaking with the professor, the majority of the time he or she states that it is because that student does not participate in class or rarely shows up.

Other advisors agreed that assisting students in getting acclimated not only to the institution but also to the classroom is key, making sure those students go to see their professors during office hours and stay active in the classroom by asking questions and participating in class discussions. According to Joy, "The African American male students that we serve must take the initiative to be and stay involved to better their chances of academic survival."

Theme 4: Building a Support System

The desire to develop relationships with their students and help them build a stable support system emerged as a common theme among participating advisors. As the primary individuals responsible for assisting with students' academic progress, all the advisors felt a responsibility to help students make connections and build rapport with certain key individuals on campus who could help them succeed. From the advisors' interview responses, it became apparent that the African American male students desired the advisors' support and commitment each time they met.

Creating a positive and nurturing environment. Creating an environment that would benefit the students was important to all six academic advisors. Timothy observed:

it is a critical need for us to have an open-door policy because often we are assisting students who are products of single-parent households, low-income, first-generation, and are usually socially impaired. These students need an outlet to vent, to plan for their futures, and to use as support systems, and that falls on us as advisors often.

Joy also emphasized the importance of maintaining an open-door policy:

The open-door policy helps us as advisors create a positive and a nurturing

environment for students to come and talk about what it is that is affecting

them academically, personally, and socially. It also helps build trust between

the two parties.

Dr. Gamble echoed similar sentiments when she stated, "We as advisors care about the

whole student and not just certain parts."

The advisors also associated creating a positive and nurturing environment with

the specific amount of effective contact shared between the advisors and students. As

Jacky adamantly stated,

In my 30 years as an academic advisor, I have been able to connect to my students

in a way that many others [advisors] have not. It is because I show a genuine

interest in them academically as well as personally. When a student meets with

me, the student knows that they are not just a number, but I genuinely have their

best interest at heart. All it takes is spending time with them.

Dr. Gamble summed up this view on behalf of all advisors, capturing a critical

perception:

Each student is unique, and each student need is different. We may encounter a

student that rarely needs our assistance, but on the other hand, we usually

encounter one student that needs more support than another. We always must

readily make ourselves available or have someone available to assist those

students' needs. This means that the student and advisor must be engaged.

Understanding African American male students' needs. Understanding the needs that influence African American male students' academic success was another topic of discussion for all the advisors. Dr. Gamble spoke about these student needs:

Getting a good understanding of the needs of the African American male students that we serve is important. A lot of times these students know what they need, but it is often hard for them to convey them to us, so we have to ask those questions that help us bring clarity to what they need from us as advisors.

All six advisors agreed that the students' backgrounds played a major role in defining each student's needs. Joy noted how important it was to "understand that each student is different and that means that each student's needs will be different." Gloria agreed. "The unique thing about each African American male student is the fact that they are all different and being able to understand their differences is important to their academic success holistically."

Joy echoed the sentiments of her colleagues, noting:

It is extremely important to us to make sure that we can capture the needs of the students fully. Those needs often reflect the backgrounds in which the African American men are reared. We know that these students enjoy more face-to-face interaction as it relates to any contact with them. This group needs nurturing, but they also need a strict sense of reality. It is up to us as advisors to not only take care of their needs but to introduce them to other avenues that will allow us to be more beneficial to them holistically. Introducing them to more technology and other ways of communication that may be beneficial to them. We must be able to

meet the student where they are at academically, but also be able to provide resources for growth.

2017 Academic Advising Survey

The Academic Advising Survey provided a third data point that allowed the researcher to gain pertinent information from Paine Community College, one of the host institutions. This information, provided by the institution's Office of Institutional Research, offered a broader sense of students' experiences of the academic advising process at their institution. The researcher was able to see the type of academic advising received and the quality of each experience.

The College distributed the survey to hundreds of students of various backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, and races to measure the overall relevance of its academic advising department. The study examined the type and quality of advising each student had experienced in Spring of 2017, same as the survey don previously, in 2014. It captured pertinent data using three general types of questions:

1. Mode of academic advising sought (i.e., what type of advising students sought, from whom, and how often).

2. Student understanding of the advising process and their sense of engagement in the sessions.

3. What outcomes the students identified from their advising session, and how effective they perceived their overall advising experience to be.

Frequency of Meetings

According to the academic advising survey results, in 2017 more Paine students were able to meet with their advisors than in previous years. In 2014, 13.6 percent of students had never had a meeting with an academic advisor. In 2017, that number decreased to 5.1 percent of students declaring that they had not seen an advisor. Approximately 5 percent of this group indicated that they did not want or need to talk with an academic advisor, whereas 44 percent stated that they were unable to contact the advisor, did not know who their advisors were, or did not know how to contact the advisor. Out of the overall population of students, 8.7 percent had seen their advisors five or more times in 2014; in 2017, this increased to twelve.4 percent.

Type of Meetings Preferred

According to the survey, the number of students who prefer face-to-face or in person advising increased from 78 percent in 2014 to 85.2 percent in 2017. Despite this preference, many more students were advised via phone or other electronic devices in 2017; that number increased from 5.9 percent in 2014 to 37.6 percent in 2017. The academic advisors have introduced these additional avenues to offer more options to students seeking assistance.

Available Resources

The survey identified various resources that Paine students were able to access with the assistance of their academic advisors. Students were asked five questions to help the researcher understand to what extent students were able to engage with academic advisors and to gain information and understanding as a result of their advising

experience. There were increasing numbers across the board from 2014-2017, which indicated students' tremendous satisfaction with their advisors.

The students reported that they left each meeting with a better understanding of campus resources (e.g., counseling, career services, financial aid, registrar, dean of students, tutoring, and health services); degree requirements and expectations (e.g., major requirements, GPA calculations, major selection process, prerequisites, course sequencing, and the graduation application process); co-curricular opportunities (e.g., internships, leadership opportunities, student organizations, service learning, the honors program, and exchange opportunities); academic rules, policies, and procedures (e.g., repeat and withdrawal policies, academic appeals, enrollment and registration holds, probation, dismissal, reinstatement, and change of major); and lastly, advising tools and information resources (e.g., course catalog, degree planning, academic advising report).

Student Perceptions of the Advising Experience

The students answered questions concerning their perceptions of the advising experience. Eighty-six percent of respondents agreed that their advisor was able to offer them a safe and welcoming environment. According to the survey, roughly three-fourths of the students agreed that their advisors showed a genuine interest in them. Also, the majority of the students agreed that their advisors helped them make progress toward their academic goals, were available when they had questions, offered encouragement to make more informed decisions about their academic paths, assisted them with a clear and precise graduation plan, and helped them to continue their enrollment.

Advisor Skills

The students also discussed their advisors' skills. Forty percent felt that their advisors had a "figure it out yourself" attitude each time they met, and they thought it was because the advisor knew absolutely nothing to assist them in answering their questions. However, 60 percent held very positive views of their advisor and felt the advisor was interested in their overall well-being both in and outside of school. The students also reported that their advisor often made them feel welcome and part of the college environment.

Advisor Availability

Thirty-six percent of the students were not pleased with their advisors or the difficult time they had contacting them. According to a representative of Paine's Office of Institutional Advancement, which conducted the survey,

Even after the survey, we received several complaints from students about not being able to see the advisors. The students stated how unprofessional some of the advisors were and expressed their need to see change as it relates to their academic advisor.

Twenty-five percent of the students conveyed that advisors needed to find a more effective method of communication. "Not only is it a struggle to contact the advisor, but it is also a struggle even to get a call or email back to follow up with us as students," stated one concerned participant. Thirty-nine percent of the students were pleased with their advisors' level of availability and the assistance they received. The results of this

study emphasize that advisors must create an open-door policy when it comes to advising students.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the experiences reported by twelve African American male students and six academic advisors regarding the academic advising process at three community colleges in Georgia. Three primary data sources were used in this study:

1. Interviews with twelve African American male students

2. Interviews with six academic advisors

3. Results from a survey used by one of the host institutions concerning students' experiences with academic advising

All of the students were passionate about sharing their stories with the researcher. They were also excited about their academic success and recognized its importance not only for themselves but for their families as well. When speaking with the advisors, their excitement about the students they serve was also apparent. They were very candid about their experiences at their respective institutions and were excited to share their overall successes and accomplishments. The following chapter will address gaps between academic advising and academic success and will present suggestions for further study of academic advising and academic persistence and achievement among African American male students in community colleges.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This purpose of this case study was to examine how African American men perceive the academic advising process and how the academic advisor influences their academic persistence and achievement. Specifically, this study explored how the lived and often shared experiences of African American male students at three community colleges affected their academic persistence and achievement. The voices and experiences of the African American male students and their academic advisors in this study describe the factors and forces that shaped the students' desire to persist and succeed at their respective institutions.

Summary of Research

The two research questions guiding this study were*: How do African American men perceive the experience of receiving academic advising in community colleges?* and *What resources and services provided by the community college do African American men believe are associated with their academic persistence and achievement at the institution?* In responding to these questions, the researcher examined three primary sources of data.

First, twelve African American male students from three rural and or urban community colleges in Georgia participated in 30- to 45-minute individual interviews, which were transcribed manually to assist in revealing important emerging themes. Participants received emailed transcripts for approval. The list of questions asked in these interviews is provided in Appendix A.

Second, the researcher conducted 45-minute to one-hour interviews with six academic advisors, during which the advisors reflected on various questions about their experiences with African American male students. The list of questions asked in these interviews is provided in Appendix B.

Third, the Office of Institutional Advancement at one of the community colleges allowed me to retrieve aggregate data from a 2017 survey about students' experiences with academic advising and their advisors. The other two colleges stated that no survey had been given to their students concerning academic advising.

The information gathered from the interviews with the African American male students, the academic advisors, and the aggregate date used from one of the three institutions, allowed me to delve further into the students' perceptions of their academic advisors, the academic advisors' perceptions of their students, and how a general student body perceived their experiences with academic advising services.

Implied Conclusions from the Study

The following findings are implied from the current study:

1. African American male students view academic advising as instrumental in their academic persistence and achievement and as a catalyst in helping to prepare them socially and mentally for academic success.

2. African American male students identified five key factors that they deemed necessary for supporting their academic persistence and achievement:

   a. the availability of their academic advisors

   b. the initial contact each student had with their advisors

    c. the relationships the students established with their advisors

    d. the students' college experiences

    e. external influences

3. The African American male students who participated in this study were highly encouraged by their advisors to be proactive in pursuing their own academic success and to stay engaged in every aspect of the educational process (e.g., academic advising, student organizations, and available campus resources and services).

4. Academic advisors were often overwhelmed by their daily tasks. They sometimes became swamped with work that took them away from their assignment with students.

5. Academic advisors can offer useful advice to their students, can motivate and encourage students, and can keep the students engaged.

6. African American male students have to stay engaged in the environment in which they are learning (e.g., classroom, student organizations) in order to wholeheartedly feel a part of that environment.

7. Other factors that support the success of the African American male students included family ties, relationships with professors and other college personnel such as their advisors, effective time management, and students' consistent expectations of advising staff.

8. Factors that may hinder academic success among African American male students include lack of motivation, lack of advisor consistency, lack of

resources offered or explained, lack of communication from the advisor, and lack of attention by the advisor given to the details of the advising process.

9. Being able to relate to or find ways to connect with African American male students is essential for advisors to assist African American males in persisting and ultimately graduating.

10. Advising has a significant influence on the overall success of African American male students. This success is established by the advisors, faculty, staff, and various organizations that helped to create a sense of belonging for each student.

Factual Conclusions from the Study

11. All twelve African American male students in this study were able to persist, and they credit the advising departments at their respective institutions.

12. At the end of fall 2017, all twelve students reported that their grades have improved because of interactions with their advisors, self-determination, and their ongoing engagement with student organizations and in the classroom. Nine of the twelve received a 4.0 GPA and the remaining three achieved between a 3.2 and 3.8 GPA.

13. The participating students reported feeling a sense of belonging and acceptance both in the classroom and in the campus community.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: How do African American men perceive the experience

of receiving academic advising in community colleges?

Research Question One arose from a concern over the high attrition rates among

African American male community college students. This question sought to examine the

overall experiences of these students with the academic advising process at their

respective institutions and how it relates to their academic persistence and achievement.

With the use of face-to-face interviews, observations, questionnaires, and phone/recorded

conversations, we were able to acquire valuable data that reflects the findings of the

research. Using concepts outlined in the theoretical framework, this study investigated

the successful outcomes of students in relation to their goals, academic backgrounds, and

the societal norms that shape perceptions of African American men. The comments from

respondents in this study suggest that African American male students at community

colleges have a more difficult time adjusting to their college environment than do their

peers. They also suggest that the students may very well need a more nurturing

environment to feel comfortable in the college context and become more engaged in the

learning process.

The findings reveal that the academic advising experiences of African American

male students at community colleges have a considerable influence on whether they

persist, and if they do persist, on their interest in pursuing higher degrees. For many

African American male students, poor academic progress, lack of support from both the

institution and their families, and the absence of positive role models in their lives often

influences their academic success and ultimately their futures. However, the participants' responses were entirely positive when they were asked to describe their overall experiences with advising; they all reported that their advisors treated them like family and made them feel at home. In a couple of instances students had to change advisors because of the lack of attention they received, and these new advisors likewise made the students feel comfortable with the advising process and the advising environment.

The students reported that although they were motivated to pursue four-year degrees, ultimately their socioeconomic backgrounds and their desire to make a difference in their own lives and the lives of their families played a significant role in their decision to persist. The students felt as though they had something to prove not only to themselves, but also to their families and advisors. In their advising sessions, they were not only advised on academics; the advisors created an atmosphere conducive to personal growth as well. This personal growth was demonstrated through the relationships the students' established with their advisors and their ability to make more sound decisions related to careers and other life choices. The students unanimously agreed that the advisors at their respective schools promoted engagement.

How Theory Informs Data Analysis

Wood and Williams (2013) suggest that for African American male students, actively participating in sports and extracurricular activities, engaging in faculty/student interaction, improving study habits, supporting others and feeling supported in return, and learning to manage life stressors were all predictors of the students' successful persistence. Conversely, the more that African American male students choose to

disengage from participation in the classroom and campus life, the stronger the likelihood that they will become disconnected from the entire academic process. For African American male students in community colleges, the impact of having a motivator or positive influencer is significant. The positive influencer or motivator helps create a sense of belonging and tends to oppose adverse academic outcomes (Schlossberg, 2011).

The results of this study confirm previous research examining the relationship between Schlossberg's theory of marginality, Wood and Harris's (2014) SEO model, and the persistence and academic achievement of African American male students in higher education. The researcher found that when colleges create an atmosphere that promotes inclusiveness and belonging and takes into consideration all the factors that help support student success, African American male students are more likely to persist and become more engaged in the overall academic process. Such efforts also make students more apt to engage with others on both an academic and social level, which helps to foster a sense of belonging.

For many of the African American male student participants, their advising experiences were life changing and helped to build self-efficacy. All the participants had high aspirations to attend four-year institutions after receiving their community college degrees. There was already one student working on his second associate's degree. Previous research suggests that social and academic integration are key factors in students' persistence in higher education; the students interviewed displayed a high level of social and academic integration, and they attributed their academic progress mostly to their interactions with their academic advisors (Tinto, 1975). Most of the literature

concerning African American males focuses on the students' academic and social interactions and experiences with faculty or their peers. Little to no research has explored the impact of students' interactions with academic advisors on students' academic persistence or achievement. Yet those interactions emerged from this study as a critical contributor to their academic persistence and success.

Participants in this study found opportunities to engage with their advisors, peers, and other academic personnel inside and outside the classroom. With this interaction, students developed internal motivation and/or self-efficacy to persist and achieve goals they had set before entering college or goals they identified while meeting with their advisors. This research shows that even when the students experienced life challenges (e.g., financial difficulties, a sense of being overwhelmed by commitments, a lack of family support, or other life stressors) before enrolling in their respective community colleges, their connections with their advisors and others helped motivate them to persist and to graduate.

Question 2: What resources and services provided by the community college do African American men believe are associated with their retention and achievement at their institutions?

The findings of this study are consistent with those of previous research showing that African American male students who become actively engaged in their college environment are more likely to establish a sense of belonging, and therefore are more likely to persist (Schlossberg, 2011). According to the Center for Community College Student Engagement (2016), there is a direct relationship between advisor/student

consistent interactions and African American males' overall success. The more the advisor engaged, nurtured, and encouraged the student, the more the student showed an interest in persisting and succeeding.

Relatively little research has examined the outcome of academic advising and its effects on African American male students. This inquiry found advising to be a significant contributor to African American male students' overall academic persistence and achievement. According to Cheung, Siu, and She (2018), academic advisors provide services and give advice that strictly aligns with each student's academic needs. Advisors also refer many of their students to other campus resources (i.e., career services, the counseling center, math lab, writing labs, tutoring centers) based on their academic or social needs.

Regarding advisor/student interactions, this study supports previous research that shows that a sense of belonging occurs when students are actively engaged in the social and academic process (Schlossberg, 2011). Advisors in this study stated that when meeting with their students, they always try to present a variety of avenues to help the students reach their full social and academic potential. The advisors stressed that they often informed African American male students about relevant clubs and organizations on their campus, such as the Black Male Initiative program, the Minority Advising Program, and other student groups, honor societies, and leadership positions that might be of interest to them.

How Theory Informs the Second Research Question

The study supports Wood and Harris's (2014) SEO model and Schlossberg's (2011) theory of marginality because despite the background and societal factors that presented these students with challenges, the advisors sought to help them become acclimated to the academic environment and give them a sense of purpose. Once the students became fully acclimated to and immersed in the college environment, a real sense of belonging developed, and they began to find comfort in their new setting. Establishing a sense of belonging creates self-efficacy among African American male students in community colleges, which promotes their academic success.

Recommendations for Further Research

The scope of the present study was limited to three community colleges in rural and or urban Georgia. For future studies, larger community colleges with a more diverse group of academic advisors should be studied to identify other factors that influence African American male students' persistence in community colleges. Future research might also delve more deeply into the dynamics of the challenges African American male students face and the unique experiences they have at community colleges. The present study could also be expanded to include community colleges in neighboring states.

Future research could also examine African American male students who transition from community colleges to four-year universities to see if their engagement levels continue and whether their sense of belonging remains present at larger institutions. Future studies could utilize a quantitative methodology to collect numerical data as it pertains to African American male students' academic success and their

interaction with their academic advisors. Also, future work should seek to capture present time retention rates.

Final recommendations are, first, to encourage research on the influence of pre-collegiate experiences and how they affect the persistence of African American male students in community colleges. Second, a future study could describe how African American male students' interactions with African American male advisor's shape student success. African American male advisors can act as positive role models in the lives of African American male students. Throughout the research, there is an opportunity to conduct a cross-analysis between the two participant groups.

Summary

This qualitative case study sought to identify critical factors that influence academic success among African American male students enrolled in community colleges by studying their interactions with their academic advisors. The sample consisted of twelve African American male community college students at three rural or urban community colleges in Georgia. Interviews were conducted with the students at their respective institutions, and the data was collected and transcribed to identify emerging themes.

In addition, six interviews were conducted with the students' academic advisors; these were also transcribed and later forwarded to everyone for any necessary corrections. Also, aggregate data from one of three participating schools was also used in this research study. Wood and Harris's (2014) SEO model was coupled with Schlossberg's theory of marginality to compare African American male students and

their interactions with advisors, specifically how their backgrounds, societal factors, and interactions help them to define their academic goals, navigate the college process, and discover who they are as students and individuals. The information shared by the students and their advisors illustrates the centrality of the relationships they established and reveals the potential of these relationships to positively affect this population of students academically and socially.

REFERENCES

Adelman, C. (2004). "Global Preparedness" of pre-9/11 college graduates: What the U.S. longitudinal studies say. *Tertiary Education and Management, 10*(3), 243-260. doi:10.1023/b: team.0000044820.14591.07

Allard, F., & Parashar, S. (2012, August 2012). Higher education: A conspiracy? How students view their chances in a four-year institution. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*. Retrieved from http://dus.psu.edu/mentor

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). (2009, October 19). *Community colleges and baccalaureate attainment* (AACC Statement). Washington, DC: Author.

American Association of Community Colleges. (2012, April). *Reclaiming the American dream: A report from the 21st-century commission on the future of community colleges.* Washington, DC: Author. www.aacc.nche.edu/21stcentrutyreport

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). (2014). *Why Community College? 2014 Fact Sheet*. Washington, DC: Author.

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). (2015). *Trends in Community College Enrollment and Completion Data, 2015.* Washington, DC: Author.

Astin, A., (1982). *Minorities in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Baker, J. A., Grant, S., & Morlock, L. (2008). The teacher-student relationship as a developmental context for children with internalizing or externalizing behavior problems. *School Psychology Quarterly, 23*(1), 3-15. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1045-3830.23.1.3

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: toward a unifying theory of behavioral

    change. *Psychological review*, *84*(2), 191.

Bean, J. P. (1985). Interaction effects based on the class level in an explanatory model of

    college student dropout syndrome. *American Educational Research Journal,*

    22(1), 35. doi:10.2307/1162986

Bean J. P., & Eaton S. (2000). A psychological model of college student retention. In J.

    M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the departure puzzle: New theory and research on*

    college student retention (pp.75-92). Nashville, TN: University of Vanderbilt

    Press.

Bean, J., & Metzner, B. (1985). A conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate

    student attrition. *Review of Educational Research*, *55*(4), 485-508.

Bettinger, E. P., & Baker, R. (2011). *The effects of student coaching in college: An*

    evaluation of a randomized experiment in student mentoring (Working Paper No.

    16881). Retrieved from: http://www.nber.org/papers/w16881

Bird, G. (2018, February 8). The Impact of Parents' Education Levels. Retrieved from

    https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/02/08/students-postsecondary-

    education-arcs-affected-parents-college-backgrounds-study

Brooks, M., Jones, C., & Burt, I. (2013). Are African-American male undergraduate

    retention programs successful? An evaluation of an undergraduate African-

    American male retention program. *Journal of African American Studies, 17*(2),

    206-221. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/43525457

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2013). 65.9 percent of 2013 high school graduates enrolled in college. *The Economics Daily*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor. https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2014/ted_20140508.htm

Bush, E. C., & Bush, L. (2010). Calling out the elephant: An examination of African American male achievement in the community colleges. *Journal of African American Males in Education, 1*(1), 40-62.

Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2015). Engagement rising: A decade of CCSSE data shows improvements across the board—Report supplement and methodology. Retrieved from http://www. ccsse.org/center/resources/docs/publications/Engagement_Rising_ Methodology.pdf 4

Chickering, A., & Gamson, Z. (1987). Seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin*, *39*, 3-7.

Cheung, R. Y. S., Siu, A. M. H., & Shek, D. T. L. (2018). Survey of needs and expectations for academic advising in a Hong Kong university. *NACADA Journal*, *37*(2), 21-32.

Cohen, A. M. (2001). Governmental policies affecting community colleges: A historical perspective. In B. K. Townsend & S. B. Twombly (Eds.), *Community colleges: Policy in the future context* (pp. 3-22). Westport, CO: Ablex.

Cohen, A. M., & Brawer, F. B. (2010). *The American community college* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

College Board. (2010). The educational crisis facing young men of color: Reflections on

    four days of dialogue on the educational challenges of minority males. Retrieved

    from http://www.advocacy.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/educational-

    crisisfacing-young-men-of-color.pdf

College Board Advocacy and Policy Center (2011). *The College Completion Agenda*

    2011 progress report. Latino edition.

    http://completionagenda.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/latino_pdf/progress_r

    eport_latino_2011.pdf

Community College Survey of Student Engagement (2013). *Five benchmarks for*

    effective educational practice in community colleges. Austin, TX: University of

    Texas. http://www.ccsse.org/survey/survey.cfm

Cooper, P. (2017, December 19). College Completion Rates Are Still Disappointing.

    Retrieved from

    https://www.forbes.com/sites/prestoncooper2/2017/twelve/19/college-completion-

    rates-are-still-disappointing/#564f38e5263a

Creswell, J. W. (2007) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five*

    approaches, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five*

    approaches (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Crookston, A., & Hooks, G. (2012). Community colleges, budget cuts, and jobs: The

    impact of community colleges on employment growth in rural U.S. counties,

    1976-2004. *Sociology of Education, 85*(4), 350-372.

Devi, M. R., Devaki, P. R., Madhavan, M., & Saikumar, P. (2013). The effect of counseling on the academic performance of college students. *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research, 7*(6), 1086-1088.

DeWitz, S. J., Woolsey, M. L. & Walsh, W. B. (2009). College student retention: An exploration of the relationship between self-efficacy and purpose in life among college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, *50*(1), 19-34.

Drake, J. K. (2013). Advising as teaching and the advisor as teacher in theory and practice. In J. K. Drake, P. Jordan, & M. A. Miller (Eds.), *Academic advising approaches: Strategies that teach students to make the most of college* (pp. 17–32). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Douglas-Gabriel, D. (2015, August 17). College is not the great equalizer for black and Hispanic graduates. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/08/17/college-is-not-the-great-equalizer-for-black-and-hispanic-graduates/?utm_term=.e5c63298a9f2

Dukakis, K., Duong, N., Ruiz de Velasco, J., & Henderson, J. (2014, August). College access and completion among boys and young men of color: Literature review of promising practices. *John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities,* https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/College percent20Access percent20and percent20Completion percent20among percent20BMOC percent20Literature percent20Review.pdf

Earl, W. R. (2014). Intrusive advising for a freshman. Retrieved from the NACADA

    Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources website:

    http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Intrusive-

    Advising-for-Freshmen.aspx See more at

    http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Intrusive-

    Advising-for-Freshmen.aspx#sthash.upiOEzPs.dpuf

Essay UK. (November 2013). The different factors affecting students' academic

    performance education essay. https://www.ukessays.com/essays/education/the-

    different-factors-affecting-students-academic-performance-education-

    essay.php?cref=1

FAFSA. (2016). What are graduation, retention, and transfer rates? Retrieved from

    https://fafsa.ed.gov/help/fotw91n.htm

Farrington, C. A., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., Nagaoka, J., Keyes, T. S., Johnson, D.,

    & Beechum, N. (2012). The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School

    Performance: A Critical Literature Review. *University of Chicago Consortium on*

    Chicago School Research, 1-108.

Fishman, T. D., Ludgate, A., & Tutak, J. (2017, March 16). Success by design. Retrieved

    from https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/industry/public-sector/improving-

    student-success-in-higher-education.html

Flowers, L. (2006). Effects of attending a 2-year institution on African American males'

    academic and social integration in the first year of college. *Teachers College*

    Record, 108(2), 267-286.

Freightbaum, A. (2018, March 23). *Trump takes another swipe at community colleges*. Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/03/23/president-trump-holds-forth-community-colleges-campus-politics

Gerlaugh, K., Thompson, L., Boylan, H., & Davis, H. (2007). National study of developmental education II: Baseline data for community colleges. *Research in Developmental Education, 20*(4), 14. http://ncde.appstate.edu/sites/ncde.appstate.edu/files/RiDE percent2020-4.pdf

Habersham, S. (2013). *Dual enrollment: An analysis of persistence gender and ethnicity* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (35645570)

Habley, W. R. (2004). *The status of academic advising: Findings from the ACT sixth annual survey.* (NACADA Monograph Series No. 10). Manhattan, KS: National Academic Advising Association.

Harper, S. W. (2006). *Black male students at public flagship universities in the U.S.: Status, trends and implications for policy and practice.* Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

Harper, S. W. (2012). *Black male student success in higher education: A report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study*. Retrieved from https://www.gse.upenn.edu/equity/sites/gse.upenn.edu.equity/files/publications/bmss.pdf

Harper, S., & Davis, C. (2012). They (don't) care about education: A counter narrative on Black male students' response to inequitable schooling. *Educational Foundations, 26*(1-2), 103-twelve0.

Harris, F., & Wood, J. L. (2013). Student success for men of color in community

colleges: A review of published literature and research, 1998-2012. *Journal of*

Diversity in Higher Education, 6(3), 174-185. doi:10.1037/a0034224

Retrieved from http://interwork.sdsu.edu/sp/m2c3/wp-

content/blogs.dir/2/files/2012/10/Harris-and-Wood-2013.pdf

Heisserer, D. L., & Parette, P. (2002). Advising at-risk students in college and university

settings. *College Student Journal*, *36*(1), 69-84.

Herget, A. (2017, January 9). *Intrusive academic advising: A proactive approach to*

student success. Retrieved from

https://www.higheredjobs.com/articles/articleDisplay.cfm?ID=1153

Hidden curriculum (2014, August 26). In S. Abbott (Ed.), *The glossary of education*

reform. http://edglossary.org/hidden-curriculumhttp://edglossary.org/hidden-

curriculum

Higgins, E. M. (2003). Advising students on probation. In *NACADA Clearinghouse of*

Academic Advising Resources. Retrieved from

https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advising-

students-on-probation.aspx

Hollis, L. P. (2015). The significance of declining full-time faculty status for

community college student retention and graduation: A correlational

study with a Keynesian perspective. *International Journal of Humanities*

and Social Science, *5*(3), 1-7.

Hollis, L. P. (2016). The importance of professor civility in a computer-based open-access environment for a minority-serving institution. In L. P. Hollis (ed.), *The coercive community college: Bullying and its costly impact on the mission to serve underrepresented populations (Diversity in Higher Education), (Vol. 18)* (pp. 65-82). Boston, MA: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Hollis, L. P. (2017). Evasive Actions: The gendered cycle of stress and coping for those enduing workplace bullying in American higher education. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal, 4*(7) 59-68.

Humphreys, D. (2012, Winter). What's wrong with the completion agenda—and what can we do about it? *Liberal Education*, *98*(1). Retrieved from https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/whats-wrong-completion-agenda—and-what-we-can-do-about-it

Jalomo, R. J. (2001) Institutional policies that promote persistence among first-year community college students. In B. K. Townsend & S. B. Twombly (Eds.), *Community colleges: Policy in the future context* (pp. 261-282). Westport, CO: Ablex.

Kanter, M. (2012, June twelve). *Remarks.* Presented at the 2012 Conference of the National Center for Postsecondary Research. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Keller, G. (2008). *Higher education and the new society*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

King, G., & Sen, M. (2013). A symposium on "The Troubled Future of Colleges and Universities." *PS: Political Science & Politics APSC, 46*(01), 83-89. doi:10.1017/s10490965twelve001771

Komarraju, M., S. Musulkin, & G. Bhattacharya. (2010). Role of student– faculty interactions in developing college students' academic self-concept, motivation, and achievement. *Journal of College Student Development*. 51(3), 332–342.

Kuh, G. (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lederman, M. T. (2012). *The 11 laws of likability*. New York, NY: American Management Association.

Lee, J. M., & Rawls, A. (2010). *The College Completion Agenda 2010 Progress Report*. New York: College Board.

Marcus, J. (2017, August 08). Why Men Are the New Minority on College Campuses. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/08/why-men-are-the-new-college-minority/536103/

Marklein, M. B. (18, November 2012). Community colleges welcome Obama's challenge. *USA Today*, 3.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2006). Designing qualitative research. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *9*(30). Retrieved from http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/996

Johnson, B. (2016, February 29). Two years of my brother's keeper: Building lasting

bridges of opportunity for young people. Retrieved from

https://obamaWhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/02/29/two-years-my-brothers-

keeper-building-lasting-bridges-opportunity-young-people

National Academic Advising Association. (2004). NACADA statement of core values of

academic advising. Retrieved April 16, 2007 from the NACADA Clearinghouse

of Academic Advising Resources Web site:

National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *The nation's Report Card: Writing

2011* (NCES 2012–470). Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, U.S.

Department of Education.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *First-generation and continuing-

generation colleges students: A comparison of high school and postsecondary

experiences.* (NCES 2017-009). Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences,

U.S. Department of Education.

New, J. (2016, March 3). A counselor who looks like you. Retrieved from

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/03/03/students-demand-more-

minority-advisers-counselors

Noguera P. (2008). *The trouble with black boys: Other reflections on race, equity, and

the future of public education* [e-book]. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Accessed November 15, 2016.

NSC Research Center. (2018, August 04). Persistence & Retention - 2018. Retrieved from https://nscresearchcenter.org/snapshotreport33-first-year-persistence-and-retention/

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P.T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research* (Vol. 2). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Perry, T., Steele, C., & Hilliard, A. G. (2003). *Young, gifted, and Black: Promoting high achievement among African-American students*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Psacharopoulos, G. & Woodhall, M. (1997). *Education for development: An analysis of investment choice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Reynolds, C. (2012, July 10). Targeting Blacks, Latinos for College Success: No Man Left Behind. Retrieved from https://diverseeducation.com/article/17201/

Schlossberg, N. K. (1989). Marginality and mattering: Key issues in building community. *New Directions for Student Services*, *48*, 5-15

Schlossberg, N. K. (2011). The challenge of change: The transition model and its applications. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, *48*, 159-162. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1920.2011.tb01102.xSmith, A. A. (2018, February 2018). Trump calls for converting community colleges to vocational schools. Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/new/2018/02/02/trump-calls-converting-community-colleges-vocational-school

Stephens, N. M., (2012). Unseen disadvantage: How American universities' focus on independence undermines the academic performance of first-generation college students. *Journal of Personality of Social Psychology*, *102*, 1178-1197.

Stewart, D. W., & Shamdasani, P. N. (1990). *Focus groups: Theory and practice.*

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2010) The influence of diversity on learning outcomes among African

American college students: Measuring sex differences. *Journal of Student Affairs*

Research and Practice, 47(3), 343-366.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2012, Summer). Academic advising needs of high-achieving black

collegians at predominantly White institutions: A mixed methods

investigation. *The Mentor*. Retrieved from

http://dus.psu.edu/mentor/old/articles/080507ts.htm

Tate, E. (2017, April 26). Graduation Rates and Race. Retrieved from

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/04/26/college-completion-rates-vary-

race-and-ethnicity-report-finds

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*

(2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1999). Taking retention seriously: Rethinking the first year of college.

NACADA Journal, 19(2), 5-9.

Tinto, V. (2007). Research and practice of student retention: What next? *Journal of*

College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 8(1), 1-19.

U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved November 6, 2009, from http://www.census.gov

U.S. Department of Education (2009). *Black student enrollment. Beginning*

Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study. PowerStats. Washington, DC: U.S.

Government Printing Office.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). *Student Support Services Program. Federal TRIO Programs.* (NCES 2013-045).

University Systems of Georgia. (2017, October 27). Georgia Southern University. https://students.georgiasouthern.edu/multicultural/mentoring/minority-advisement-program-map/

Varney, J. (2007, September). Intrusive advising. *Academic Advising Today*, *30*(3), 1.

Vaughan, G. B. (2009). *The community college story*. Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges.

Wood, J. L. (2012). Black males in the community college: Using two national datasets to examine academic and social integration. *Journal of Black Masculinity*, *2*, 56-88.

Wood, J. L., & Harris III, F. (2014). The five domains: A conceptual model of Black male success in the community college. In F. A. Bonner II (Ed.), *Building on resilience: Models and frameworks of Black male success across the P-20 pipeline* (pp. 173-187). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Wood, J. L., & Williams, R. C. (2013, Spring). Persistence factors for Black males in the community college: An examination of background, academic, social, and environmental variables. *Spectrum, 1*(2), 1-28.

Xiong, S., Allen, C., & Wood, J. L. (2016). The role of community college counselors as validating agents on men of color student success. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 40*(6), 558-561.

Yin, R. K. (2003a). *Applications of case study research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:

    Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2003b). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks,

    CA: Sage.

APPENDIX A

African American Male Student Interview Protocol

Name:

Date:

Location:

Introduction:

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. I am grateful for your willingness to share your thoughts on this important subject. I will be asking you questions and recording your responses. After completion of our conversations, I will transcribe them and ask you to review them so that my notes are true to your thoughts and feelings.
I am interested in finding out in this study what the academic advising experiences of African American male students is like and if those experiences influenced you to return to the college for your second year. The questions were made available to you prior to our conversation for your review. Please feel free to express your thoughts and feelings freely. I want to know what you think. If I need further clarification of something you have shared, I may ask some additional follow up questions that you may not have been made aware of. Do you consent to our conversations being audio taped? Are you ready to begin?

Interview Questions

1. Who were the primary individuals responsible for advising you prior to you enrolling at the college?
2. Think back about your first experience with academic advising at the college. What were some of your initial feelings?
3. Were you advised by a professional advisor in the College or a faculty advisor in your department? Or both?
4. Describe your first advising meeting.
5. How would you rate your first advising meeting?
6. How often did you meet with your advisor during your first year?
7. How would you describe your academic advising experiences during your first year of college?
8. How would you also describe your expectations of your academic advising meetings with your advisor?
9. Did your academic advising experiences play a part in your decision to return to the college for a second year?
10. How could the academic advising process be improved?

11. What were some of your initial feelings about your academic advising experience?
12. Does your advisor adequately support your academic needs?

Participant Data Sheet & Questionnaire Participant Information

1. Name_____

2. Email_____

3. Phone_____

What is your classification?

Are you at least 18? _____ Yes _____ No

Were you enrolled full-time during the Fall 2016 Semester? ___ Yes ___No

Were you enrolled full-time for the entire school term? _____ Yes _____ No

Did you return full-time during the Fall 2017 Semester? _____ Yes _____ No

What is your parent or guardian's highest level of education?

_____ grade school (elementary and middle)

_____ some high school

_____ high school or equivalent

_____ some college

_____ college

APPENDIX B

Academic Advisor Interview protocol

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Interviewee: _____

Introduction

I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. I will be recording and transcribing what we say today. Once our conversation has been transcribed, I will ask you to review the transcription to make sure that it accurately records our conversation. Since we will be talking informally, we may use "uhs" or "ahs" or other exclamatory remarks. Those will also be transcribed, but if I use any quotes in the final report, they will be deleted. It's important that the transcription be verbatim, so that I do not unintentionally paraphrase something you have said.

I am interested in finding out how you feel Academic Advising has affected how you advise students and your overall satisfaction with your role as an academic advisor or advising director. I really want to get your perspective, so please feel free to share your true feelings.

Questions:
1. Please tell me a little about yourself, highlighting how you became an academic advisor and describing the type of training or education you received to help you advise students.
2. What is your definition of advising?
3. Describe your work with students.
4. What discussions occur through advising?
5. What are your primary goals for a student as a result of advising?
6. If any, are there others you rely on to assist you in these advising goals?
7. How does your school impact your advising? Are there different expectations, processes, or requirements of advisors in your school that differ from others?
8. Are other campus advisors doing the same type of work in advising?
9. Do you think your schools academic model impacts how advising is conducted?
10. Is there anything else I should know about how advising is conducted?
11. Tell me about the challenges you face as an academic advisor
12. Is there anything I did not ask about that I should have in order to understand the advising process better?

Probing questions:
1. How do these challenges affect your decision to continue to work as an academic advisor?
2. Could you please elaborate?
3. Could you explain more fully?
4. Why do think that happened?

Thank you so much for allowing me to interview you.