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ABSTRACT

Name: Paula D. Causher

Department: Leadership in Educational and Sport Organizations

Title: Female and Male African-American Senior Undergraduate Student Leaders' Perceptions of Factors Influencing Their Academic Success in Illinois Public Doctoral Degree-Granting Institutions: Implications for Higher Education Leadership

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Female and male African-American senior undergraduate student leaders'
perceptions of factors influencing their academic success at selected public doctoral
degree-granting institutions in Illinois are examined. Collectively, these institutions
(Illinois State University, Northern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University
in Carbondale, University of Illinois in Chicago, and University of Illinois, Urbana-
Champaign) enroll approximately half of Illinois' African-American undergraduate
students. Twenty graduating African-American student leaders participated in the
study, 12 females and 8 males. The study focused on African-American students'
own perceptions of factors they believed enabled them to achieve academic success.
Study methodology included in-depth interviews, profiles of student demographic
information, and published institutional data.

Research questions addressed student perceptions of factors influencing their
academic success in terms of perceived meanings of academic success, factors
contributing to their success, factors making it difficult to achieve success, and
recommendations for improving academic success for African-American
undergraduate students. Study data provided a basis for interpretive analysis and
yielded fruitful grounds for understanding factors that African-American
undergraduate students may perceive as contributing to their academic success.

A central finding of the study was that participating females' responses focused on both gender and identification as African-American students as related to academic success. Males' responses largely excluded gender and focused primarily on race. Female and male students' perceptions appeared similar in that they largely related their academic success to their dealing with the stigma of racial stereotyping, their motivation to succeed, their focus on academic success, and their educational and family background. Female and male students' perceptions appeared different in aspects reported by females only: attention to gender as a factor in academic success, levels of social involvement in the institution, use of institutional support services, and religious and spiritual life. Additionally, males reported more career orientation than did females.

Respondent data, findings, and conclusions provide a grounded basis for institutional leadership and commitment regarding African-American student success at the baccalaureate level. Specific recommendations for institutional leadership and individual student action as well as suggestions for further research are offered.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

FEMALE AND MALE AFRICAN-AMERICAN SENIOR UNDERGRADUATE

STUDENT LEADERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS INFLUENCING

THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN ILLINOIS PUBLIC DOCTORAL

DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR

HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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PAULA D. CAUSHER

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requirements.

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Dissertation Director

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Date

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We often sometimes forget to thank those who in some way made it possible for us to accomplish our goals. I do not want to be guilty of that, and I cannot thank

them enough.   A sincere thank you to all those who kept asking, "Have you finished

yet?" Their question stayed in the forefront of mind and reminded me that I had

work to do.

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education for me that I thought were not possible. I thank my friends and colleagues

for their support and encouragement during this process. None of this would have

been possible without the Lord's blessing, loving friendship, and spiritual support.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my nieces, nephews, and god-children

who will enter the doors of higher education in the

near future to achieve their educational goals

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This study emerges from a broad concern for achieving greater understanding of African-American students' academic success at the undergraduate level and thereby contributing to increased rates of graduation for this student population at American colleges and universities. Researchers know little about the qualitative experiences of African-American students regarding factors influencing their academic success at doctoral degree-granting institutions. In fact, research is even more limited regarding various experiences of successfully graduating African-American female and male students. Most of the research studies and findings on minority student retention are based on quantitative research (Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, & Trevino, 1997). Their findings are generally based on enrollment trends, graduation rates, grade point averages (GPAs), attrition rates, withdrawal rates, and other factors that address institutional departure. What works in student retention and graduation is often approached from the perspective of what students do wrong that leads to institutional departure rather than what may lead to student success.

In fact, Person and Christensen (1996) and Stage (1992) stated that the quantitative methodologies used on primarily White campuses produced aggregate

data showing mostly the views of the White population at these institutions. Furthermore, Bean (1990) noted that by using quantitative methods, one removes real experiences of the students when trying to understand their experiences in specific contexts. Livingston and Stewart (1987) observed the advantages one could learn from studying the perceptions of students from the same ethnic background as opposed to examining them collectively with other minority students.

Padilla et al. (1997) suggested that examining student success in college would provide a different perspective on student retention. It would provide for the emergence of new paradigms that could lead to developing different theoretical models of success. Also, practical strategies for retaining students could emerge through this new way of thinking. Postsecondary institutions would have to develop new strategies for addressing the issues of early student departure from institutions. The demographics of the student population in higher education are changing, and new innovative approaches must be employed to address the needs of minority students enrolled in their institutions. Understanding the experiences that African-American students encounter as successful students can provide insight into an area where little qualitative research has been conducted.

Various reasons exist as to why students do not successfully matriculate to degree completion. These reasons may be attributed to a variety of factors, including institutional polices and practices and personal issues that are related to the student themselves. In Illinois, for example, colleges and universities are having to develop strategies for timely degree completion for all students. These strategies have come

about as a result of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) (1995) calling upon universities to expand efforts to identify and address barriers that may discourage students from expeditiously completing their degree programs.

Despite the significant volume of research on retention of students that has spanned several decades (Tinto, 1993), the research findings have led to little improvement in retention rates (Padilla et al., 1997). There still appears to be a limited understanding on what affects enrollment and persistence of African-American students at colleges and universities. This lack of understanding may be attributed in part to institutions addressing student retention and outcomes based on quantitative research data and analysis.

The literature on what works in student retention and graduation mostly focuses on where the student erred. In contrast, this study is concerned with broad questions about African-American students' success at four-year colleges and universities. What enables African-American students to succeed? What are the factors that impact African-American students' experiences of academic success? How are these students able to negotiate successfully through the college? What characteristics do they have that enable them to achieve academic success? What perceptions did they have of the institution? Were there any institutional policies and practices that helped with their success? Are there any differences between the female African-American experience and the male African American experience? The current study emerges from these broad concerns and focuses on the reported experiences of senior female and male African-American student leaders.

Each year, thousands of students enroll in colleges and universities with the expectation of completing a baccalaureate degree. More than half of these students will have successfully matriculated to degree completion within six years. However, the persistence rate for African-American students is below the national level. A report prepared by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (1996) shows the graduation rate for African Americans at Division I schools to be 39%, compared to 59% for Whites at these same institutions. The graduation rate is based on the comparison of the number of students who entered a college or university and the number of those who graduated within six years. For example, if 100 students entered and 50 graduated within six years, the graduation rate is 50%.

Because graduation rates are low for African-American college students and many do not matriculate through degree completion, there is particular need to gain greater understanding of factors that may account for the persistence of the number of students who continue and successfully complete the baccalaureate degree. Although many studies have been concern with academic failure, this study is concerned with academic success from the perspective of female and male African-American students who are academically successful campus student leaders.

Purpose, Problem and Dimensions of Interest

The purpose of this study is to contribute to greater understanding of factors that African-American student leaders perceive as enabling them to achieve academic success in college. The research problem of the study is to examine

selected African-American undergraduate student leaders' perceptions of factors influencing their academic success in selected public doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois. The purpose and problem are addressed in the study using an interview methodology and an interpretative analysis of the stories of academically successful female and male African-American student leaders.

The selected dimensions of interest that are important to understanding African-American student leaders' perceptions of factors influencing their academic success in selected public doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois include both selected individual student dimensions and institutional dimensions. The selected student dimensions include successful students' definition of academic success, major, GPA, career goal, number of hours worked, financial assistance, leadership experiences, participation in service activities, student organizations, service organizations, time in school, full-time status, and students' interaction with other students and faculty. The selected institution dimensions include overall student enrollment; an ethnic breakdown of the student body, gender makeup; graduation rates, location, campus size, and tuition and fees. A respondent profile form was used to capture basic student data (see Appendix A). Interviews were conducted to capture students' individual stories based on their responses to the questions asked on the interview guide (see Appendix B).

Research Questions

The goal of the study is to examine the academic success stories of female and male African-American student leaders' perceptions of factors influencing their academic success in selected public doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois. Accordingly the following research questions are examined in this study:

1. How do undergraduate African-American female student leader participants describe selected individual and institutional factors influencing their academic success in public doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois. examined in terms of (a) respondents' definitions of academic success, (b) factors contributing to their academic success, (c) factors making it difficult for them to be academic successful, and (d) recommendations for improving academic success for African Americans?

2. How do undergraduate African-American male student leader participants describe selected individual and institutional factors influencing their academic success in public doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois, examined in terms of (a) respondents' definitions of academic success, (b) factors contributing to their academic success, (c) factors making it difficult for them to be academic successful. and (d) recommendations for improving academic success for African Americans?

3. How do undergraduate African American female and male student leader participants describe selected individual and institutional factors influencing their academic success in public doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois. examined in terms of (a) respondents' definitions of academic success, (b) factors contributing

to their academic success, (c) factors making it difficult for them to be academic successful, and (d) recommendations for improving academic success for African Americans?

Background and Rationale

Over the past 40 years, colleges and universities in the United States have seen changes in the demographic makeup of their African-American student population. Overall rates of attendance of African-American students at colleges and universities have increased, though modestly. At the same time, as African-American students' attendance at traditional colleges and universities has increased, attendance at historically Black colleges and universities declined. Also, some historically Black colleges and universities are no longer such. These historically Black colleges are now diversifying their student body. Furthermore, African-American students' participation as student leaders has also been impacted by this demographic shift.

Prior to 1954, the majority of African-American students were attending historically Black colleges and universities in the southern states. Approximately 90% of the 100,000 African-American students were educated at historical Black colleges and universities (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). The segregation that was common during this period made it difficult or impossible for African Americans to attend predominantly White colleges and universities.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Supreme Court ruled on a number of

cases that challenged the separate-but-equal doctrine as established in the 1896

Plessy v. Ferguson decision. These rulings paved the way for the country to begin

desegregating public education (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). As African

Americans took advantage of the opportunity to attend White institutions,

enrollments at historically Black colleges and universities declined. The enactment

of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 led to even more changes in Black students'

attendance at predominantly White institutions (Stefkovich &Leas. 1994). Prior to

1964, approximately 60% of African-American students attended historically Black

institutions. In 1974, the proportion had declined to roughly 25%. In 1995, some

852,000 African Americans were enrolled in four-year institutions, of which 230,279

(27%) attended traditionally Black colleges and 621,721 (73%) attended

predominantly White colleges ("Vital Signs," 1997a).

Until 1968, 80% of all undergraduate degrees awarded to African Americans

were earned at historically Black colleges or universities (Allen, 1985). In 1994,

historically Black colleges and universities awarded 28% of all bachelor degrees

earned by African Americans nationwide (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

Allen (1985) stated that far too little research is available about the consequences and

implications of this rapid societal change.

The retention and graduation rates of African Americans and other minority

students enrolled in institutions of higher learning continue to be a concern. Recent

data indicate that the graduation rates are estimated at 40% for African-American

students, 39% for Hispanics, and 37% for Native American students (NCAA, 1998). Research on student retention has mostly been focused on factors attributed to student failure. Much research has been done on deferential effects on African-American students attending predominantly White colleges as compared with African-American students attending historically Black colleges.

The research over the years on African-American students' persistence at White colleges as compared with those attending historically Black institutions has been consistent. Overall, the findings suggest that African-American students do not fare as well at White colleges. Other findings suggest that Black students at predominantly White colleges have lower GPAs than their peers at historically Black colleges (Allen, 1992). Although the latter perform better academically, they are often dissatisfied with the facilities and organizational structure of their colleges (Allen, 1992; Nettles, 1988). The data reveal a need for further research to identify factors that influence the success of academically successful minority students. The literature must begin to show and tell the stories of those who have successfully matriculated and earned a degree.

The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education ("Vital Signs," 1997b) reports that the nationwide graduation rate for African-American students was 38% as compared to 59% for White students. However, African-American students enrolled at some highly ranked universities had nearly the same graduation rate as Whites. For example, at Harvard University, African-American students' graduation rate was 95% as compared to 97% for White students. The graduation rate for African-

American students at Princeton was 92% as compared to 95% for Whites. If one

was to conduct a study of the perceptions of the African-American students' success

factors at these institutions, their experiences would differ in contrast to White

students' experiences. Some have suggested that these highly ranked universities

have selected admissions policies and, therefore, their persistence rates would be

high for all students.

During this same period, African-American students who attended

traditionally Black colleges have retention rates ranging from 53% at Hampton

University to as low as 12% at Texas Southern University. According to the U.S.

Department of Education (1996), historically Black colleges and universities

enrolled 26% of the African-American student population at baccalaureate degree-

granting institutions and, as stated previously, awarded 28% of all bachelor degrees

earned nationwide.

In Illinois, the IBHE (1995) reported that African-American and Hispanic

students have retention and degree completion rates significantly below the level of

majority students. According to the NCAA (1996) report on graduation rates of

Division I state universities in Illinois, the rates range from 56% for African-

American students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) to 14%

at Chicago State University.

Prillerman, Myers, and Smedley (1989) stated that African-American

students have identified four process variables implicated in the pathways to success

or failure. These variables include perceived support of the environment, degree of

alienation, unique status-related pressures or problems, and the relative effect of using various adaptational strategies to cope with these pressures. Allen (1985), Nettles (1988), and Fleming (1984) have investigated African-American student adjustment and achievement in a more multivariate and integrative manner. These studies reveal that nonintellective, psychosocial, and contextual factors such as self-concept, ethnic ideology, relationships with faculty, feelings and experiences of racism and discrimination, and feelings of social isolation were among the strongest predictors of negative outcomes for African-American students. Because graduating African-American student leaders are successful students, it is extremely valuable to explore their perception of factors influencing success to satisfy broad concerns of study. Thus, it is appropriate to investigate the perceptions of factors influencing female and male African-American student leaders' perceptions of their academic success.

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to gain greater understanding of the factors that influence African-American student leaders' academic success in college. It examines similarities and differences between selected female and male African-American student leaders' perceptions of their academic success when analyzed by individual student and institutional factors. This study is significant because it can contribute to the understanding of factors that enable African-American student leaders to succeed in college. This research adds to what has been written and documented on the

academic success of African-American student leaders' experiences in higher education.

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Limitations and Delimitations

This study of African-American student leaders' perceptions of college success is delimited by (a) including only African-American student leaders at selected state doctoral degree-granting universities in Illinois; (b) seeking only African-American undergraduate senior student leaders' perceptions of success and not those of college administrators, faculty, and support staff; and (c) selected senior African-American student leaders enrolled in baccalaureate degree-granting programs. These delimitations were appropriate to the scope of the study.

This study is limited by the number of students participating. The research was conducted with African-American undergraduate student leaders in selected public doctoral-degree granting universities in Illinois. The focus was not on students enrolled at historically Black colleges and universities or private four-year institutions of higher learning. It does not include African-American student leaders who are freshmen, sophomores, or juniors. This study addresses only the perceptions of female and male African-American students and academic success stories from these institutions and is not generalizable beyond the population studied. This study does not address campus climate at each of the institutions in this investigation.

Definition of Terms

Selected terms have specialized meaning in the context of this study. "Successful students" are defined in this study as female and male African-American student leaders who were seniors in an undergraduate program and were near graduation at the time of data collection. "Student leaders" are defined as students who at the time of data collection were members of an on-campus club or organization, regardless of his or her rank or hierarchy within the organization. In addition, the term "African American" is used interchangeably with the term "Black" The term "minority" is used to refer to a person or persons identified with and considered to be one of the following racial or ethnic groups: Black, Hispanic, and Native American. These terms are used consistently throughout this study.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 has included an overview of the study. The purpose, problem, and dimensions of interest are identified. Research questions and significance of the study have been presented. In Chapter 2, the literature on student academic success and persistence is reviewed and the framework for the study is addressed. The design of the study is detailed in Chapter 3, and the presentation and analysis of data constitutes Chapter 4. The summary, recommendations, and concluding statement are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, literature pertaining to this study is reviewed and presented in four sections: (1) student persistence, (2) institutional factors. (3) individual factors. and (4) gender differences.

Student Persistence

Each year, thousands of African-American students enter the doors of higher education. seeking to complete a bachelor degree. For many of these students. this is their first encounter with an educational environment different from that which they have experienced. Although a significant number of these students do not successfully matriculate to degree completion. more than one third of the African-American undergraduate enrollees do successfully navigate their way through the process.

The reasons for the high attrition and low degree-completion rates among African-American students and other minority students vary. A student's departure from school may very well be attributed to unaddressed personal problems. financial reasons, academic difficulty, or institutional polices and practices. In some

instances, a student's withdrawal from school may not have any bearing on his or her ability to perform and successfully complete required course work.

As noted, the proportion of African-American students who actually matriculate to degree completion are significantly below the national norm. The graduation rate for African-American students is 39%, compared to 59% for White students. The national graduation rate for all undergraduate degree-seeking students is 56% (NCAA, 1996). Many factors have been examined to understand this outcome. Educators vary in their interpretation of the contributing factors that impact student retention and attrition (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993).

Tinto (1998) reported that the institutional policies and practices regarding successful student matriculation have been geared toward the development of programs such as mentoring, retention, orientation, tutoring, and cultural programs. Tinto contended that there have been no comparable changes in the academic side or in the organization in higher education. The educational experiences of the student have mostly remained unchanged and unaffected by the research on student persistence.

Padilla et al. (1997) stated that many of these studies focus on the individual and institutional reasons for students leaving school from the perspective of student failure. Recent studies have been conducted to examine student success and to identify factors that lead to degree completion. Evans (1996) stated that the methods of collecting data in quantitative studies often do not capture a campus climate because of the open-ended questions that are often asked in survey form and

interpreted in statistical data. Allen (1985) noted that prior research studies on African-American students has not included or addressed what he referred to as the "multicausal, multidimensional nature of the schooling process" (p. 135). The variables used in the studies were background, college environment, psychological characteristics, interpersonal relationships, and other factors that excluded the multivariate dimensions.

Tinto (1993) stated that most college students who leave college do so during or after their first year. The student's freshman-year experience is a deciding factor in shaping subsequent experiences. Studies conducted by Kember (1989, cited in Carter-Obayuwana, 1996) reveal that the student who is considered weak or high risk is more likely to drop out. However, the number of students' early departures from school can be significantly reduced if they have developed and used coping strategies to address factors that cause stress. Allen and Haniff (1989) stated that a student's individual characteristics influence his or her ability to persist in college. This influence is determined by how bright the student is, the student's level of background preparation, and the student's intensity of personal ambition and striving.

Although institutions of higher learning have intervention programs in place to assist students, some of these students do not seek out or take advantage of these programs. During their first semester or year on campus, students may not even be aware that these programs exist. In some instances, they may be reluctant to ask or seek help until it is too late. University personnel may even find it problematic for

them to identify these at-risk students in a timely fashion to prevent students' early institutional departure.

Spady's (1970) model considered and included the social integration that emerges from shared group values, normative congruence, and friendship support. This social integration enables students to cope with their environment. This model was expanded by Tinto and Wallace (1989, cited in Carter-Obayuwana, 1996) to include background characteristics and individual attributes. The inclusion of these variables would increase student retention (Carter-Obayuwana, 1996). Tinto's (1975, cited in D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993) model focused on academic and social preparedness for college and factors related to social integration of particular college campuses. These academic outcomes are most likely influenced by students' family background, high-school experiences, campus social interactions, and personal attitudes (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993).

Adjusting to campus life can be overwhelming for some. Allen and Haniff (1989) stated that the attainment process is influenced by institutional, individual, and interactional factors. Some students are able to cope and adjust quite well to their campus surroundings. Other students, for various reasons, are not able to adapt and recover from the issues that prevent them from moving forward. Research studies have revealed some factors that lead to attrition. Some of these studies have also revealed some individual and institutional factors that impact student persistence.

African Americans' persistence in college is below the national norm. However, those who choose to remain in college have developed and applied their skills, which enables them to matriculate to degree completion. Attinasi (1989), Rendon (1994), and Terenzini et al. (1994) noted the various pathways to integration and that it can occur inside or outside the classroom. Tinto and Kadel (1994, cited in Tinto, 1998) stated that student persistence is impacted when involvement in the classroom becomes an avenue for involvement beyond the classroom.

In summary, it is evident that students come from various backgrounds and that they bring with them experiences that affect how they approach college life and academic studies. Individual and institutional factors contribute to students' persistence. A number of variables affect student persistence. The level of academic and social integration are key factors to retention. Research must look not only at past research endeavors but also at new approaches, in particular the qualitative experiences of students who are successful.

Institutional Factors

The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education ("Why Aren't There More Blacks," 2000/2001) examined a number of highly ranked colleges and universities with degree completion rates of 80% and higher for African-American undergraduate students. The graduation rates for African Americans were comparable to White students at these institutions. Admission to these schools is considered to be highly competitive. In addition to these students being high

achievers, some other factors contributed to the high graduation rates at these

institutions as compared to other schools with lower rates, but they were comparable

in ranking.

The common elements reported by *The Journal of Blacks in Higher*

Education ("Why Aren't There More Blacks?" 2000/2001) as influencing factors

that contribute to African-American students' high graduation rates at these highly

ranked institutions included:

. Campus climate in which students are welcomed and the environment

fosters nurturing and growth.

. Support services such as orientation and retention, which enable students to

adjust to their environment.

. Geographic location, which indicates that colleges and universities with

high graduation rates for African-American students tended to be in urban areas and

schools that had lower graduation rates for this population were located in rural

areas. Schools with lower percentages of African-American undergraduate enrollees

in their student bodies tended to have lower graduation rates. Those with lower

percentages of African-American students had fewer activities that involved them.

. Curriculum in science and technical programs at highly selective schools

can affect student persistence, especially when the students are made uncomfortable

by faculty and administration. The perception that African-American students

cannot perform at the same level as White students still persists at some schools.

Steele (1992) also stated that stereotyping can affect students' academic performance.

. Financial aid, in that schools with large endowments are able to provide additional resources to enable students to remain in school and continue their studies without departing from the institution for financial reasons. Bynum (1987) stated that the availability of financial aid is a key factor for Black students' persistence in college. Sherman, Giles, and Williams-Green (1994) also stated that by providing security to finance college studies is a clear and effective measure to promote retention.

Brown (1991) identified seven components to increase efforts for success in the recruitment, retention, and graduation of minority students:

. Financial aid that provides students with a financial aid package that includes grants and scholarships but keeps student loans to a minimum.

. Multicultural environment that provides students with an attractive environment in which their opinions are represented and viewed. The environment is diverse not only in the student body but within the institution, including faculty, administrators, and staff.

. Academic retention programs, which provide a curriculum that recognizes the contributions of minority students. These contributions should be illustrated throughout the campus, which would provide a high degree of institutional support and commitment to retention programs, which has the support of the faculty.

. Sensitizing faculty, which provides an environment that is conducive for minority students.

. Communication with high school guidance counselors, which establishes communication at all levels to improve minority access to higher education, including working with high school guidance counselors and the university community.

. Social climate that provides social activities on campus that are inclusive. Students should feel a sense of comfort on campus.

. Commitment by the governing board to increasing the presence of minorities on campus.

A number of studies have been conducted over the years identifying factors that are attributed to a student's institutional departure or persistence. In many cases. these studies addressed student retention and persistence from the perspective of student failure. Students who are more involved academically and socially with other students and faculty are more likely to persist (Astin, 1993; Terenzini et al., 1994; Tinto, 1998). In some cases, students have difficulty integrating academically and socially within the institution. Tinto (1998) stated that academic and social integration influence persistence in various ways for various students and that the two interact in ways that foster persistence. Stage (1989) and Tinto (1998) contended that persistence is more likely to happen when both forms of integration occur. Allen and Haniff (1989) stated that it is the quality of life at the institution; level of academic competition; university rules, procedures, and resources;

faculty/student relations; and relationship with other students that also influence student persistence.

Steele (1992) stated that the problems of African-American dropouts have nothing to do with innate ability or environmental conditioning. Steele cited that 70% of African Americans at four-year colleges drop out, compared to 45% of White students. The problem Steele observed is "stigma," the devaluation many Blacks face in society and schools. Steele offered a corrective approach to the problem: "Schools must focus more on reducing the vulnerabilities that block identification with achievement" (p. 78). Taylor and Antony (2001) stated that African-American students face an additional obstacle in school. Negative racial stereotypes can induce or create a climate of intimidation that can inhibit academic achievement. These doubts are not internal but are created by simulations such as class presentations, testing, and token status. These stereotypes can cause anxiety and self-consciousness.

The National Science Foundation funded a study at Tufts University to examine racial bias and prejudice. The findings revealed that racial bias and prejudice are related to the lightness or darkness of a Black person's skin. Other features such as hair length and texture, lip fullness, or nose width were not associated with racial bias or prejudice. What is also revealing is the fact that both Whites and Blacks associated intelligence, attractiveness, and motivation with individuals who had light skin. Blacks and Whites both associated dark-skinned Blacks with poverty and unattractiveness ("Tufts University Study," 2002).

Hurtado (1994) contended that a college's historical legacy of exclusion of various ethnic groups can continue to influence current practices, which can then determine the prevailing climate. Assessing an institution's history of access and exclusion is difficult. An institution's climate can affect a student's psychological response to the environment. Winbush (2001) examined campus racism in the 21st century and noted that in the latter part of the 20th century, there was an increase in violence toward students of color, which was reminiscent of the 1960s. However, in the beginning of the 21st century, the Internet has enabled anyone to spread hatred by just a click of the mouse. Winbush also stated that these recent incidents reflect what educator Richard Richardson described as the three levels of campus diversity in this country. Level I is the university that resists the implementation of diversity at most levels; Level II is the university that is not willing to make changes to an administrative structure that inhibits true diversity, and Level III is the university that has woven diversity seamlessly into the fabric of the institution.

Some key factors that ensure the retention of minority students are programs that are designed to meet their individual needs. Tinto (1993) stated that the effectiveness of these programs is contingent upon the level of commitment the institution is willing to give toward these programs. This commitment would include the successful integration of the program within the institution's academic, social, and administrative life. These programs are not isolated from the college's support programs but have been successfully integrated into the institution.

Williamson (1999) and Allen, Epps, and Haniff (1991) stated that African-American students continue to seek support services that are targeted specifically for African Americans because they still experience a sense of alienation and discomfort at predominantly White institutions. Pounds (1989) reported that African-American students describe the environment on White campuses as unfriendly and unsupportive. Most freshmen usually face a period of adjustment when they enter college. This adjustment can be more intense for minority students if it is compounded with racial discrimination. Q. E. Moore (1996) stated that if adjustment for college life is stressful for students in general, it is likely to be even more so for African-American students in particular. Williamson (1999) examined the history of Black student unions, organizations, and support services on campus and stated that these services were initially established to promote retention, academic success, and resiliency at predominantly White colleges and universities.

A recent study to develop an outcome measure and benchmark for Illinois Transfer Centers (McKillip, 2001) revealed that those Illinois community colleges with transfer centers that had successful integration and institutional commitment to increase minority transfer to senior institutions had higher transfer rates for minority students. These centers were an integral part of academic and student support services.

To reveal how African-American students at a predominantly White campus perceived their environment, D'Augelli and Hershberger (1993) conducted a study comparing African-American and White students who had similar academic

backgrounds, attended the same college for the same length of time, and majored in the same field. The goal of the study was to identify differences in the social aspects of their college lives. This investigation matched both groups to determine if they differed or arrived at different paths in accomplishing their academic goal. The results reveal that African-American students experienced discrimination and harassment on campus. This was the only significant factor that varied between the two groups of students studied. The GPAs of the African-American students were comparable to the Whites, but their experiences with the campus environment were quite different. The researchers concluded that although the African-American students' SAT scores were lower than those of the White students, it was not significant in their performance in college. This supported prior research that SAT scores were not a predictor in determining African-American students' success in college.

Some colleges and universities have shown considerable improvement in their retention and graduation rates of minority students. The retention rates at these schools are in sharp contrast to the national norm reported earlier. For example, in 1976, Boston College had a 17% retention and graduation rate for African-American and Hispanic students. In 1996, the college retention and graduation rate was 93% over a four-year period for a target minority group of students. The college attributed this improvement to an array of academic support services available to students of color. Brown (1996) stated that the success of the program is attributed

to an effective support system that addresses the academic psychological and social needs of students of color.

Initially, Boston College provided these services through the Office of Minority Student Programs, which was changed to the Office of African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American (AAHANA) Student Program. Students used the services sparingly when it was under the former name. The term "minority" was viewed by many students as pejorative. Students in the program were also encouraged to participate in leadership roles in student government. Some of these students were elected by the student body to offices.

Q. E. Moore (1996) reported on a retention program in the Office of Academic Support at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. This program was designed to improve the retention of minority students at the university. The program had been successfully integrated into the university's structure. Success of the program was attributed to the intrusive approach used in counseling and academic advising, tutoring, and outreach activities. The university had incorporated retention efforts in the college's mission statement and philosophy. This level of commitment was demonstrated by the resources provided to ensure success of the program. Some key factors that have enabled the program to be successful are:

. Academic advising and counseling, which provides holistic and intrusive counseling to students. Counselors are able to develop and build one-on-one relationships with students. Continuous follow-up on students' progress is essential.

This allows students to develop the self-confidence and self-awareness to adapt to the college environment. Peer counseling and mentoring is provided by university students who are successful role models on campus.

. Tutorial services, which provide additional assistance to freshman and sophomore students in core courses outside the classroom. Students can attend study skills workshops, and assistance is available for students interested in forming study groups. Peer tutors are also available in a variety of subject areas.

. Outreach activities, which provide services that encourage students to continue their higher education beyond a bachelor degree. Workshops are available on time management, leadership, and stress management.

Q. E. Moore (1996) stated that students participating in the program were satisfied with the program services. Student participants perceived the program services as contributing to their academic success and comfort with the university environment. The program had the support of the faculty and administrators who referred students. The program also contributed to the university efforts to increase minority enrollment.

M. A. Moore (1996) reported that the State University of New York at Buffalo increased its minority student enrollment and retention and graduation rates in their special support programs on campus by utilizing a comprehensive holistic approach. Their model incorporates all seven elements identified by Brown (1991). More than 25,000 students are enrolled at the university each year. Admission to the school is considered to be moderately difficult (Peterson, 2001). The university had

embarked on a campus-wide commitment to increase access and retention of minority students on campus. Prior to this endeavor, minority support programs were operating in various units within the university. An Office of Special Programs within the Academic Affairs Division was opened to consolidate and better manage recruitment, retention, and graduation of minority groups on campus.

The university established communication links by becoming involved in programs for minority students at the elementary and secondary levels. These programs include academic skills and attitudes toward education. Minority undergraduate students enrolled at the university have access to a number of academic support services such as counseling, tutoring, and mentoring. Minority students who desire to continue their studies at the graduate or professional studies level have financial assistance and academic mentoring support. M. A. Moore (1996) stated that students participating in these special programs had experienced greater academic success and higher retention and graduation rates than the university population as a whole. Some of these programs had higher completion rates over the university honors-program participants.

In summary, the literature identifies institutional factors that contribute to students' success in college. Geographic location of the institution can have an impact on African-American students' persistence. The commitment by the university to create a campus environment in which students are comfortable and experience a sense of well being is key to students' success. Colleges that have this commitment tend to have higher completion rates for students. Support programs

and social activities that are inclusive for African-American students and other students of color encourage them to seek out and take advantage of these services and continue to use them. African-American students also seek out support programs that are specifically targeted for them. Other factors that impact student persistence include providing students with an attractive financial aid package. a curriculum that encourages students to explore avenues not explored. and sensitizing the university community at large to the diversity of the population served. Perceived racism and stereotyping on college campuses have a negative impact on the academic performances of African-American students. Students who are involved academically and socially are more likely to persist. However. academic and social integration can influence persistence in separate ways for various students. and they both interact in ways that foster persistence.

Individual Factors

Allen (1985) examined the structural, interpersonal, and psychological correlates of Black students' outcomes at six predominantly White public universities. The main purpose of the study was to look at those factors of successful Black students' adaption to college. Allen used Tinto's (1975. cited in D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993) multivariate model, which took into account students' persistence rates as a factor of student interaction with college academic and social systems. Allen measured student adaption to college by levels of involvement. campus life, academic achievement levels, and future occupational goals.

The results of Allen's (1985) study revealed that students who were more socially involved: had better relations with faculty, more participation in Black student organizations and activities, and a more favorable view of support services and race relations. Older students and those indicating favorable campus race relations had lower occupational aspirations. No significant gender difference existed in college GPAs. Male students indicated that they were less religious and more moderate in racial ideology, and claims of self-confidence and achievement drive were higher among males. Older students and students who participated more frequently in the activities of Black student organizations expressed stronger "pro-Black" racial attitudes. More moderate racial attitudes were characteristics of students having positive faculty relations, favorable views of campus race relations. and better high-school grades.

Students in southern universities had lowered self-confidence. achievement, and family socioeconomic status. However, students attending southern universities reported more favorable campus race relations. Students who were regular participants in Black student organizational activities, who had positive faculty relations, and who evaluated campus support services favorable were also more frequently involved in campus social activities. These students reported better integration in and satisfaction with the general campus social life. Academic achievement was highest for students who reported favorably faculty relations. better high-school grades, and more years in college and who attended college outside the

southern schools. Male students who attended schools in the North were economically better off and reported higher occupational goals.

Rendon (1994) conducted a study on transforming culturally diverse students through validation. Students from diverse ethnic backgrounds were interviewed and asked questions regarding their involvement in the college academic community and out-of-class experiences. The themes that emerged from this study were:

1. Students who were traditional college students had little or no concern about their ability to succeed in college, but students who attended community colleges or predominantly Black colleges expressed some questions about their ability to succeed.

2. Some students who were independent were able to function within the college academic community and social structure. However, many of the nontraditional students needed help from others in negotiating their way through the college community and social structure.

3. Freshman student success is dependent upon the student's involvement in college life or based on whether external agents can validate students in an academic and/or interpersonal way.

4. Nontraditional students who are vulnerable can be transformed into learners through, in, and out of class academic and/or interpersonal validation.

5. Involvement in college for nontraditional students is not easy, and validation may be the key to their involvement and a prerequisite for involvement to occur.

As noted, the instruments used to identify student retention and attrition are based on the traditional college student and, therefore, do not take into consideration the diverse population of students who are currently attending four-year colleges. The theoretical models used to capture data on student success for the traditional college student has been well documented over years. However, as Weidman (1989, cited in Strage, 1999) noted, the formula used to identify student persistence included consideration of students' academic preparation, the appropriateness of their educational expectations and career goals, and the anticipatory socialization they acquired from parents, peers, and others prior to entering college along with their assimilation into their new environment upon matriculation. Strage (1999) stated that present-day college populations do not reflect the students who participated in the foundational studies. The traditional college student is 18-22 years old, comes from a middle-class background, and has parents who attended college. Strage also made reference to the changing demographics of students who are entering four-year colleges.

During the period of 1984 to 1994, college attendance for White students increased by 5.1%, but the minority student population increased by 61.0%. More than 40% of the students attending college were 25 years of age, 43% attended part-time, and nearly 46% were employed. Strage (1999) stated that little is known about the strengths, weaknesses, and academic achievement motivations of this "new" college population.

Although it is assumed that high-achieving students will succeed in their course studies, it is important that these students are exposed to an environment that is not only conducive toward learning but will also foster psychological and social well-being. Students do not seek out support if they perceive their environment as one of exclusion and not inclusion.

Both Astin (1982) and Morgan (1990) indicated that a student's academic preparation in school, specifically the type of grades they receive, are potential indicators for predicting a student's success in college. However, standardized tests are not considered to be effective predictors in determining college student outcomes (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993). Higher education has long used standardized tests as a requisite for determining college admission selection and predicting student achievement in college. These tests have not escaped criticism from opponents of standardized tests who believe that these tests are not accurate indicators of a student's success in college. These tests have been viewed by some as racially biased and do not accurately determine one's ability to succeed in college.

Bell-Rose (1999) examined the SAT scores of African-American students. The purpose of the study was to identify Black high achievers based on test scores, socioeconomic environment, school, high-school GPA, rank, and educational aspirations. These same factors were also compared with White students who were high achievers.

The findings of the study revealed that African-American students are not well prepared to compete for admission to selective institutions as compared with

high-achieving White students. African-American students who do score at the top

range of the SAT do so with fewer academic and social advantages. African

Americans who did score high on the test did not score as high as Whites and all

other minority groups.

The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)

(2001) examined the instructional quality at eight Chicago public high schools.

ACORN's primary researcher, Doug Trimmer, studied four neighborhood high

schools and four high schools classified as either magnet, academy, or college prep

schools. The neighborhood high schools were either all Black or Hispanic, and the

magnet, academy, or college prep schools included a variety of diverse students.

The study revealed that students who attended the neighborhood schools

came from low-income families and that less than half graduated from high school or

took the ACT. Students who attended magnet, college prep, or academy schools had

higher family incomes; their graduation rates ranged from 78% to 95.8%; and most

of them took the ACT, on which they scored seven points higher than did

neighborhood high-school students. The findings from this study also revealed that

the neighborhood schools experienced a lack of resources and instructors with less

education and teaching experience. In some instances, instructors taught subjects

that they were not adequately prepared to teach. Only 20% of the students at these

schools scored at or above the national norm on the reading comprehension test.

The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education ("Special Report," 2000)

identified a number of factors that contributed to Blacks scoring low on the ACT and

SAT tests. The results from this study were similar to ACORN's (2001) findings. They concluded that Black students are not adequately schooled to take tests. For the most part, many Black students are educated in inner-city public schools that do not have the resources to provide quality instruction, materials, equipment, and books. These students do not have a support system at home that fosters a learning environment. Even the middle-class Black students are usually first-generation college students and have not been exposed to the same college prep environment as White students.

African-American students and White students do not follow the same academic track. White students are placed in college preparatory schools, and Black students are placed in vocational training schools. Students who are in college prep schools are most likely to have taken trigonometry, calculus, English literature, and honors courses that prepare them for college. Black students in vocational or training schools are given geometry and basic English courses. Clearly, these courses are not sufficient for Black students to successfully score as well as White students on the ACT or SAT tests. These students are also less likely to obtain academic scholarships awarded by colleges and universities because of their low test scores.

African-American students are also faced with the expectation that they will not perform well on standardized tests. In some instances, instructors have low expectations that these students will perform well on tests and so may not be inclined to challenge these students based on their on preconceived notions. These students

can be affected by this stigma and question their ability to perform as well. However, there has been a growing interest among colleges and universities to give less weight to standardized tests as the main criteria for college admission. Some schools have already begun to admit students based on other factors and give less weight to standardized tests as a primary admission criterion.

Steele (1997) asserted that stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. African Americans are affected by a stereotype whereby their group's intellectual skills are questioned because of negative stereotyping. The successful reversal of this stereotype and subsequent success depends on schooling strategies that reduce stereotypes. In the educational setting, African Americans have to deal with negative stereotypes about their abilities, and many scholastic domains and women must also deal with it, primarily in math, physical science, and engineering courses. Steele states that to improve the domain performance of these students, one should focus on the feasible task of lifting this situational threat rather than on altering their internal psychology. Steele conducted and documented a number of experiments with undergraduate students testing this framework by manipulating stereotypes of academic abilities, and racial and gender differences on standardized tests were reduced significantly.

Brown (1994) conducted a study of the perceptions of African-American students regarding their experiences at Whitman University, a predominantly White institution. The study was qualitative and included a number of in-depth student interviews. The focus of the study was to identify African-American students'

perceptions of their undergraduate experiences at a predominantly White university.

The intended goal was to debunk the myth of African-American homogeneity and to

identify the heterogeneity of African-American students' stories by looking at

subgroups that shared commonalities.

The criteria used in the selection of African-American students included

leadership, involvement on campus life, and GPA. The researcher used open-ended

questions to allow participants to tell their own stories about campus life. Brown's

(1994) study revealed how the institution viewed the expectations of African

Americans differently from the expectations of the majority White population

enrolled at the university.

Brown (1994) concluded that campus climate was a major extrinsic factor

that shaped the university. Students who perceived the campus climate as warm felt

welcomed and accepted on campus. Students who described the campus as chilly

felt that they were only tolerated on campus. Students who described the campus as

cold felt the campus climate was hostile. There was also some relationship with

students' GPAs and campus climate. Students who had high GPAs saw the campus

environment as supportive. Students who had average grades had mixed perceptions

about the campus environment. Students who had low grades perceived the campus

as hostile. A student's identity--that is, their sense of comfort with themselves--

affected their persistence in college. Students who had positive identities tended to

graduate from the university. Students who expressed uncertainty with their identity

had mixed results in persisting in college. Students who were dissatisfied with their

identities tended to face challenges in meeting the university's academic requirements.

The findings also revealed that students' values and performance levels mirrored their academic perspective. Students who developed a balanced social life on campus had clear academic perspective, healthy identities, and optimistic future orientation activities. Students who had negative perceptions of their identities, academic perspectives, and future orientation developed unbalanced social adjustments. Students who performed above the institution's minimum GPA tended to have cautiously optimistic future orientations. Those students whose GPAs were below the institution's requirements tended to have pessimistic future orientations and those who performed significantly above the institution's requirement tended to have optimistic future orientations.

Padilla (1991, cited in Padilla et al., 1997) developed a model for identifying successful minority students at a specific college. The purpose of the model is to identify heuristic knowledge and actions that successful students used to overcome barriers to academic success. Padilla's qualitative model considered the knowledge students possess and what students acquire through the learning process in class. Students enter college with some acquired heuristic and theoretical knowledge from the academic and social challenges that the student has faced and the actions they have taken to successfully navigate their way through degree completion. Heuristic knowledge for the most part is something that is acquired informally and is usually passed on by an experienced student to a new student. In many instances, this

knowledge is usually shared by student organizations, orientation, or through some informal setting. Not every student is aware of this knowledge on campus.

In a study conducted by Padilla et al. (1997), they used Padilla's (1991) model to identify the actions students employ to overcome barriers to college success. The findings from the study revealed four barriers: (1) discontinuity barriers, (2) lack of nurturing barriers, (3) lack of presence barriers, and (4) resource barriers. Successful students were able to overcome these barriers using a number of set strategies.

Discontinuity barrier. Successful students who are faced with discontinuity barriers or obstacles that might prevent them from making a smooth transition from high school to college prepare themselves mentally for the challenges they may encounter. They set a strategy on how they can deal with the transition. They take into consideration the environmental change, independence, and coming to terms with value of job versus value of education.

Lack of nurturing. Successful students possess the knowledge that empowers them to overcome a lack of nurturing barriers. They nurture themselves or acquire nurturing through others on campus. They know their self-worth and identity and are persistent in meeting their own needs. They access support groups, mentoring resources, and ethnic minority group services and seek out faculty advisors, staff members, and support programs.

Lack of presence barrier. Successful students deal with the lack of minority presence in the curriculum and campus programs by recognizing the lack of minority

presence and seeking out support of minorities on campus. Successful students join and participate in ethnic student organizations, make themselves known on campus. and develop their own academic skills.

. Resource barriers: Successful students overcome financial aid and lack of money by planning ahead. They prepared early for their financial aid. They network with people who know the financial aid system. and they developed time management skills.

Doucette (1999). a writer for *Black Collegian*, recently highlighted five African-American undergraduate student leaders. Each of these student leaders was either currently a senior at or had recently graduated from a historically Black college. They were recognized for their high level of academic achievement and leadership ability. Each of these student leaders was actively involved in a number of activities, clubs, and organizations both on and off campus. They all were focused and had high aspirations, self-confidence. and take-charge attitudes. Some examples can be seen in some of their responses. One female student leader who had a triple major in electrical engineering, mathematics. and physics stated. "I'm not the type that you only see in class. In fact, on the weekend, I'm at all the social events. People say, 'Oh, no, you can't do that' or 'That's hard,' and when you look up, I'm doing it."

One male student leader who was majoring in English and was president of student government on campus stated,

> I don't think that leaders should be overseers or the man out front. I think that leaders are responsible for empowering their people and motivating

them. If each individual on campus is successful and I'm never seen. I'm still a great leader.

Another female student leader who majored in accounting and served as student government president for four years stated to the interviewer that what moved her toward leadership was her realization that as a minority, she had to be four or five times better than the competition. She stated, "Being in that position made me want to stand out. I figured, what better way to stand out than to take charge."

This section addressed a number of factors that can impact student outcomes in higher education. Individual characteristics can influence a student to complete college. How students are able to cope with their environment also influences persistence. Academic and social integration are important factors in student persistence, and the more involved students are, the more likely they will persist. The attainment process is influenced by institutional factors and individual and interactional factors. If students perceive these interactions as positive, especially with faculty and students, they are more likely to persist. One form of integration can be used as a vehicle for other forms of integration. African-American students are also faced with additional adjustment problems because of past exclusion practices on campus and the experiences of alienation and lack of support. However, successful students create or find the necessary social networks to persist.

Gender Differences

There has been a decline in the degree of attainment and enrollment of African-American males in higher education as compared to African-American females. Cross and Slater (2000) reported that in 1997, African-American males comprised 37.5% of all African-American enrollments in higher education. The graduation rate for African-American males was 33%, compared to 43% for African-American females. The gap between African-American men and African-American women has grown apart steadily for the past 20 years. Mauveaux (2002) stated that the enrollment of Black women has been growing more rapidly than that of Black men. Enrollment of Black women increased by 23% between 1990 and 1996, compared to 16% for Black men. Mauveaux noted that during this same period, the gender gap for White students widened but it was not as wide as the Black gender gap. White male enrollment was 44% as compared to 56% for White females. In fact, there has been a growing gender gap in higher education between males and females of all races in the United States. Astin (1998) stated that between 1966 and 1996, the number of women entering as freshmen in college had switched from a minority of 45.7% to a majority of 55.4%. Mauveaux (2002) stated that this gender gap does not change the pay status for women in their favor.

A number of factors can be attributed to the decline of Black male participation in higher education. Cross and Slater (2000) stated that there are several underlying explanations as to why the higher education gap exists between male and female African-American undergraduate degree-seeking students.

including the culture of the primary and secondary education system appearing to favor young Black girls over Black boys; race discrimination in employment being far more intense against Black men than against Black women; the erosion of the Black family; the media's portrayal of successful Black men concentrating on athletes and entertainers; an antiachievement ethic growing among many young Black men; and the separation of Black families by White owners during the years of slavery, which forced Black women to take on many of the family responsibilities traditionally held by men.

Allen (2002, cited in "New Report," 2002), who authored a report called "Stony the Road We Trod," examined higher education outcomes for Blacks in the state of California. The report revealed that although Black males represent 3% of the state's overall population, they are 25% of the prison population and 1% of its college population. Lancer (2002) stated that the problems of Black males have more to do with racial stratification than their problems with academic achievement. This racial stratification prescribes Blacks to a lower societal status and is at the root of their academic deficiencies.

Davis (1994) examined the student background, college-level factors, and academic performance to determine how these factors affected Black males attending historically Black and White colleges and universities. The study also examined students' perceived social support and its contribution to college student achievement. The study revealed that Black males who attended historically Black colleges had attended Black high schools. These students were more integrated into

the academic life on campus and had higher GPAs. They perceived their college as providing more institutional support. In regard to their academic achievement, racial congruency was not a significant predictor. However, students who had higher socioeconomic backgrounds, high-school GPAs, and SAT scores and were integrated into campus academic life had good study habits and formed good relations with their peers.

Davis (1994) further stated that Black males who attended White institutions had a lower mean age, a higher socioeconomic status, lower degree aspirations, less racial congruency in high school, and better study skills. However, these students' perceptions of institutional support, study habits, and peer relations were not significantly related to academic performance. Students who had a more positive perception about institutional support studied harder and had stronger peer relations. These students did not necessarily have higher levels of achievement. However, students who did have higher levels of academic integration performed better academically.

Davis (1994) stated that academic integration was the only college environment variable found to be a significant predictor of these students' grades at White colleges. The study also revealed that those students who had higher GPAs tended to come from a home community that mirrored the college environment. The opposite was true for students whose home community did not mirror the college environment. Students who had higher GPAs in high school tended to have higher GPAs in college. Males who had higher degree aspirations had higher grades.

Steele (1997) stated that African Americans contend with stereotyping about their abilities and standardized test scores. Women encounter this in math and science. Steele stated that the focus should be to look at the processes that can hamper a group, school performance, and what can be done to improve the performance. Steele further stated that the societal structure limited the educational access imposed on both groups. Steele noted that women would have to dispel the low expectation myth perceived by teachers, family, and society that the sciences are not feminine or the prospect of staying in a profession that is dominated by males.

Mauveau (2002) raised questions such as the benefit, if any, of the women's movement on Blacks. The pace of progress has been slower and uneven for Blacks. Mauveau expressed uncertainty in being able to adequately compare Blacks and women in terms of their pace and progress. However, Mauveaux cited Gloria Scott, an expert on women's issues, who had a different perspective. Scott stated that there has been progress. There has been more involvement by Black sororities and other Black women's organizations as a result of the women's movement. These organizations are working on a range of social issues.

Hamilton (2002) reported that the fall edition of *The American Freshmen: National Norms for 2001* revealed that freshmen students are more liberal. Approximately 404,000 students and 717 schools participated in this national study of full-time freshmen enrolled at four-year colleges and universities. The study revealed that in 2001, approximately 29.9% of the students surveyed had identified their politics views as liberal or far left. This is highest percentage increase in 20

years, compared to the 20.7% who compared their views as far right. According to

the study, students with liberal views had strong attitudes about social and political

issues. These issues included race, gay rights, drug testing, and the death penalty.

Race appeared to have the strongest liberal attitude in this study. Approximately

70% of the respondents stated that they had socialized with someone of a different

racial or ethnic group in the last year. Women (71.9%) were more likely to socialize

with someone of a different race than men (67.6%). In regard to race, it was reported

that racial sensitivity had increased. The number of freshmen who agreed that racial

discrimination is no longer a problem in America fell to 19.5% in 2001, compared to

the 21.4 % in 1999. Approximately 31.5% of college freshmen stated that they were

committed to promoting racial understanding. There was also a decline in freshman

response opposing affirmative action.

Astin (2002, cited in Hamilton, 2002), who authored the survey, stated that as

students of different races have more contact with each other, their concern about

racism and their commitment to racial equity grows. However, Graves (2002, cited

in Hamilton, 2002) stated that, current trends not withstanding, America's college

students are still as baffled and bewildered by race as the rest of us. Graves further

stated that biologists have known for over a century that there are no geographical

races.

In this section on gender, the literature reveals that African-American male

and female students face racial problems in higher education. The stigma that is

placed on them can be stressful and overwhelming at times. Both groups face the

stigma of not being able to perform academically at the same level as other ethnic groups. African-American males in particular tend to do better at historically Black colleges. African-American female students are faced with additional stereotyping when they major in subject areas that have been dominated primarily by males. In general, both genders are faced with the dilemma of having to prove themselves in the educational setting.

Recent data has revealed that college freshmen's attitudes toward race is changing and is becoming more liberal. Females are more likely than males to experience diversity among others outside their race.

Conclusion

Overall, what has been presented is a summary of the literature on factors that enable African-American students to succeed. Students' education and socioeconomic background affect how they adjust to college academic and social life. In some instances, students who are academically integrated on campus can persist without high levels of integration into the social life on campus.

Student experiences inside the classroom and outside the classroom affect persistence. Successful students are focused and set strategies prior to arriving on campus. They know how to network and become involved in academic life and in social activities on campus. Some successful students are able to adjust to their environment more readily if their home environment is similar to their campus environment. Academic integration and social integration are reciprocal. However,

depending on the college environment and institutional policies, academic integration may not be dependent on social integration for students to be persistent.

Successful students develop relationships with faculty and peers. These students usually begin academic and social integration in their first year in college. What can be drawn from the research literature is that African-American students are heterogeneous and the actions they employ to successfully negotiate their way through the process differ student to student and campus to campus. Many successful students recognize the barriers or obstacles but overcome them and accomplish their educational endeavors. These students are assertive and persistent in reaching their goals. Successful students face more challenges when they are made to feel that because of their race, they have to prove themselves more than do other students. Recent literature has suggested that the attitudes of college students are changing and that they have a more liberal view about social and political issues. Some critics have suggested that African Americans have not benefited from the women's movement and affirmative action at the same pace as women in general, although others have contended that there has been progress as a result of the women's movement.

The literature also reveals that students who are integrated academically and socially are more likely to persist. Both forms of integration influence persistence in different ways for different students. One form of integration can be a vehicle for integration in the other. Social integration provides shared group values and

friendship support, which can also influence persistence. The literature also points out that involvement matters most during the first two years.

Based on the literature, institutional and individual interaction may influence student outcomes. Institutional factors that influence student outcomes are campus climate, support services, curriculum, financial aid, diversity on campus, and commitment by the institution. Individual factors include social involvement, participation in student organization, favorable view of support services and the institution itself, higher achievement drive, and development of time management skills. Other individual factors include background preparedness, assertiveness, family support, high-school experiences, campus and social interactions, and adjustment to campus life. All these literature-based factors are addressed in this study.

What is known to be true is that student persistence is more likely to be influenced by the student's individual characteristics. These characteristics generally include educational background preparation, the ability to cope and handle various situations, and their inner drive to strive. Persistence most likely occurs when both social and academic integration happen.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to examine factors that African-American

graduating seniors who were also student leaders perceived as influencing their

academic success at selected doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois.

Described in this chapter are the study plan, data collection protocols, study

participants, data collection, and data reporting analysis as related to the study

design.

Study Plan

This is a qualitative research study using in-depth interviews for data

collection. A qualitative approach was chosen to allow the participants to develop

and describe their own views and perceptions about their academic success. Bean

(1990) stated that qualitative studies provide for a richer description of student

experiences and allow for a better understanding of these experiences. Interviews

enable the researcher to capture information in the language and words of the

participants. The interviews were structured and open ended. Using a structured

interview enabled the researcher to analyze and compare data collected from the

interview. The advantage of using open-ended questions is that it enables the

researcher to elicit a range of responses from the participants, and the information

obtained may be unanticipated (Merriam & Simpson, 1989).

The interviewer was an African-American female who also attended and

graduated from a public doctoral degree-granting institution in Illinois. The

researcher also has experience in working with minority transfer students in

facilitating their transfer from a two-year college to a four-year college. This

experience allowed insight into and understanding of the participants' views.

Creswell (1994) stated that this kind of openness is considered to be useful and

positive.

Data Collection Protocols

A total of two researcher-developed protocols were used in the study: a

respondent profile form and an interview guide. A field test of the protocols was

conducted with four student leaders enrolled at a public community college, two

female and two male. The purpose of the field test was to determine if any

modifications needed to be made to the interview questions being asked or the

respondent profile form. This insured the legitimacy of the instrument being used

prior to the initial study. No changes were deemed necessary, and the study

proceeded with the planned protocol. Data pertaining to the institutions in this study

was compiled from the IBHE (2000) *Data Book* and Peterson's (2001) *College and*

University Almanac.

The respondent profile form was used to capture basic demographic information about the student leaders. The respondent profile form consists of 14 questions (see Appendix A) that were answered by the respondents at the time of the interview session. Profile data included gender, age, enrollment status, cumulative GPA, financial aid received, employment status, hours worked, major, degree type, career goal, graduation date, how students rated themselves as successful students, how students rated their leadership activities as contributing factors to their success, and a list of involvement in activities on and off campus. Students were also asked whether they attended a public or private high school and if it was located in a city or suburban area. This question was asked after it emerged during the interview.

The interview guide was used to gather information on factors that the respondents perceived, as African-American student leaders, as influences on their academic success at the university they were either currently attending as a senior student or had attended before they recently graduated. A total of five questions with subquestions were asked of each participant (see Appendix B). The subjects were told prior to the interview and at the time of the interview why they were chosen to participate in this study. The five questions asked were:

1. How do you define "academic success"? What does it mean to you to be an academically successful student? How do you perceive your academic success in comparison to the academic success of other students? Do you see academic success as different for female students as compared to male students or for African Americans as compared to other students?

2. What do you see as the most important factors contributing to your academic success? What helped you to be successful? Do you see important contributing factors as different for female students as compared to male students or for African Americans as compared to other students?

3. What do you see as the most important factors making it difficult for you to be academically successful? Do you see important challenges as different for female students as compared to other students?

4. What are your recommendations for improving African-American students' academic success? What advice would you give to future African-American students, to administration, to faculty, or to support professional staff? Is your advice any different with respect to female students as compared to male students or to African Americans as compared to other students?

5. Is there anything else you would like to say about the subject?

Study Participants

Study participants were African-American students serving in any capacity as student leaders in their organizations regardless of rank within the hierarchy of the organization. Initially, it was requested that the participants be classified as college seniors and have a preferred minimum GPA of 3.0 (B) on a 4.0 (A) grade scale. However, some schools identified participants with GPAs slightly below what was requested. Although two participants had GPAs of 2.60 and 2.89 (both B- averages), they were included in this study.

The study participants were selected from public doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois. Doctoral degree-granting institutions were chosen because of the richness and layers of resources available to students at such institutions and relative comparability. The institutions represented were Illinois State University (ISU), Northern Illinois University (NIU), Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (SIU), University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), and University of Illinois Urbana Champaign (UIUC). The universities were contacted by telephone and were asked if they would identify African-American student leaders who met the criteria to participate in this study. The university representatives contacted were directly involved with working with African-American student leaders on their campus and agreed to identify participants for this study. A total of 29 potential participants was identified through this process.

This process was chosen in order to access students, maintain consistency across institutions, and establish a group of participants in a reasonable size. The university representatives were sent an official letter of request and informed consent. The universities were asked to identify potential participants and to ask students' permission to release information to the researcher. When the university identified the study participants, the study participants signed informed consent forms. The university sent the signed informed consent forms, telephone numbers. and addresses to contact participants. Ultimately, a total of 20 undergraduate African-American student leaders participated in the study. 12 female students and 8 male students. The researcher intended to have an equal proportion of female and

male students from each of the institutions in this study; however, some students were unreachable or did not meet the criteria established for inclusion in this investigation, such as having a C GPA or being an international student.

Data Collection

Following the identification of participants, data were collected in a series of interviews. Interviews were audio recorded, and notes were taken as a backup precaution and to track the researcher's observations. Approximately 4 of the 20 respondents were interviewed in person, and 16 participants were interviewed via telephone. Participants who were interviewed in person completed the respondent profile individually. The 16 respondents who were interviewed by telephone were asked the questions, and the researcher completed the respondent profile form based on the respondents' answer to the questions asked at the time of the interview.

Each participant had an opportunity to make comments to the questions asked on the respondent form and the interview questions and add other comments if desired. Respondent profile forms were checked for completeness at the time of the interview. The average duration of interview time for both in-person and telephone interviews was 55 minutes. The range was 35 minutes to 90 minutes. Students were also asked whether they attended a private or public high school and whether it was in the city or a suburb.

Data Reporting Analysis

Data were reported for the 20 study participants, all of whom completed a respondent profile. A total of 14 questions were asked on the respondent profile. The data were analyzed by grouping common variables from each response to the interview questions. The recorded interviews were transcribed and put in document form. Taped interviews were transcribed to initially identify preliminary coding categories and themes. A comparative analysis was conducted, including classifying and cataloguing participants' responses. This was accomplished by developing a list for each participant to determine themes that were evident in the entire sample. The respondent profile forms were compiled to identify common themes of male and female respondents. The results of the analyses are reported by the research questions.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Presented in this chapter is an analysis of data related to African-American senior undergraduate student leaders' perceptions of factors influencing their academic success in selected public doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois. The central focus is on presentation and interpretive analysis of the stories of academically successful female and male African-American student leaders.

First, a profile of the institutions attended by the participants in this investigation is presented. Second, respondent profiles of the participants in this study are presented. Third, interview data are presented corresponding to the three research questions for the study.

Institutional Profile

Institutional data were taken from the IBHE (2000) *Data Book* and Peterson's (2001) *College and University Almanac*. The institutional profiles capture the diversity of each institution at the time of the interview data collection. They allow the researcher to ascertain the types of institutions from which the participants in this study matriculated to degree completion. The institutional profiles are relevant to this study because they provide a comparative snapshot of the similarities and

differences among the institutions. They also provide context for respondents'

perceptions. There are 12 public state universities in Illinois. Five of these

institutions are doctoral degree-granting institutions: ISU, NIU, SIUC, UIC, and

UIUC. The remaining public universities in Illinois award graduate degrees at only

the master's level and are not included in this study.

Respondents who participated in this study attended one of the five public

doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois. These universities are located in

various regions throughout the state of Illinois. UIC is the only institution that is

located in a large metropolitan urban area. All other schools in this study are located

in small cities. The institutions' campus sizes ranges from 216 acres at UIC to 1,470

acres at UIUC.

As shown in Table 1, each of these institutions has an overall enrollment of

more than 20,000 students. UIUC is the only institution in this investigation with an

overall enrollment more than 35,000. Enrollment in the undergraduate programs at

four of the five institutions range from 16,170 to 17,705. UIUC is the only

institution in this investigation with an undergraduate enrollment of 28,733. The

student/faculty ratio at these institutions ranges from 14:1 at UIC and UIUC to 19:1

at ISU.

The institutions' difficulty of admission ranges from moderately difficult to

very difficult. Four of the five institutions ranked entrance difficulty as moderately

difficult. Moderately difficult is defined as more than 75% of the freshmen being in

Table 1

Illinois Public Doctoral Degree-Granting Institutional Profile by
Enrollment Size, Entrance Difficulty, Freshmen Admitted,
and Faculty/Student Ratio for Fall 1999

Institution	Total Enrollment, Fall 1999	Undergraduate Enrollment, Fall 1999	Campus Size and Setting	Entrance Difficulty*	Admitted Freshmen	Student/ Faculty Ratio
ISU	20,470	17,705	850 acres, small town	Moderately difficult	75%	19:1
NIU	22,843	16,893	589 acres, small town	Moderately difficult	73%	17:1
SIUC	22,323	17,338	1,128 acres, small town	Moderately difficult	71%	18:1
UIC	24,810	16,170	216 acres, urban town	Moderately difficult	61%	14:1
UIUC	38,851	28,733	1,470 acres, small town	Very difficult	71%	14:1

* *Most difficult* is defined as more than 75% of the freshmen being in the top 10% of their high-school class, scoring 1250 or higher on the SAT I (verbal and mathematical combined) or 29 or higher on the ACT composite, and 30% or fewer of the applicant being accepted. *Very difficult* is defined as more than 50% of the freshmen being in the top 10% of their high-school class, scoring 1150 or higher on the SAT I or 26 or higher on the ACT, and about 60% or fewer of the applicants being accepted. *Moderately difficult* is defined as more than 75% of the freshmen being in the top half of their high-school class, scoring 900 or higher on the SAT I or 18 or higher on the ACT, and about 85% or fewer of the applicants being accepted. *Minimally difficult* is defined as most freshmen not being in the top half of their high-school class, scoring somewhat below 900 on the SAT I or below 10 on the ACT, and up to 95% of the applicants being accepted. *Noncompetitive* is defined as mostly all applicant being accepted, regardless of high-school rank or test scores.

Source: IBHE (2000), *Data Book*, p. 25; Peterson (2001), *College and University Almanac*, pp. 7-128.

the top half of their high-school classes and scoring 900 or higher on the SAT or 18

or higher on the ACT. UIUC is ranked as very difficult. Very difficult is defined as

more than 50% of the freshmen being in the top 10% of their high-school class and

scoring 1150 or higher on the SAT or 26 or higher on the ACT (Peterson, 2001).

The percentage of freshmen applicants admitted to these institutions ranges from

61% at UIC to 75% at ISU.

As shown in Table 2, the annual cost of tuition and fees at the five public

doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois ranges from $3,936 at SIUC to

$4,802 at UIUC. However, when tuition and fees are combined with room and

board, UIC has the highest annual cost for undergraduate enrollees. A significant

number of students who attend UIC commute to and from home. However, there

appear to be no significant differences in tuition cost at these institutions.

Table 2
Tuition and Fees, Room and Board for Full-Time, In-State Undergraduate
Students at Illinois Public Doctoral Degree-Granting Institutions
for the 1999-2000 Academic Year

Institution	Tuition and Fees	Room and Board	Total
ISU	$4,210	$4,248	$8,458
NIU	$4,384	$4,416	$8,800
SIUC	$3,936	$3,872	$7,808
UIC	$4,654	$6,894	$11,548
UIUC	$4,802	$5,544	$10,346

The five universities identified in this study collectively enroll 66.5% of all

students enrolled in undergraduate programs at all Illinois public universities.

Approximately 71% of the males enrolled in undergraduate programs at Illinois

public universities are attending one of the five public doctoral degree-granting

institutions. Approximately 61% of the women enrolled in undergraduate programs

in Illinois public universities are enrolled at one of the five doctoral degree-granting

institutions in Illinois (IBHE, 2000). There are slightly more male undergraduates

than female undergraduates attending SIUC (56.81%) and UIUC (52.01%).

However, female enrollment makes up more than half of the total enrollment at ISU

(57.96%), NIU (53.83%), and UIC (54.43%)

Approximately 69.40% of the undergraduate enrollees at Illinois public

doctoral degree-granting institutions are White. Non-White students (African

American, American Indian, Asian, and Hispanic) make up 25% of the overall

baccalaureate enrollment at these institutions. Foreign and/or nonresident students

comprise 1.82 % of the undergraduate student enrollment. However, individually,

the ethnic makeup of students attending ISU is slightly less diverse than the other

public doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois. Approximately 87.53% of the

students enrolled at ISU are White. The ethnic breakdown for non-White students at

ISU consists of Black.(7.34%), Hispanic (2.46%), and Native American (1.61%).

As shown in Tables 3 and 4, African-American enrollments at these

institutions collectively were overall slightly higher than other minority ethnic

groups. Asian students make up the largest number of minorities enrolled at UIC

(22.47%) and UIUC (12.88%). African-American students represent the largest

minority ethnic group at ISU (7.34%), NIU (11.83%), and SIUC (14.53%). Native

American enrollees are less than 0.50% at Illinois doctoral institutions.

African-American students attending public universities in Illinois represent

20.8% of the overall total enrollment at Illinois public universities. They comprise

9.77% of the overall total undergraduate enrollment at public doctoral degree-

Table 3

Baccalaureate Enrollment in Illinois Public Doctoral Degree-Granting Institutions by Race for Fall 1999

Institution	Black	Native American	White	Asian	Hispanic	Nonresident	No Indication	Total
ISU	1,300 (7.34%)	56 (0.32%)	15,497 (87.53%)	285 (1.61%)	436 (2.46%)	131 (9.74%)	0 (0.00%)	17,705 (100.00%)
NIU	1,998 (11.83%)	42 (0.25%)	12,222 (72.35%)	1,082 (6.40%)	931 (5.51%)	174 (1.03%)	444 (2.63%)	16,893 (100.00%)
SIUC	2,519 (14.53%)	77 (0.44%)	11,956 (68.96%)	259 (1.49%)	499 (2.88%)	640 (3.69%)	1,388 (8.01%)	17,338 (100.00%)
UIC	1,587 (9.81%)	40 (0.25%)	7,257 (44.88%)	3,634 (22.47%)	2,782 (17.21%)	260 (1.61%)	610 (3.77%)	16,170 (100.00%)
UIUC	2,060 (7.17%)	60 (0.21%)	20,271 (70.55%)	3,702 (12.88%)	1,526 (5.31%)	562 (1.96%)	552 (1.92%)	28,733 (100.00%)
Total	9,464 (9.77%)	275 (0.28%)	67,203 (69.40%)	8,952 (9.26%)	6,174 (6.38%)	1,767 (1.82%)	2,994 (3.09%)	96,839 (100.00%)

Table 4

Baccalaureate Enrollment in Illinois Public Doctoral Degree-Granting Institutions by Gender and Race, Fall 1999

Race	ISU		NIU		SIUC		UIC		UIUC	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Black	824	476	1,265	733	1,342	1,177	1,164	423	1,246	814
Native American	31	25	22	20	34	43	19	21	30	30
White	8,950	6,547	6,495	5,727	4,983	6,973	3,764	3,493	9,637	10,634
Asian	150	135	510	572	96	163	1,810	1,824	1,631	2,071
Hispanic	237	199	495	436	197	302	1,602	1,180	752	774
Nonresident	70	61	81	93	280	360	118	142	269	?93
No indication	0	0	225	219	556	832	324	286	225	327
Total	10,262	7,443	9,093	7,800	7,488	9,850	8,801	7,369	13,790	14,943
Total %	57.96	42.04	53.83	46.17	43.19	56.81	54.43	45.57	47.99	52.01

granting institutions in Illinois. African-American enrollments at these institutions

range from 7.17% at UIUC to 14.53% at SIUC.

More than half (54%) of African-American males who attended public

universities in Illinois were enrolled in undergraduate programs at one of the five

doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois. Approximately 44% of female

African-American students attending public universities in Illinois are enrolled in

undergraduate programs at one of the five public doctoral degree-granting

institutions Illinois (IBHE, 2000).

As shown in Table 5, the median age for students enrolled at these

institutions is 21. Males were slightly older than females at all institutions. The

median age for males is 21.3; for females, 20.8. SIUC had the highest median age

for males (21.9). UIC had the highest median age for females (21.3). However,

UIUC had the lowest median age for both gender groups (males, 20.5 and females,

20.3).

Table 5

Median Age of Undergraduate Students Enrolled in Illinois Doctoral
Degree-Granting Institutions by Gender, Fall 1999

Institution	Women	Men	Total
ISU	20.6	21.1	20.8
NIU	20.9	21.2	21.0
SIUC	21.1	21.9	21.5
UIC	21.3	21.7	21.5
UIUC	20.5	20.3	20.4
Total	20.8	21.3	21.0

As shown in Table 6, approximately 90.61% of the students enrolled at these

schools are full-time students, and 9.39% are enrolled part-time. Full-time

enrollments range from 86.76% at UIC to 94.13% at UIUC.

Table 6

Attendance Status of Undergraduate Students in Illinois Public Doctoral
Degree-Granting Institutions, Fall 1999

Institution	Full-Time		Part-Time		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
ISU	16,184	91.40	1,521	8.60	17,705	100.00
NIU	15,011	88.86	1,822	11.14	16,893	100.00
SIUC	15,908	89.23	1,921	10.77	17,829	100.00
UIC	14,029	86.76	2,141	13.24	16,170	100.00
UIUC	27,219	94.13	1,697	5.87	28,916	100.00
Total full/part time	88,351	90.61	9,162	9.39	97,513	100.00

As shown in Table 7, the degree completion rates for undergraduate students

attending Illinois public doctoral degree-granting institutions are 35% for UIC, 39%

for SIUC, 52% for NIU, 53% for ISU, and 78% for UIUC. African-American

students' degree completion rates were below the institutions' average rate. The

degree completion rates for African-American students were 23% for UIC, 24% for

SIUC, 25% for NIU, 31% for ISU, and 56% for UIUC (NCAA, 1996).

Table 7

Illinois Public Doctoral Degree-Granting Institutions'
Graduation Rates by Race, 1999

Race	ISU	NIU	SIUC	UIC	UIUC
Native American	35%	50%	17%	28%	46%
Asian	41%	67%	36%	38%	80%
Black	31%	25%	24%	23%	56%
Hispanic	33%	42%	27%	29%	62%
White	57%	57%	43%	39%	81%
Nonresident alien	64%	22%	57%	44%	56%
Other	57%	41%	44%	39%	65%
Total	53%	52%	39%	35%	78%

Based on the data displayed in Tables 1 through 7, four of the five Illinois
doctoral degree-granting institutions in this study are comparable in student
enrollments (between 20,000 and 25,000 students). UIUC is notably larger, with an
enrollment of nearly 40,000 students. Tuition costs at these schools are close in
range. The locations of these institutions, with the exception of UIC, are in small
cities. A majority of the students who attend the five institutions are full-time
students. The average age of the students attending these schools is 21. Entrance
difficulty at four of these schools is considered to be moderately difficult. UIUC is
considered to be very difficult. There was not a notable difference in the percentage
of freshmen admitted based on the total number of freshmen applicants at all five
institutions. The diversity of the institutions as a whole can be seen in the racial
makeup of the overall combined student body. African Americans represent 9.77%

of the total student body; Asians, 9.26%; Hispanics, 6.38%; foreign, 1.82%; and Native Americans, 0.28%.

What may be significant is that UIC is the only school in this study that is in an urban area. However, African-American students are not the majority ethnic minority group on campus. African Americans represent 9.81% of the student enrollment at UIC, compared to 22.47% for Asians and 17.21% for Hispanics. This may be of interest because African Americans represent the largest minority group in the city of Chicago, followed by the Hispanic population. According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* ("Almanac Issue," 2001), the racial and ethnic distribution in the state of Illinois is American Indian, 0.2%; Asian, 3.2%; Black, 15.3%; Hispanic, 9.9%; and White, 81.3%.

An apparent difference among these institutions is the student/faculty ratio, which ranges from 14:1 at UIC and UIUC to 19:1 at ISU. The percentage of females and males enrolled at these institutions also is somewhat different. ISU, NIU and UIC enroll slightly more females than males. SIUC and UIUC enroll slightly more males than females.

Another difference among these institutions is the overall percentage of African-American students enrolled. The percentage of the African-American student body at these schools ranges from 7.17% at UIUC to 14.53% at SIUC. This is of interest because the literature has indicated that campus climate and diversity can impact minority student enrollment.

For four of the five institutions, entrance difficulty was the same (moderately difficult). The exception was UIUC (very difficult). Also of note is the graduation rate for African-American students at all five institutions. At all five institutions, these rates were below the institutions' norms for all other racial and ethnic groups. UIUC had notably higher graduation rates for African-American students than those for the other four Illinois doctoral degree-granting institutions. However, the graduation rate for African Americans the UIUC is 56%, compared to 62% for Hispanics, 80% for Asians, and 81% for White students. This is of interest in light of the literature, which suggests that highly ranked schools with high graduation rates have institutionally contributing factors that positively affect the degree completion rates in addition to some students being high achievers. What is of even more interest is that the graduation rate for African-American students enrolled at UIC was lower than the four schools located in small towns. This may also be significant because the literature suggests that African Americans tend to persist more at schools located in urban cities.

Respondent Profiles

Based on profile data provided by participants and as shown in Table 8, all 20 respondents for this study were African-American undergraduate senior student leaders who were enrolled at one of the five public doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois. The respondents participating in this investigation attended

either ISU (n = 4), UIC (n = 3), UIUC (n = 6), NIU (n = 4), and SIUC (n = 3).

Approximately 60% (n = 12) were female and 40% (n = 8) were male.

Table 8

Respondents' Enrollment by Gender and Institution

Institution	Female	Male	Total
ISU	2	2	4
NIU	2	2	4
SIUC	2	1	3
UIC	2	1	3
UIUC	4	2	6
Total	12	8	20
Total %	60	40	100

As shown in Tables 9 and 10, the respondents' age ranged from 21 to 31.

The mean age of all respondents was 22.6. The mean of female respondents was

21.9, compared to 23.6 for male respondents. The overall GPA of all respondents

was 3.21. The mean GPA for females was 3.25, compared to 3.17 for male

respondents. All respondents were enrolled full-time and received some form of

financial aid. Forty percent (n = 8) of the respondents reported receiving academic

scholarships. Approximately 70% (n = 14) were employed part-time and worked an

average of 18.6 hours per week. The respondents' number of work hours ranged

between 10 and 30 hours a week.

Table 9

Respondent Profile Composite by Age, Grade
Point Average, and Enrollment Status

Gender	Age Range	Mean Age	GPA Range	Mean GPA	Full-Time Enrollment
Women	21-24	21.9	3.0 - 3.6	3.24	12/12
Men	21-31	23.6	2.6 - 3.5	3.17	8.8
Total	21-31	22.6	2.6 - 3.6	3.21	20/20

Table 10

Respondent Profile Composite by Number of Hours
Worked and Financial Aid

Gender	Receiving Financial Aid Based on Need	Received Academic Scholarship	Number of Respondents Working	Range of Hours Worked Per Week	Average No. of Hours Worked per Week
Women (12)	12/12	6/12	7/12	10 - 26	18.6
Men (8)	8/8	2/8	7/8	10 - 30	18.6
Total	20/20	8/20	14/20	10 - 30	18.6

Respondents were also asked during the interview if they had attended high school in either the city or suburbs and if the school was public or private. Eleven respondents attended high school in the suburbs, and of those 11, nine were from public schools, and two were from private schools. Nine respondents attended schools in the city, and of those nine, eight attended public schools, and one attended a private school.

As shown in Table 11, 13 respondents (65%) were pursuing a bachelor of science degree and seven respondents (35%) were pursuing a bachelor of arts degree. The respondents' majors varied. Approximately 8 of the 20 respondents were majoring in business-related fields: three in finance and five in either accounting. business, economics. management, or operations management. Three respondents were pre-medicine majors. Nine of the respondents' majors were in either African-American studies, criminal justice. education, English literature, electrical engineering, liberal arts. nursing. speech communications, or theater.

As shown in Table 12. respondents were asked to rank the extent to which they considered themselves to be successful students. The ranking was between 1 and 5. with 1 being very unsuccessful and 5 being very successful. One half of the students (n = 10) indicated 5. very successful. Their GPAs ranged from 2.82 to 3.60. Eight respondents rated themselves as 4. successful. Their GPAs ranged from 2.60 to 3.50. Two students. whose GPAs were 3.20. rated themselves a 2. somewhat successful.

As shown in Table 13, respondents were also asked to rank the extent to which they believed their academic leadership activities contributed to their academic success. The ranking was between 1 and 5, with 5 being the highest extent to which they believed their academic leadership activities contributed to their academic success and 1 being the lowest extent. Students' response to this question varied. Six students ranked their leadership as 5, the highest extent for leadership

Table 11

Respondent Profile Composite by Degree Type and Major

Degree Type	Major	Total
Bachelor of Science	Accountancy	1
	Criminal justice	1
	Electrical engineering	1
	Finance	3
	Liberal arts	1
	Management	1
	Microbiology/premedicine	3
	Nursing	1
	Secondary education	1
Bachelor of Arts	African-American studies	1
	Economics	1
	English literature	1
	Marketing	1
	Operations management	1
	Speech communications	1
	Theater	1
Total		20

Table 12

Summary of Respondents' Responses by Gender. GPA Range.
and Mean GPA to Question 11 on Respondent Profile Form:
"To What Extent Do You Consider Yourself a
Successful Student?"

Gender, GPA Range, and Mean GPA	Very Unsuccessful	Unsuccessful	Neutral	Successful	Very Successful
Women (12)	0	0	1 (8.3%)	4 (33.3%)	7 (58.3%)
Women's GPA Range	0	0	3.20	3.00-3.49	3.00-3.60
Women's Mean GPA	0	0	3.20	3.29	.21
Men (8)	0	0	1 (12.5%)	4 (50.0%)	3 (37.5%)
Men's GPA Range	0	0	3.20	2.60-3.50	2.82-3.40
Men's Mean GPA	0	0	3.20	3.18	3.16
Total (20)	0	0	2 (10.0%)	8 (40.0%)	10 (50.0%)

Table 13

Respondents' Response by Gender to Question 12 on Respondent Profile
Form: "To What Extent Do You Believe Your Academic Leadership
Activities Contributed to Your Academic Success?"

Gender	1		2		3		4		5	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Women (12)	0	0.0	1	8.3	2	16.7	4	33.3	5	41.7
Men (8)	0	0.0	1	12.5	4	50.0	2	25.0	1	12.5
Total (20)	0	0.0	2	10.0	6	30.0	6	30.0	6	30.0

as a contributing factor to their academic success. Six students ranked their

leadership activities influencing their academic success as 4. Three students ranked

their leadership activities influencing their academic success as 3, and two ranked

their leadership activities influencing their academic success as 2.

As shown in Tables 14, 15 and 16, participants in this investigation were

asked to list those clubs and organizations in which they were involved both on and

off campus regardless of hierarchy within the organization. All participants in this

investigation indicated that they were involved in at least one activity on campus.

Respondents on an average participated in 3.5 activities on campus. All 20 students

collectively were involved in a total of 70 on-campus activities. Students

participated in a variety of activities. More than one third (37.0%) of the activities

the respondents were involved in were related to the students' academic major.

Student leaders' involvement in activities relating to support services represented

21.0% of the overall activities in which they participated on campus. One half of the

respondents' participation in activities was distributed among various organization

activities: recreational, student unions, mentoring, fraternity, and honor societies.

Summary of Female Respondent Profiles

Approximately 12 female respondents participated in this investigation. The

female participants were full-time students and were enrolled at ISU (n = 2), NIU (n

= 2), SIUC (n = 2), UIC (n = 2), and UIUC (n = 4). These data are presented in

Table 17.

Table 14

Combined Summary of Respondents' Participation in On-Campus
and Off-Campus Activities, Clubs, and/or
Organizations by Gender

Activities by Location	Women	Men
On Campus		
Fraternity or sorority	1	2
Major-related club	18	8
Honor society	4	1
Mentoring	4	2
Support services	12	3
Student government	5	2
Choir, religious dance	7	1
Subtotal	51	19
Off Campus		
Mentoring	3	1
Volunteer work	10	3
Religious	2	1
Other	4	3
Subtotal	19	8
Overall Total	70	27

Table 15

Composite Summary of Respondents' Participation in Campus Activities, Clubs, and Organizations by Gender

Respondents by Gender	Fraternity or Sorority	Major-Related Clubs	Honor Society	Mentoring Club	Support Services Activities	Student Government Association	Bowling, Choir, Dance, Religious	Total	Mean Activity
Women (12)	1	18	4	4	12	5	7	51	4.25
Men (8)	2	8	1	2	3	2	1	19	2.37
Total	3	26	5	6	15	7	8	70	3.50
Total %	4.29	37.14	7.14	8.57	21.43	10.00	11.43	100.00	

Table 16

Summary Composite of Respondents' Participation in Off-Campus Activities
Clubs, and/or Organizations by Gender

Respondents by Gender	Mentoring	Volunteer Work	Religious	Other	Total	Mean
Women (10/12)	3	10	2	4	19	1.9
Men (7/8)	1	3	1	3	8	1.1
Total (17/20)	3	26	5	6	40	2.35
Total %	4.28	37.14	7.14	8.57	21.42	10.00

Table 17

Female Respondents' Profile by Institution, Degree Type,
Major, and Career Goal

Female Respondents	Institution	GPA	Degree Type	Major	Career Goal
Pat	ISU	3.07	BS	Finance	A job
Karen	ISU	3.50	BA	Marketing	A job
Renee	NIU	3.20	BS	Premedicine	Physician and teacher
Stacy	NIU	3.60	BS	Nursing	Nursing Anesthetist
Ruby	SIUC	3.00	BS	Liberal arts	Teacher
Mary	SIUC	3.49	BA	Theater	Actress
Carla	UIC	3.00	BA	English literature	Open a K-12 Christian school
Tina	UIC	3.30	BA	African-American studies	Open a community center
Kathy	UIUC	3.15	BS	Finance	Financial analyst
Carol	UIUC	3.40	BS	Premedicine	Physician
Cindy	UIUC	3.20	BS	Finance	Investment portfolio manager or own firm to help African-American community
Gail	UIUC	3.00	BA	Speech communications	Chief executive officer (CEO) of human resources

The average age of the female respondents, also shown in Table 17, was 21.9.

The female ages ranged from 21 to 24 years of age. The average GPA was 3.24 on a

4.0 scale. The GPAs ranged from 3.00 to 3.60. All female participants were

receiving some form of financial aid. Six of the 12 female student participants

received academic scholarships. Seven female respondents held part-time jobs.

They worked an average of 18.6 hours a week.

Approximately 7 of the 12 female respondents were pursuing a bachelor of

science degree and five were pursuing a bachelor of arts degree. Their majors were

African-American studies (n = 1), English literature (n = 1), finance (n = 3), liberal

arts (n = 1), marketing (n = 1), premedicine (n = 2), nursing (n = 1), speech and

communications (n = 1), and theater (n = 1). The intended individual career goals

for the female respondents are actress (n = 1); financial analyst (n = 1); physician (n

= 2); owner of a Christian school (n = 1); nursing anesthetist (n = 1); owner of a

community center (n = 1); owner of a firm in the Black community (n = 1); CEO of

human resources (n = 1); teacher (=1); and worker in a job (n = 2).

With reference to Table 12 (shown previously), female respondents were

asked to rank themselves as successful students on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being

highest extent to which they considered themselves successful students. Seven of the

12 students ranked themselves at 5; four ranked themselves at 4, and one ranked

herself at 3. Female participants in this study were also asked to rank the extent to

which they believed their student leadership activities contributed to their academic

success. They ranked their perceptions on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest

contribution of their leadership activities to their academic success. Five of the 12

female respondents ranked their leadership activities at 5 as contributing to their

success. Four females ranked leadership activities at 4 as contributing to their

success; two ranked leadership activities at 3; and one ranked leadership activities

at 2.

As shown in Tables 18 and 19. all 12 female respondents collectively

participated in 51 campus activities. The average number of campus activities in

which female respondents were involved was 4.25. Campus activities ranged from

involvement in sororities (n = 1) to major-related club activities (n = 18). Support

services was second in leading female respondents' participation in university

activities, followed by social activities (n = 7); student unions (n = 5); honor clubs (n

= 4); and mentoring (n = 4). Universities that had the most involvement per female

respondent were NIU (6.5), UIUC (4.25), SIUC (3.0). ISU (2.0), and UIC (2.0).

As shown in Table 20. 10 of the 12 respondents participated in 19 off-campus

activities. These activities included mentoring. volunteer. religious/faith. and

recreational. UIUC female respondents averaged three off-campus activities. NIU

students average two off-campus activities. UIC students averaged 1.5. ISU

averaged 1 activity. and SIUC averaged 1 activity.

Half of the female respondents attended public high schools in the suburban

area, and six attended school in the city, of which five attended public schools and

one attended a private school. There appeared to be no significant differences in

students' high-school location or type.

Table 18

Women Respondents in On-Campus Participation in Activities in Clubs and Organizations by Institution

Women	Institution	Sorority	Major-Related Clubs	Honor Society	Mentoring Club	Support Services Activities	Student Government Association	Bowling, Choir, Dance, Religious	Total
Pat	ISU		2						2
Karen	ISU		2						2
Renee	NIU	1	1		1	2	1	1	
Stacy	NIU		2	1	1	2			
Ruby	SIUC				1	1		1	
Mary	SIUC		3						
Carla	UIC					1	2	2	5
Tina	UIC		1	1		2		2	6
Kathy	UIUC		2						2
Carol	UIUC		1	2		1			4
Cindy	UIUC		2		1	2	1		7
Gail	UIUC		2			1	1	1	4
Total		1	18	4	4	12	5	7	51

Table 19

Composite Summary of Respondents' Participation in Campus Activities, Clubs, and Organizations by Gender

Women (12) Respondents by Institution	Sorority	Major-Related Clubs	Honor Society	Mentoring Club	Support Services Activities	Student Government Association	Bowling, Choir, Dance, Religious	Total	Mean Activity
ISU (2)		4						4	2.00
NIU (2)	1	3	1	2	4	1	1	13	6.50
SIUC (2)		3		1	1		1	6	3.00
UIC (2)		1	1		3	2	4	4	2.00
UIUC (4)		7	2	1	4	2	1	17	4.25
Total	1	18	4	4	12	5	7	51	4.25
Total %	1.96	35.29	7.84	7.84	23.53	9.80	13.73	100.00	

Table 20

Women Respondents' Participation in Off-Campus Activities,
Clubs, and Organizations by Institution

Females	Institution	Mentoring	Volunteer	Religious	Recreational	Total
Pat	ISU					0
Karen	ISU		1			1
Renee	NIU		1		1	2
Stacy	NIU		1		1	2
Ruby	SIUC					0
Mary	SIUC				1	1
Carla	UIC			1		1
Tina	UIC	1	1			2
Kathy	UIUC		3			3
Carol	UIUC	1		1	1	4
Cindy	UIUC	1	2			4
Gail	UIUC		1			1
Total		3	10	2	4	19

Summary of Male Respondent Profiles

Approximately eight African-American males participated in this

investigation. These male respondents were enrolled at one of the five Illinois

doctoral degree-granting institutions: ISU (n = 2), NIU (n = 2), SIUC (n = 1), UIC (n

= 1), and UIUC (n = 2). All eight male respondents were enrolled full-time and all

received some form of financial aid. Two of the eight male respondents received

academic scholarships. The average age of the male respondents was 23.6 years old.

Seven of the eight male respondents were employed and worked an average of 18.75 hours per week. The GPAs ranged from 2.60 to 3.40. The average GPA was 3.17 on a 4.0 scale.

As shown in Table 21, approximately six of the eight male participants were pursuing a bachelor of science degree and two were pursuing a bachelor of arts degree. Their majors were business-related fields (n = 4: accountancy. economics. management. operations management); criminal justice (n = 1): electrical engineering (n = 1); premedicine (n = 1). and secondary education. history (n = 1). Five of the eight male respondents were specific when identifying their career goals. The intended individual career goals for the male respondents were a worker in a job (n = 2); a physician (n = 1). secretary of education (n = 1). undecided (1): human resource position or owner of a business or worker in a job in a firm (n = 1): and worker in a job at Texas Instruments (n = 1).

With reference to Tables 12 and 13 (shown previously), male respondents were asked to rank the extent to which they considered themselves successful students. The ranking was done on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very unsuccessful and 5 being very successful. Three students ranked themselves as very successful. four ranked themselves as successful. and one ranked himself as somewhat successful. Male respondents were also asked to rank the extent to which they believed their leadership activities contributed to their academic success. The ranking was done on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest extent of contribution.

One male participant ranked himself at 2, four ranked themselves at 3, two ranked

themselves at 4, and one male ranked himself at 5.

Table 21

Male Respondent Profile Composite by Institution, GPA,
Degree Type, Major, and Career Goal

Male Respondents	Institution	GPA	Degree Type	Major	Career Goal
Andre	ISU	3.40	BS	Secondary education	Secretary of education
Steve	ISU	3.29	BS	Criminal justice	Undecided
Rudy	NIU	2.82	BS	Accountancy	Work in form/own business
Carl	NIU	3.50	BA	Operations management	Undecided
Allen	SIUC	2.60	BS	Electrical engineering	Work for Texas Instruments
Ben	UIC	3.26	BS	Management	Human resources
Ray	UIUC	3.36	BS	Microbiology/Premed	Physician/medicine
Sam	UIUC	3.20	BA	Economics	Hold a job

As shown in Tables 22, 23 and 24, respondents were asked to list the clubs

and organizations that they were involved with on campus and off campus,

regardless of hierarchy within the organization. All male respondents were involved

in campus activities. Seven of the eight male respondents were involved in off-

campus activities. Male respondents were involved in a total of 19 campus activities

and eight activities outside the university. The number of activities participated in

by males ranged from two to three activities. Males averaged 2.37 campus activities

Table 22

Male Respondents' Participation in On-Campus Clubs and Organizations by Institution

Males	Institution	Fraternity	Major-Related Clubs	Honor Society	Mentoring Club	Support Services Activities	Student Government Association	Choir	Total
Andre	ISU		2	1					3
Steve	ISU							1	1
Rudy	NIU		1		1	2			4
Carl	NIU				1				1
Allen	SIUC	1					1		2
Ben	UIC		1			1			2
Ray	UIUC	1	3						4
Sam	UIUC		1				1		2
Total		2	8	1	2	3	2	1	19

Table 23

Composite Summary of Male Respondents' Participation in Campus Activities by Institution

Male Respondents (8) by Institution	Sorority	Major-Related Clubs	Honor Society	Mentoring Club	Support Services Activities	Student Government Association	Bowling, Choir, Dance, Religious	Total	Mean Activity
ISU (2)		2	1				1	4	2.00
NIU (2)		1		2	2			5	2.50
SIUC (1)	1					1		2	2.00
UIC (1)		1			1			2	2.00
UIUC (2)	1	4				1		6	3.00
Total	2	8	1	2	3	2	1	19	2.37
Total %	10.53	42.11	5.26	10.53	15.78	10.53	5.26	100.00	

and 1.14 activities off-campus. Participation in campus activities included a male

mentoring program, choir member, honors program, and clubs within their majors.

Males were more involved with activities related to their major than any other type

of activity.

Table 24

Male Respondents' Participation in Off-Campus Activities,
Clubs, and Organizations by Institution

Males	Institution	Mentoring	Volunteer	Religious	Recreational	Total
Andre	ISU		1			1
Steve	ISU			1	1	2
Rudy	NIU		1			1
Carl	NIU				1	1
Allen	SIUC		1			1
Ben	UIC				1	1
Ray	UIUC	1				1
Sam	UIUC					0
Total		1	3	1	3	8

Approximately eight (42%) of the 19 activities on campus were related to the

male students' major. UIUC, ISU, and NIU had slightly more male student

participation in campus activities. Respondents were involved with off-campus

activities such as volunteer work at an elementary school, volunteer work at a

juvenile detention center, and church activities.

There appears to be no similarity in comparing GPAs with students' ranking

of their success or leadership activities and success. As presented previously in

Table 14, students' responses to success varied. Students who ranked their success

at 5 had an average GPA of 3.16. Students who ranked themselves at 4 had an

average GPA slightly higher, at 3.18. However, students who ranked themselves at 3

had an average GPA of 3.20. One male participant who ranked his leadership at 5

and his success at 4 had a GPA of 2.60. This respondent was involved in two

campus activities and one off-campus activity. However, one student who had a

GPA of 3.36 ranked his success at 4 and his leadership at 3.

Male respondents were asked during the interviews if they had attended a

public or private high school and whether it was in the city or suburbs. Five of the

eight male respondents attended high school in a suburban area, of which two

attended private schools and three attended public schools. Three of the eight male

respondents attended public high schools in the city.

Similarities and Differences Between Male and Female Respondents' Profiles

Male respondents were older than female students. The average age for male

respondents was 23.6 as compared to 21.9 for females. Approximately seven

(87.5%) of the eight males worked as compared to seven (58.3%) of the female

respondents in this study. There were no significant differences with respect to work

hours between male and female respondents. Both groups averaged 18.6 work hours

a week. All respondents received financial aid. However, more females received

academic scholarships than did males. Half (50%) of the females were receiving

academic scholarships as compared to two (25%) males. Females' GPAs were

slightly higher than male respondents' GPAs. With respect to the respondents'
career goals, both groups appeared to have the same level of aspirations as to what
they wanted to do upon completion of their studies in college. A majority of the
respondents' career goals were specific. However, males tended to identify titles and
companies at which they wanted to be employed more than did the females. Three
of the respondents' career goals were not clarified beyond seeking employment.

There was a difference between male and female participation in campus and
off-campus activities and with how they ranked themselves as successful students
and their leadership activities. Females were more involved in activities, averaging
four on-campus activities as compared to the males' involvement of two activities.
Both groups tended to participate more in clubs relating to their major, support
services, and mentoring activities. There was also a difference between males and
females regarding participation in off-campus activities. Females averaged 1.9 off-
campus activities and males averaged 1.1 off-campus activities.

There appeared to be slightly less participation at UIC for both female and
male respondents. This may be in part due to it being primarily a commuter school.
There also appeared to be more participation by males at NIU, which had more
female enrollees than males. This was also true for the female respondents at UIUC,
which had more males than females. The data described in this analysis is found in
Table 23.

Respondents were asked to rank themselves as successful students on a scale
of 1 to 5, with 5 being very successful. More than half of the female respondents

ranked themselves at 5 as compared to three of the eight male respondents.

Respondents were also asked to rank the extent to which they believed their

leadership activities contributed to their academic success. This ranking was done

on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest contribution. Five (41%) of the females

ranked leadership activities contributing to their success at 5, but one (12%) male

student ranked leadership activities at 5. There were no significant differences

between male and female respondents' GPAs and ranking of their success and

leadership activities.

It appeared that males' perceived involvement on campus was not a

significant factor or indicator for their academic success. However, female

respondents perceived their involvement in on- and off-campus activities as

contributing factors to their success.

There appeared to be no significant differences between males and females in

their geographical location of high-school attendance, although the proportion of

males who attended high school in the suburbs was slightly higher than that of

females. Future studies may want investigate the type of high school in terms of

diversity and resources available.

Interview Responses

Interview responses are presented to correspond to each of the three research

questions.

Interview Responses Corresponding to
Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, "How do undergraduate African-American

female student leader participants describe selected individual and institutional

factors influencing their academic success in public doctoral degree-granting

institutions in Illinois, examined in terms of (a) respondents' definitions of academic

success, (b) factors contributing to their academic success, (c) factors making it

difficult for them to be academic successful, and (d) recommendations for improving

academic success for African Americans?"

As shown in Table 25, *academic success*, as defined by most of the female

respondents in this study, consisted of a combination of perceived factors. Goal

attainment appeared to be a main factor in defining academic success.

Approximately 10 of the 12 female respondents stated that accomplishing one's

goals were key to academic success. Five female respondents stated that maintaining

a good GPA and being focused were elements of success. Four respondents stated

that learning the material was also a factor. Other factors worth noting included

finding a job in the field of study (n = 3), establishing a foundation for a career (n =

3); being involved academically and socially (n = 3); setting strategy (n = 2);

managing time well (n = 2), networking (n = 1), coping (n = 1), realizing one's

potential (n = 1), and working to the utmost of one's ability and maintaining honors'

status (n = 1).

Table 25

Female Respondents' Definition of Academic Success by Institution and GPA

Definition of Academic Success	Pat, ISU, 3.07	Karen, ISU, 3.50	Renee, NIU, 3.20	Stacy, NIU, 3.60	Ruby, SIUC, 3.49	Mary, SIUC, 3.00	Carla, UIC, 3.00	Tina, UIC, 3.30	Kathy, UIUC, 3.15	Carol, UIUC, 3.20	Cindy, UIUC, 3.40	Gail, UIUC, 3.00	Total (n = 12)
Achieving goals	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	10
Good GPA		X		X	X			X				X	5
Being focused		X		X				X	X	X			5
Learning the subject			X				X				X	X	4
Finding a job in the field of study	X			X		X							3
Being involved academically and in social activities		X								X		X	3
Time management		X								X			2
Communication skills										X			1
Setting strategy									X	X			2
Networking										X			1
Foundation for a career	X			X						X			3
Getting the most out of classes											X	X	2
Coping										X			1
Realizing potential	X												1
Working to the utmost of one's ability									X				1
Maintaining honors' status				X									1

Female respondents' response to the question varied. For example, one female respondent stated that academic success was not only goal attainment but also consisted of other elements such as setting strategy to be able to succeed in anything that one sets out to accomplish. For example, Cindy was 21 years of age and majoring in finance. Her career goal was to become an investment portfolio manager or own a firm to help the Black community. Cindy gave a 5 rating on the respondent profile form to being a very successful student. She also gave a 5 rating to her leadership activities contributing to her academic success. Cindy defined academic success as follows:

> Academic success for me would be actually having some goals in mind and educational goals. As far as career goals, in what you want to accomplish and devise a solution or set strategy in which you go about to achieve, to obtain, certain goals. Being a student at the University of Illinois, academic success is a must. School is strictly based on academics, and it is very important to be able to succeed and to compete with others--other culture groups, other ethnic backgrounds--and being able to set your mark, being able to discern yourself from others, being able to focus and discipline yourself in the manner in which you're able to handle certain situations-- whether they have to do with education or just dealing with faculty and staff-- being able to strive and being able to conquer, meaning academic challenges --as far as school work, as far as overcoming the odds, as far as being in large classroom setting, being able to communicate very well. Communication is a must. If you are not able to communicate and sell yourself--because basically all that school is, is preparing you to network, preparation for corporate America, and if you're not able to communicate verbally, as well as written skills, you're in for a big challenge.

However, Stacy stated that academic success included establishing a good foundation, having good grades, and maintaining honors' status. Stacy was 23 years old and was majoring in nursing. She was married with one young child and commuted more than 130 miles each day to school from home. She received

academic scholarships and worked 24 hours a week. Stacy rated herself at 5 for being a very successful student. She gave a 3 rating for leadership activities contributing to her success. She defined academic success as follows:

> I would have to say, just looking from an academic level, I would have to say achieving a GPA that's better than average and successfully completing all my classes. It was really important to me to maintain an honor's status. It was important for me to establish a good foundation so I could have a good career.

When asked how they perceived their academic success in comparison to the academic success of other students, approximately 5 of the 12 respondents stated that they were different in that they did not compare themselves with others. Four female respondents stated that they were above average, and three stated that they were average students in comparison to other students. More than half ($n = 9$) of the female respondents stated that there were no gender differences with respect to academic success. Respondents who perceived differences stated that females were more focused than males ($n = 3$). One female respondent stated that males received better grades than females. One student who stated that there was no difference noted, however, that her field was nursing and she saw no difference on her observation in her field of study. Other factors noted included women being stereotyped as inferior to men ($n = 1$), women not realizing their potential, and differences in male-dominated majors in school.

When asked if they perceived academic success as different for African-Americans, four said no, one stated somewhat, and seven of the respondents stated that there were differences. The differences cited by the female respondents

included having to prove oneself (n = 4), attempting to do things on one's own (n = 2), little presence of other African-Americans on campus (n = 2), having educational backgrounds that are not the same as compared to other students (n = 1). White students being able to navigate their way through the process better (n = 1); and a lack of mixing of the different clubs and activities on campus (n = 1). Summaries of the data presented appear in Tables 26, 27, and 28.

Contributing Factors

Female respondents were asked what they perceived to be the most important factors contributing to their academic success and what helped them to be successful. Did they see important contributing factors for female students being different from those for male students? Did they perceive a difference between those factors for African-Americans and for other students?

A majority of the female respondents, 11 of the 12, stated that their parents and family were main contributing factors. More than half stated that their educational background (n = 8) and their motivation or intense drive from within (n = 9) were major factors. Six students cited their spirituality as a key contributing factor. Four attributed time management as a factor in their success. Fewer than half stated that professors (n = 3), friends and peers (n = 3), and being a first-generation college student in the family (n = 3) were key factors. Support services (n = 4) and counselors (n = 3) were also perceived as institutional factors contributing to their success. Other factors reported by respondents included being a wife/mother (n = 1);

Table 26

Female Response to How They Compare Their Academic Success to That of Other Students

Comparison of Success to Others	Pat, ISU, 3.07	Karen, ISU, 3.50	Renee, NIU, 3.20	Stacy, NIU, 3.60	Ruby, SIUC, 3.49	Mary, SIUC, 3.00	Carla, UIC, 3.00	Tina, UIC, 3.30	Kathy, UIUC, 3.15	Carol, UIUC, 3.20	Cindy, UIUC, 3.40	Gail, UIUC, 3.00	Total (n = 12)
Above average	X	X		X							X		4
Average			X			X	X						3
Student does not compare herself with others					X			X	X	X		X	5

Table 27

Female Response to Gender Differences in Academic Success

Gender Differences in Academic Success?	Pat, ISU, 3.07	Karen, ISU, 3.50	Renee, NIU, 3.20	Stacy, NIU, 3.60	Ruby, SIUC, 3.49	Mary, SIUC, 3.00	Carla, UIC, 3.00	Tina, UIC, 3.30	Kathy, UIUC, 3.15	Carol, UIUC, 3.20	Cindy, UIUC, 3.40	Gail, UIUC, 3.00	Total (n = 12)
Yes	X						X		X				3
No		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	9
Patterns/Themes													
Females more focused							X		X	X			3
Nursing major				X									1
Males get better grades	X												1
Stereotype of women as inferior	X												1
Women do not realize their full potential	X												1
Difference in certain majors											X		1

Table 28

Female Response to Differences in Academic Success for African Americans

Academic Success Different for African-Americans?	Pat, ISU, 3.07	Karen, ISU, 3.50	Renee, NIU, 3.20	Stacy, NIU, 3.60	Ruby, SIUC, 3.49	Mary, SIUC, 3.00	Carla, UIC, 3.00	Tina, UIC, 3.30	Kathy, UIUC, 3.15	Carol, UIUC, 3.20	Cindy, UIUC, 3.40	Gail, UIUC, 3.00	Total (n = 12)
Somewhat		X											1
No					X			X			X	X	4
Yes	X		X	X		X	X		X	X			7
Patterns/Themes													
Having to prove oneself	X		X	X						X			4
Whites have attended better schools						X							1
Attempt to do things on one's own									X	X			2
Little presence of African Americans on campus									X	X			2
Educational background not similar		X				X	X						3
Blacks do not believe they have the same potential	X												1
No mixing of the clubs on campus		X											1
Whites are able to navigate through the process more easily									X				1

people who doubted them (n = 1), being away at school (n = 1), being disciplined (n = 2), not going back from where the student came from (n = 1), financial aid advisor (n = 1), surrounding myself with people who want to do better (n = 1), Black student Union (n = 1), joining diverse study groups (n = 1), and the willingness to be open minded (n = 1).

Female respondents were asked if they perceived any differences in academic success based on gender. One half of the students said there were no differences and one half stated that there were differences based on gender. Respondents' answers varied. The factors respondents cited included males driven by money (n = 1), more difficulties for males (n = 1), males being more involved in sports (n = 2), females working harder (n = 1), and females being more self-disciplined (n = 1).

A majority of the female respondents stated that there were differences in contributing factors for African-Americans in their success. Approximately 9 of the 12 female respondents stated that there were differences. One female respondent stated there were, one stated that she could not decide, and one said that there was a slight difference. More than half (n = 7) of the respondents stated that race was a factor, five stated that having to prove oneself was a factor, two stated that there were few African-Americans on campus, two cited the notion that one will not succeed was a factor, and two stated that educational background was a factor. The data for this analysis are presented in Tables 29, 30, and 31.

Table 29

Female Responses to Factors Contributing to Their Academic Success

Contributing Factors to Academic Success	Pat, ISU, 3.07	Karen, ISU, 3.50	Renee, NIU, 3.20	Stacy, NIU, 3.60	Ruby, SIUC, 3.49	Mary, SIUC, 3.00	Carla, UIC, 3.00	Tina, UIC, 3.30	Kathy, UIUC, 3.15	Carol, UIUC, 3.20	Cindy, UIUC, 3.40	Gail, UIUC, 3.00	Total (n = 12)
Parents/family	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11
Motivation	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X	9
Educational background	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X			8
Religion/faith			X		X		X	X			X	X	6
Time management		X			X				X	X			4
Professors		X								X		X	3
Friends/peers			X			X			X				3
First-generation student	X			X		X							3
Being a wife/mother				X									1
People who doubted her				X									1
Being away at school				X									1
Discipline									X			X	2
Not going back where she came from												X	1
Support services			X				X	X		X			4
Guidance counselors	X		X					X					3
Financial aid advisor			X										1
Not having to work	X												1

(continued on following page)

Table 29 (continued)

Contributing Factors to Academic Success	Pat, ISU, 3.07	Karen, ISU, 3.50	Renee, NIU, 3.20	Stacy, NIU, 3.60	Ruby, SIUC, 3.49	Mary, SIUC, 3.00	Carla, UIC, 3.00	Tina, UIC, 3.30	Kathy, UIUC, 3.15	Carol, UIUC, 3.20	Cindy, UIUC, 3.40	Gail, UIUC, 3.00	Total (n = 12)
Surrounding herself with people who want to do better											X		1
Black student union										X			1
Joining diverse study groups									X				1
Willingness to be open-minded										X			1

Table 30

Female Responses to Gender Differences as Contributing Factors for Academic Success

Gender Differences in Contributing Factors?	Pat, ISU, 3.07	Karen, ISU, 3.50	Renee, NIU, 3.20	Stacy, NIU, 3.60	Ruby, SIUC, 3.49	Mary, SIUC, 3.00	Carla, UIC, 3.00	Tina, UIC, 3.30	Kathy, UIUC, 3.15	Carol, UIUC, 3.20	Cindy, UIUC, 3.40	Gail, UIUC, 3.00	Total (n = 12)
Yes	X		X	X	X		X		X				6
No		X				X		X		X	X	X	6
Patterns/Themes													
Males driven by money	X												1
Harder for males in nursing				X									1
Males more involved in sports			X		X								2
Females work harder							X						1
Females more self-disciplined									X				1

Table 31

Female Responses to African-American Differences in Academic Success

Different for African Americans?	Pat, ISU, 3.07	Karen, ISU, 3.50	Renee, NIU, 3.20	Stacy, NIU, 3.60	Ruby, SIUC, 3.49	Mary, SIUC, 3.00	Carla, UIC, 3.00	Tina, UIC, 3.30	Kathy, UIUC, 3.15	Carol, UIUC, 3.20	Cindy, UIUC, 3.40	Gail, UIUC, 3.00	Total (n = 12)
No						X							1
Not sure											X		1
Slightly												X	1
Yes	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			9
Patterns/Themes													
Positive role models							X						1
Few African Americans on campus							X	X					2
Educational background	X				X								2
Having to prove oneself		X	X	X		X	X						5
Race issues	X	X			X			X	X	X		X	7
The notion that one will not succeed										X		X	2
Stereotyping based on major	X				X								2
Pressure to succeed as a first-generation student	X				X								2
Motivation based on family economics	X				X					X			3

Additional factors cited by students were stereotyping based on major (n = 2).

first generation and the pressure to succeed (n = 2), and motivation based on family

economic situation (n = 2). An example of contributing factors can be seen in the

following respondents' responses to contributing factors. The students' inner drives

varied from raising a child. people who doubted their ability to succeed. economic

situations. and being a first-generation college student.

For example. Gail was 21 years of age and majoring in speech

communications. Her career goal was to become the chief executive officer of

human resources in a firm. She worked 15 hours a week. She rated herself at 5 for

being a very successful student and ranked at 4 for leadership activities contributing

to her success. Gail also stated the main thing that enabled her to succeed as follows:

"Mainly. the goal that I have [is] to never hav[e] to go back where I came from or to

ever have to live at where I lived at before or any situation like that again."

Renee was 21 years of age and majoring in marketing. Her goal was to

secure a job. She received an academic scholarship. She rated herself at 5 for being

very successful and at 4 for her leadership activities as contributing to her success.

Time management was a key contributing factor for her:

> I would say time management. being able to get everything done in the time
> that I am allotted. and being able to sit down and actually finish something
> that I started, not [to] put it off to the last minute or procrastinate with
> everything.

<u>Factors Making it Difficult</u>

Female respondents were asked what they perceived as the most important factors making it difficult for them to be academically successful. Did they see important challenges as different for female students as compared to male students? Did they see differences for African-Americans as compared to other students? Individual factors appeared to be more of a concern.

More than half of the female respondents (n = 7) stated that staying focused was a primary factor in making it difficult for them to be successful. Staying motivated, perceptions of racism, and being expected not to do well were the next primary factors (n = 5) perceived as making it difficult for them to be successful. Less than half (n = 4) of the female respondents experienced some form of alienation in group projects in class. Other factors that made it difficult or were challenging were peer pressure (n = 3), perceptions of competing with students (n = 2), being a wife/mother (n = 1), time management (n = 2), maintaining a high GPA (n = 2), male-driven departments in certain majors (n = 1), few Blacks on campus (n = 3), their own personal insecurities (n = 1), getting through the first year of general-education courses (n = 2), and females not being supported by instructors in science courses (n = 1).

More than half of the 12 female respondents (n = 7) stated that there were challenges based on gender. Four students stated there were no challenges, and one student stated that it was probably a challenge based on gender. Three themes emerged from the interviews. One half (n = 6) of the female respondents stated that

the pressure for women to prove themselves was a factor. Four stated that females still deal with some major fields that are dominated by males, which could be a factor, and three stated that historical attitudes of women being inferior to men was still a factor.

A majority of the respondents (n = 8) stated there were some challenges for African-Americans. Two stated that there were some challenges and two stated that there were no challenges at all for African-American students in their academic success. Most of the students (n = 10) stated that the challenge is the pressure to prove oneself. Other factors included the historical attitude of women being inferior (n = 2), male-dominated major fields (n = 2), perceptions of being looked down upon (n = 1), and stereotyping in math and science courses (n = 1). The data for this analysis is presented in Tables 32, 33, and 34.

Recommendations

When asked what their recommendations were for academic success, most of the female respondents stated the need for students to be focused (n = 7). Other individual factors included being assertive (n = 4), setting goals (n = 4), not secluding oneself (n = 3), time management (n = 2), getting to know one's professors (n = 2), joining study groups (n = 2), not giving up (n = 3), not socializing until after one's first year (n = 1), and getting the most out of classes (n = 1). Institutional recommendations included using support systems (n = 4) and more diversity in campus activities. The data for this analysis is presented in Table 35.

Table 32

Female Responses to Contributing Factors that Make it Difficult to Be Academically Successful

Factors Making It Difficult to Be Academically Successful	Pat, ISU, 3.07	Karen, ISU, 3.50	Renee, NIU, 3.20	Stacy, NIU, 3.60	Ruby, SIUC, 3.49	Mary, SIUC, 3.00	Carla, UIC, 3.00	Tina, UIC, 3.30	Kathy, UIUC, 3.15	Carol, UIUC, 3.20	Cindy, UIUC, 3.40	Gail, UIUC, 3.00	Total (n = 12)
Staying focused		X	X	X	X	X	X	X					7
Staying motivated		X	X	X		X		X					5
Perceptions of racism	X						X		X	X		X	5
Being expected not to do well				X					X	X	X	X	5
Alienation in group projects	X					X	X				X		4
Peer pressure						X		X					2
Perceptions of competition with White students	X					X							2
Being a wife/mother				X									1
Time management		X		X									2
Maintaining a high GPA				X	X								2
Certain majors being male-driven					X								1
Few Blacks on campus/in major	X								X			X	3
Personal insecurities												X	1
Getting through first-year general courses			X									X	2
Females not being supported by instructors in science courses									X				1

Table 33

Female Responses to Challenges as Contributing Factors of Academic Success Based on Gender

Challenges Based on Gender	Pat, ISU, 3.07	Karen, ISU, 3.50	Renee, NIU, 3.20	Stacy, NIU, 3.60	Ruby, SIUC, 3.49	Mary, SIUC, 3.00	Carla, UIC, 3.00	Tina, UIC, 3.30	Kathy, UIUC, 3.15	Carol, UIUC, 3.20	Cindy, UIUC, 3.40	Gail, UIUC, 3.00	Total (n = 12)
None			X			X	X				X		4
Yes	X	X		X	X			X	X	X			7
Probably												X	1
Patterns/Themes													
Pressure for women to prove themselves	X	X			X			X	X			X	6
Historical attitudes of women as inferior	X	X						X					3
Male-dominated major fields				X	X	X		X					4

Table 34

Female Responses to Challenges as Contributing Factors of Academic Success for African Americans

Challenges Based on African Americans	Pat, ISU, 3.07	Karen, ISU, 3.50	Renee, NIU, 3.20	Stacy, NIU, 3.60	Ruby, SIUC, 3.49	Mary, SIUC, 3.00	Carla, UIC, 3.00	Tina, UIC, 3.30	Kathy, UIUC, 3.15	Carol, UIUC, 3.20	Cindy, UIUC, 3.40	Gail, UIUC, 3.00	Total (n = 12)
Somewhat		X									X		2
Yes	X			X	X	X	X	X		X		X	8
No			X		X								2
Patterns/Themes													
Pressure to prove oneself	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		X	10
Historical attitudes of woman as inferior	X								X				2
Male-dominated major fields						X		X	X				3
Perceptions of being looked down upon										X			1
Stereotyping in math and science							X						1

Table 35

Female Responses to Recommendations for Improving Academic Success

Recommendations	Pat, ISU, 3.07	Karen, ISU, 3.50	Renee, NIU, 3.20	Stacy, NIU, 3.60	Ruby, SIUC, 3.49	Mary, SIUC, 3.00	Carla, UIC, 3.00	Tina, UIC, 3.30	Kathy, UIUC, 3.15	Carol, UIUC, 3.20	Cindy, UIUC, 3.40	Gail, UIUC, 3.00	Total (n = 12)
Staying focused			X		X		X	X	X	X		X	7
Setting goals				X	X					X		X	4
Not secluding oneself	X			X		X						X	4
Time management					X					X			2
Getting to know one's professors		X				X					X		3
Joining study groups				X					X				2
Using support services	X			X				X			X		4
Being assertive				X				X	X		X		4
Having more diversity in clubs	X												1
Not giving up				X						X	X		3
Not socializing in the first year												X	1
Getting the most out of classes		X											1

Interview Responses Corresponding to
Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked. "How do undergraduate African-American male

student leader participants describe selected individual and institutional factors

influencing their academic success in public doctoral degree-granting institutions in

Illinois, examined in terms of (a) respondents' definitions of academic success. (b)

factors contributing to their academic success. (c) factors making it difficult for them

to be academically successful, and (d) recommendations for improving academic

success for African Americans?"

As shown in Table 36. *academic success* for the male respondents appeared

to be a key element for academic success. Approximately six of the eight male

respondents in this study believed that accomplishing one's academic goals was

academic success. One male respondent stated that academic success is how well

one moves through the system. and another respondent stated that achieving good

grades and learning the subject was academic success.

When asked how they compared their academic success to others. one

respondent stated that he perceived his success as being high. Four male respondents

stated that they were above average in comparison to others. and three stated they

were about average in comparison to others.

As shown in Tables 37. 38. and 39. all the male respondents stated that there

were no differences between genders regarding academic success. However. a

majority of the male respondents (n = 6) perceived success for African-Americans as

being different from that for other students. Three of the eight male respondents

Table 36

Male Respondents' Definitions of Academic Success by Institution and GPA

Definition of Academic Success	Andre, ISU, 3.40	Steve, ISU, 3.29	Rudy, NIU, 2.82	Carl, NIU, 3.50	Allen, SIUC, 2.60	Ben, UIC, 3.26	Ray, UIUC, 3.36	Sam, UIUC, 3.20	Total (n = 8)
Achieving goals	X		X		X	X	X	X	6
Earning good grades/GPA				X			X		2
Learning the subject				X					1
Setting strategy			X						1
Moving through the system well		X							1
Enduring to one's highest potential					X				1

Table 37

Male Responses to How They Compare Their Academic Success to Others

Comparison of Academic Success to Others	Andre, ISU, 3.40	Steve, ISU, 3.29	Rudy, NIU, 2.82	Carl, NIU, 3.50	Allen, SIUC, 2.60	Ben, UIC, 3.26	Ray, UIUC, 3.36	Sam, UIUC, 3.20	Total (n = 8)
High		X							1
Above Average	X		X	X			X		4
Average					X	X		X	3

Table 38

Male Respondents' Perceptions of Gender Differences in Academic Success

Gender Differences in Academic Success	Andre, ISU, 3.40	Steve, ISU, 3.29	Rudy, NIU, 2.82	Carl, NIU, 3.50	Allen, SIUC, 2.60	Ben, UIC, 3.26	Ray, UIUC, 3.36	Sam, UIUC, 3.20	Total (n = 8)
None	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8

Table 39

Male Responses to Differences in Academic Success for African Americans

Academic Success Different for African Americans?	Andre, ISU, 3.40	Steve, ISU, 3.29	Rudy, NIU, 2.82	Carl, NIU, 3.50	Allen, SIUC, 2.60	Ben, UIC, 3.26	Ray, UIUC, 3.36	Sam, UIUC, 3.20	Total (n = 8)
No							X	X	2
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X			6
Patterns/Themes									
If one does well, one is less likely to be noticed	X	X				X			3
Not enough support systems			X	X					2

stated there were no differences. The main factors perceived as different for African

Americans were that if one does well, one is less likely to be noticed (n = 3), and that

there were not enough support systems for them (n = 2).

For example, Ray was 22 years old and majoring in microbiology. His career

goal was to become a physician. He rated himself at 4 for being successful and at 3

for leadership activities contributing to his success. Ray defined academic success as

follows:

> Academic success is describing an academic goal for yourself, and success is
> achieving your goals and achievement of that goal at various levels. Your
> success will be measured by your progress taken at that point toward your
> goal. That maybe . . . high grades will get you closer to that point or goal.

Steve was 21 and majoring in criminal justice. He was undecided about his

career goal but was considering graduate school. He worked 10 hours a week. Steve

rated himself at 4 for being a successful student and 2 for his leadership activities

contributing to his success. He defined academic success as a combination of grades

and how one is able to navigate one's way through the process. Steve defined

academic success as follows:

> I think [signs of] being successful are your grades and keeping a good grade
> point average; also how well you are moving through the school system. I
> think if you do both of these successfully, that makes you an academic[ally]
> successful student.

Carl was considered a nontraditional student. He was 31 years old and

returned to college after leaving to join the workforce and eventually returning to

school after being laid off. He was majoring in operations management in

information systems. He was undecided about his career but was considering a

business venture. Carl rated himself at 4 for being a successful student and at 3 for

his leadership activities contributing to his academic success. He defined academic

success as follows:

> I think academic success is, in part, grades, but I think the other part of it is
> actually learning something like opposed to just being able to get it back on
> tests and then you forget it. That is my main concentration, especially in my
> major--making sure that I actually am learning the material as opposed to just
> giving it back on a test.

However, some male respondents perceived academic success as different for

African Americans. Campus environment appeared to be a factor in how African

Americans were perceived in their academic endeavors on campus. For example,

Steve stated,

> I see African Americans who are doing good in school, but they are less
> likely to be noticed. It's just like the real world. If you're successful in the
> real world, you're successful to a certain amount of people or only if you're
> talked up. But if you're White and you're successful, you're automatically
> successful. You're automatically noticed. That's the way I see it in college,
> too.

Contributing Factors

When asked what the contributing factors to their success were, five of the

eight respondents stated that family was the primary contributing factor. Other

individual factors were motivation (n = 3), educational background (n = 4), hard

work (n = 3), upbringing (n = 3), being focused (n = 1), stress management (n = 1),

friends (n = 1), study groups (n = 1), faith/religion (n = 1), time management (n = 1),

and being an older student (n = 1). Institutional factors were use of support services

(n = 4), support from faculty (n = 3), and advisors and counselors (n = 3).

More than half of the male respondents stated that there were no differences between gender in contributing factors. One respondent stated that there was some difference and two said yes, there were differences. The themes that emerged were males being more easily influenced (n = 2) and males being expected to be leaders (n = 1).

When asked if contributing factors were different for African-Americans, two respondents stated there were no differences, three stated there were some differences, and three stated there were differences. The major themes emerging from this were that males do not take advantage of support systems (n = 2) and that other races are privileged (n = 3).

Male respondents also stated a combination of individual and institutional factors that contributed to their success. More than half of the students reported support services as a factor contributing to their success. Half of the students stated that their relationships with faculty were key elements to their academic success. Approximately four of the eight students attributed their backgrounds as factors. Specifically, they stated that prior schooling and family were key factors to their success. In terms of individual factors, three students stated that it was hard work and self-motivation that enabled them to be successful.

Approximately five of the eight male respondents perceived no differences between genders in determining contributing factors for success. Those who did perceive differences stated either that males were more easily influenced than females or that it was harder for females and even more so for Black females because

they are not given much respect. The data for the analysis are presented in Tables

40, 41 and 42.

Factors Making It Difficult

As shown in Tables 43, 44, and 45, male respondents were asked what they

perceived as the most important factors making it difficult for them to be

academically successful. Did they see important challenges as different for female

students as compared to male students or for African Americans as compared to

other students? Individual factors were more of an issue than institutional factors.

The majority of the male respondents (n = 5) identified difficulties as peer pressure

(n = 2), staying focused (n = 1), taking classes outside their comfort zone (n = 1),

friends at home who were not in school (n = 2), having to prove oneself (n = 1), and

not pushing oneself (n = 1). One student stated that he had not experienced any

challenges that made it difficult for him to be successful.

For example, Rudy was 22 and is majoring in accountancy. His career goal

was to work in a firm or own an accounting business. He rated himself a 5 for being

a very successful student and a 4 for his leadership activities as contributing factors

to his success. Rudy stated that peer pressure was difficult.

> Peer pressure got me for a while. I was always a bright kid. But I tried to fit
> in so I wouldn't be called a nerd. Peer pressure almost ended my college
> career. I started to get wild even though I was getting As and Bs and almost
> got kicked out for disciplinary problems by trying to fit in. I got in trouble,
> and I knew I needed to stop trying to fit in.

Table 40

Male Responses to Factors Contributing to Their Academic Success

Contributing Factors for Academic Success	Andre, ISU, 3.40	Steve, ISU, 3.29	Rudy, NIU, 2.82	Carl, NIU, 3.50	Allen, SIUC, 2.60	Ben, UIC, 3.26	Ray, UIUC, 3.36	Sam, UIUC, 3.20	Total (n = 8)
Family			X		X	X	X	X	5
Faculty support	X		X				X		3
Support services			X	X		X	X		4
Motivation			X	X			X		3
Educational background		X		X			X	X	4
Hard work	X						X	X	3
Counselors/advisors			X		X				2
Upbringing/background		X	X	X					3
Being focused	X								1
Stress management							X		1
Friends					X				1
Study groups					X				1
Faith/religion	X								1
Time management		X							1
Being older, more mature				X					1

Table 41

Male Responses to Gender Differences as Contributing Factors for Academic Success

Gender Differences as Contributing Factors?	Andre, ISU, 3.40	Steve, ISU, 3.29	Rudy, NIU, 2.82	Carl, NIU, 3.50	Allen, SIUC, 2.60	Ben, UIC, 3.26	Ray, UIUC, 3.36	Sam, UIUC, 3.20	Total (n = 8)
No				X	X	X	X	X	5
Somewhat	X								1
Yes		X	X						2
Patterns/Themes									
Males being more easily influenced	X		X						2
Males being expected to be leaders		X							1

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Table 42

Male Responses to African-American Differences in Academic Success

	Andre, ISU, 3.40	Steve, ISU, 3.29	Rudy, NIU, 2.82	Carl, NIU, 3.50	Allen, SIUC, 2.60	Ben, UIC, 3.26	Ray, UIUC, 3.36	Sam, UIUC, 3.20	Total (n = 8)
Different for African Americans?									
No					X		X	X	3
Somewhat	X			X					2
Yes		X	X			X			3
Patterns/Themes									
Males not taking advantage of support systems	X					X			2
Other races being privileged		X	X	X					3

Table 43

Male Responses to Factors Making It Difficult to Be Academically Successful

Factors Making It Difficult to Be Successful	Andre, ISU, 3.40	Steve, ISU, 3.29	Rudy, NIU, 2.82	Carl, NIU, 3.50	Allen, SIUC, 2.60	Ben, UIC, 3.26	Ray, UIUC, 3.36	Sam, UIUC, 3.20	Total (n = 8)
Peer pressure			X		X				2
Not pushing oneself								X	1
Having to prove oneself							X		1
Not being focused				X					1
None		X							1
Campus environment						X			1
Friends at home who are not in school	X				X				2
Taking classes outside comfort zone							X		1

Table 44

Male Respondents' Contributing Factors Making It Difficult Based on Gender

Difficult Factors Based on Gender	Andre, ISU, 3.40	Steve, ISU, 3.29	Rudy, NIU, 2.82	Carl, NIU, 3.50	Allen, SIUC, 2.60	Ben, UIC, 3.26	Ray, UIUC, 3.36	Sam, UIUC, 3.20	Total (n = 8)
None	X			X	X	X		X	5
Yes		X	X				X		3
Patterns/Themes									
Females get pregnant			X						1
Harder for females		X							1
African-American males are stereotyped				X					1

Table 45

Male Respondents' Contributing Factors Making It Difficult for African Americans

Factors Making Academic Success Difficult for African Americans?	Andre, ISU, 3.40	Steve, ISU, 3.29	Rudy, NIU, 2.82	Carl, NIU, 3.50	Allen, SIUC, 2.60	Ben, UIC, 3.26	Ray, UIUC, 3.36	Sam, UIUC, 3.20	Total (n = 8)
Yes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Patterns/Themes									
Experiencing racism, recognizing it, and moving on				X	X				2
Prior schooling	X			X	X		X		3
Adjusting to environment									0
Males being stereotyped				X		X		X	3
Peer pressure from Whites			X						1
Economics		X							1

Three of the eight male respondents stated that campus environment was an issue. For example Ray pointed out his challenge:

> I always had to constantly prove my intelligence because the majority of the students that are not minority automatically assume that you are less intelligent, so when it came to a group or class project or something, they don't even consult you or they feel you are less intelligent--even professors to a certain extent. It's always a road block I have to work with or get passed. After my credentials became known, I didn't have that problem. but initially it was always a problem in trying to get past that.

More than half (n = 5) of the males stated that there were no differences between challenges for males and females. Three stated that there were challenges based on gender. The themes that emerged included it being harder on females (n = 1), females get pregnant, (n = 1), and African-American males are stereotyped (n = 3). However, half of those who did see differences stated that females who become pregnant return with a baby, which can be a challenge.

When asked if challenges were different for African Americans, all the male respondents said yes, but their specific responses varied. Two stated that the difficulty was experiencing racism but one came to recognize it and move on. They stated that prior schooling was a challenge, three stated that males are stereotyped, one cited peer pressure from Whites, and one stated family economics.

An example of the male experience is Allen's response, who was 23 years old and majoring in electrical engineering. His career goal was to work for a firm such as Texas Instruments. He received an academic scholarship and worked 25 hours a week. He rated himself a 4 for being a successful student and a 5 for his leadership activities contributing to his success. Allen stated,

I experience it from some teachers. I could feel it, and you just know it. For example, when given assignments, some White students' work would not be as well put together, but yet some would receive a better grade than me. Racism is not something I think about or dwell on, but it's a fact, and you do what you have to do to get through the course. You recognize that it's there, but you move on.

Recommendations

Respondents were asked to give recommendations for improving African-American student academic success and advice to future African-American students, administration, faculty, and supportive professional staff. They were also asked if their advice would be any different with respect to female students as compared to male students or to African Americans as compared to other students.

The advice the male respondents gave was a combination of participating actively in academic and social activities, staying focused, and taking advantage of support services. Six of the male respondents stated that their advice would not be any different for female students. Their recommendations included staying focused (n = 6), getting involved in student activities (n = 2), participating in group projects (n = 2), being assertive (n = 1), joining study groups (n = 1), talking to professors (n = 1), and making grades a priority (n = 1). Their advice for African-American students included working harder, identifying a goal, and staying focused to accomplish their goals. Utilizing minority support services appeared to echo for most of the male respondents. The descriptive data in this analysis are presented in Table 46.

Interview Responses Corresponding to
Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, "How do undergraduate African-American

female and male student leader participants describe selected individual and

institutional factors influencing their academic success in public doctoral degree-

granting institutions in Illinois, examined in terms of (a) respondents' definitions of

academic success, (b) factors contributing to their academic success, (c) factors

making it difficult for them to be academically successful, and (d) recommendations

for improving academic success for African Americans?

More than half of the female and male respondents said that achieving one's

goals were indicators for being academically successful. Maintaining a good GPA

was also an indicator by both groups, but it was more important for the female

respondents. Females respondents also said that being focused was a key factor for

defining academic success. Collectively, female respondents identified 16 indicators

for defining academic success, as compared to six for male respondents. Female

respondents' indicators were a combination of academic, personal, and social

variables that defined academic success as compared to individual factors of male

respondents in their definition.

When asked how they compared themselves to others, males were more

likely to rank themselves higher than females. For example, male respondents (n =

8) compared their academic success to others as high (n = 1), above average (n = 4),

and average (n = 3). However female respondents were somewhat more reserved in

comparing their academic success to others. Females stated that they were either

Table 46

Males Responses to Recommendations for Improving Academic Success

Recommendations	Andre, ISU, 3.40	Steve, ISU, 3.29	Rudy, NIU, 2.82	Carl, NIU, 3.50	Allen, SIUC, 2.60	Ben, UIC, 3.26	Ray, UIUC, 3.36	Sam, UIUC, 3.20	Total (n = 8)
Stay focused	X			X	X	X	X	X	6
Get involved in student activities	X							X	2
Watch relationships in which one is involved		X							1
Join support groups	X								1
Participate in group projects	X							X	2
Work harder		X				X			2
Have a goal			X					X	2
Be assertive				X					1
Join study groups				X					1
Talk to professors					X				1
Make grades the first priority						X			1
View Blacks as students, not as numbers	X								1
Take time to know students	X								1
Provide diversity training for staff			X						1
Be aware there is a Black population on campus; Black organizations are the only ones				X					1
Be satisfied with faculty and staff support			X						1

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above average (n = 4), average (n = 3), or that they did not compare themselves with others (n = 5). This may be significant, although GPA or major did not seem to be a factor. When asked if academic success was different based on gender, all males stated no. However, 9 of the 12 female respondents said yes, and three said no. Females stated a number of variables contributing to these gender differences. These variables are linked to barriers associated with discrimination and stereotyping of women. Male respondents stated there were no gender differences. which may also be significant.

What is significant is that more than half of the male respondents stated that there were differences in academic success for African-Americans in comparison to other students. The primary indicators were two institutional factors: not being noticed in class when doing well and too few support systems on campus. However. more than half of the female respondents stated that there were differences for African Americans as compared to other students. Female respondents cited academic, social and interpersonal factors that were different for African-Americans. Other factors included educational background, reaching potential, no mixing of clubs, and having to prove oneself. The one common factor cited by both groups was the experience of some form of racism.

When asked to identify key factors contributing to their success, female respondents stated that the key variables were parents, motivation, educational background, religion, time management, professors, friends, and being the first generation in the family to go to college. Male respondents' key variables were

family support, support services; and educational background. Again, female respondents had more (n = 21) contributing factors than male respondents (n = 15). There were differences again in gender when asked if contributing factors were different. Over half of the male respondents stated there were no differences, one stated there was some difference, and two said there were differences. The two themes that emerged were that males were more easily influenced and males were expected to be leaders. One half of the females stated that there were differences, and one half stated that there were no differences. The themes that emerged were that males are driven by money (n = 1), it is harder for males in nursing (n = 1), males are more involved in sports (n = 2), females work harder (n = 1), and females are more self-disciplined. What is significant is that none of the males stated any differences for females.

> No, but I noticed a difference at my school. The Black girls that go here graduate. Seventy percent of the men don't make it past their freshmen year. The ratio for men is four to one. The Black males--they really don't make it. They try to be cool and fit in. Peer pressure, friends, and drinking is a factor.

However, three of the females said no and nine said yes. Two of the nine females who said "no" to the question added "but," an "if" statement, or a certain condition. Those exceptions include how females are perceived within a major, a job, or with a professor or a difference within the African-American race based on gender. For example, Tina was 23 years old and majoring in African-American studies. She was receiving an academic scholarship at the university she was attending. When asked if she saw academic success as different for female students as compared to male students, she responded,

Actually, no, I don't. I think it depends on who puts forth the most effort, if you are driven to it. I don't believe in the technical fields that men are more thoughtful than the females. I just think if you put the time and energy into it, it will produce the desired results. The way the males are perceived by professors, yes, but as far as scores and their performance, no.

Females mentioned issues of concern for both gender groups.

More than half of the female respondents stated that there were differences in factors contributing to academic success for African-Americans. Approximately 9 of the 12 female respondents stated yes, one said there was no difference, one stated that she could not really say, and one stated it was slightly different. Males stated that there were no differences (n = 3), two stated there was some difference, and three stated that it was a difference for African-American students.. Two themes emerged: one was the perception of discrimination and one was allowing for other groups to be privileged and treated differently.

Respondents were asked what factors made it difficult for them to be successful. Female respondents cited 15 indicators as compared to eight factors cited by male respondents. The major themes cited by female respondents included staying focused (n = 6), staying motivated (n = 5), and various forms of racism, such as not being expected to do well (n = 5) and perceptions of racism (n = 5). Male respondents' key factors that make academic success difficult included peer pressure (n = 2), not pushing oneself (n = 1), having to prove oneself (n = 1), campus environment (n = 1), and taking classes outside of one's comfort zone (n = 1). Peer pressure seemed to be a significant factor for males as opposed to female respondents.

A majority of the female respondents stated that challenges faced in academic success were different based on gender. More than half of the female respondents stated there were differences, two stated there were probably differences, and two stated that there were no differences. The major themes were pressure for women to prove themselves (n = 5), historical attitudes of women being inferior to men (n = 3), and male-dominated major fields (n = 4). Fewer than half of the male respondents stated there were no differences. Three of the eight male respondents stated three themes: females get pregnant; academic success is harder for females because of the stereotypes placed on women, and African-American males are stereotyped.

When asked if challenges were different for African Americans, male respondents overwhelmingly said yes, and 10 of the 12 female respondents also concluded there were differences. Racism and feelings of having to prove themselves were key factors.

Some examples of the gender differences and challenges for African-American students are evident in the following examples: Tina was 23 years old and majoring in African-American studies. She was receiving an academic scholarship. When asked if she saw academic success as being different for female students as compared to male students, she responded,

> Actually, no, I don't. I think it depends on who puts forth the most effort, if you are driven to it. I don't believe in the technical fields that men are more thoughtful than the female. I just think if you put the time and energy into it, [you] will produce the desire results. The way the males are perceived by professors, yes, but as far as scores and their performance, no.

Some viewed the differences as stereotypes that have been placed on women.

Pat was 21 years old and was receiving an academic scholarship. Her major was

finance. She ranked herself at 5 for being a very successful student on the

respondent profile form. She saw the difference between male and female students

as follows:

> Yes, I do. Mostly, in my class, the test scores that were the highest were
> usually among the male students, and usually the awards were usually given
> to male students. So I think it has been different just because of the whole
> inferiority in the past that has been placed upon women. I think it's hard for
> women to realize that they can and oftentimes will be more successful than
> men. Sometimes it kind of a barrier there, before they even try.

Mary was a 24-year-old female who aspired to become an actress. She was

involved in three organizations on campus and one off campus. She worked 15

hours a week and was majoring in theater. When asked if challenges were different

for men and women, she stated,

> Not being able to trust my instructors. I continue to strive to be the best, and
> I get good grades. I have seen challenges. It is male-driven in my
> department. There are not many parts for females, and more parts and shows
> are given to the males in my department. I have to work hard to prove
> myself.

When asked about challenges, some of the male and female respondents

stated that it could be a challenge for women, especially in the science and

engineering programs or in the workforce because women had not made significant

gains in these fields.

Institutional Factors

Campus climate appeared to be an emerging theme for a majority of the respondents. Students who attended diverse elementary and secondary schools believed that they were able to adjust when experiencing some form of alienation. Issues concerning campus climate emerged when probing institutional factors contributing to their success, such as faculty, support services. class-assigned group projects, study groups, or factors influencing their success.

Although race was mentioned, it was not something that the respondents dwelled on. A significant number of participants indicated that they found themselves having to prove they were just as capable of performing as well or even better on class assignments. In particular, some of the participants believed that their classmates had perceived them as not being able to do the work when it came to group projects. Seldom were they ever asked to be a part of a study group. However, once the participants exhibited that they could do the work or pull their own weight, they were accepted by the group. Some examples of this type of exclusion from group participation can be seen in the following observations given by three participants.

Carol was a 21-year-old female student who was majoring in human development and premedicine. Her career aspirations were to become a teacher and a physician. She worked 15 hours a week and was actively involved in four organizations on campus as an orientation leader. a member of the honor society, a scholar for the McNair research program, and an active member of the minority

organization for premedicine students. She was involved in her church choir and was a mentor for the boys and girls club. Her GPA was 3.4 on a 4.0 scale. She took advantage of and used all support programs available to her. She attended public schools in an urban area. When asked about her participation in study groups, she stated,

> Oh yes, but in some of my science classes, I was like the only person of color, so when you would have to get in groups, they--the other students-- would look at me like I didn't know what I was doing. So it would want to make me work harder to show them that I know what I am doing. My first day, even though I was there, I was left out of the group. No one acknowledged me, and they talked around me, so I would have to pretty much make myself known, like "I know the answer" and "I know how to do this question." I had to be aggressive and let them know.

Kathy was a 21-year-old female who attended a private elementary school and high school. She received an academic scholarship to the university. Her GPA was 3.15, and she was majoring in finance. When asked about important challenges as being different for female students as compared to other students, she perceived her race and gender as a challenge for her in school. She stated,

> Yeah, I think it really depends. Say you walk into a class, they know you're Black, and they know you are a female, and I think the important factors are the perceptions they already have of you not doing good or not being on it or you are the person who won't come to class--things like that--which is already set in their minds. If I went to an all-Black school, I wouldn't have this problem because race wouldn't be an issue but obviously is going to be somewhat of an issue, but a teacher is not going to blatantly do something like this because you can sue for things like that. But it's something you sense with certain professors, yes.

<u>Individual Factors</u>

A person's educational background and upbringing appeared to be a frequently emerging theme when participants were asked about their academic success. The respondents in this investigation perceived their prior schooling as a factor that enabled them to adjust to campus life and academic subjects. Participants who attended private schools, regardless of the school's location, said it contributed to their success. Participants who attended suburban schools attributed their success back to their earlier schooling as well.

Some of the participants who attended private schooling or schools in the suburbs believed that their classmates and peers from urban areas who attended public school were at a disadvantage because of the perceived perceptions of the public schools' delivery system. They also believed that those who attended predominantly Black schools had a more difficult time adjusting to a predominantly White university. This was based on their interactions with other students on campus. This perception was consistent at all colleges.

Gail was a 21-year-old female who attended a predominantly Black school in the city. She was majoring in speech communications and aspired to be a CEO of human resources. Her GPA was 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. She was involved in four organizations on campus. She did volunteer work outside the university. When asked about the high school she attended, she said she did not think that it prepared her well. Her response was as follows:

> No, I think they left a lot out. I don't think anybody was prepared for college, maybe because I came from an all-Black high school in an all-Black

neighborhood and I wasn't prepared for the different cultures. Going to an all-White university, I wasn't prepared for all of that, and I wasn't prepared well for the classes neither.

Ben was a male majoring in management. His career goal was to work in human resources at a firm. He attended public school in an urban area. He gave himself a 5 rating for academic success and a 3 for leadership activities contributing to his success. When asked what factors made it difficult to be academically successful, he stated,

> I would say one of the most difficult things for me was getting used to an environment like UIC and the size of the school. I attended a public school, which I think made it difficult for me because it didn't prepare me as well academically.

A majority of the students attributed their success to upbringing. Some students believed that their parents' or primary guardians' expectations and childhood schooling helped them to achieve their goals. Students indicated factors such as time management and what was expected of them. Family encouragement and support were key factors. Approximately 5 of the 12 female respondents stated that their faith contributed to their success. Three of the eight male respondents stated that family and faith contributed in some way to their success. Five of the female respondents stated spirituality, and 11 stated upbringing. For example, the following are some of the responses regarding contributing factors:

> Andre: I would say my spirituality and my religious component of my life and just support from those that are close to me in my life, like my immediate family–my parents and my siblings.

> Renee: My faith in God. Also the daily activities which helped me reach my goals so I can become a better person and I can make a difference.

Ray: I was raised by my grandmother. I wasn't raised in a family where I had a mother or a father. So that in itself, having been independent and even at a young age having to pat yourself on the back to the point where you realize that you don't have to do that anymore and keep on going. Between my heavenly father and [my] grandmother they provided me with the encouragement that I needed.

As shown in Table 47, participants were academically and socially integrated into college life. Family and educational background appeared to be key factors in their success. Students were highly motivated for different reasons as supported by the literature. They appeared to have a clear focus in their goal attainment.

Summary

Students who participated in this study appeared to be optimistic of their career goals. They viewed themselves as successful students. Although campus climate was a theme, it appeared that it did not prevent these students from accomplishing their educational goals. Some students viewed this as a motivational factor to prove others wrong. Both male and female respondents appeared to have adjusted at their respective universities despite some emerging campus climate themes. This adjustment in part could be attributed to their academic perspectives. that is, having specific career goals and adjusting to social life on campus. A majority of the participants took advantage of the support services on campus and found them to be useful in their academic endeavors.

For the most part, males believed that there was no difference in academic success for males as compared to females. However, it appeared that females were more likely to see differences based on gender than were males. In some instances,

Table 47

Contributing Factors for Academic Success Based on Participants'
Responses Relative to Literature Categories

Institutional Factors Contributing to Student Success	Females			Males		
	Confirms Literature	Disconfirms Literature	Extends Literature	Confirms Literature	Disconfirms Literature	Extends Literature
Geographic location (IBHE, 2000)	1 Mary: Being away at school			1 Ben: Getting used to environment and size of campus		
Diverse environment (Brown, 1991; IBHE, 2000, 2001)						
Favorable campus climate (Allen, 1989; Brown, 1989; IBHE, 2000; Steele, 1997)						
Availability of financial aid (Brown, 1991; Bynum, 1989; IBHE, 2000; Sherman et al., 1994)	2 Pat: Receiving financial aid and not having to work while in school					
Supportive faculty (Brown, 1991; IBHE, 2000)	3 Karen: Professors' willingness to help	3 Cindy: Some teachers not supportive, as in science classes		3 Rudy: Professors taking time to explain and a few were very helpful		

Table 47 (continued)

Institutional Factors Contributing to Student Success	Females			Males		
	Confirms Literature	Disconfirms Literature	Extends Literature	Confirms Literature	Disconfirms Literature	Extends Literature
Curriculum/instruction with which students feel comfortable (IBHE, 2000; Steele, 1992)						
Support service programs (Brown, 1991; IBHE, 2000; M. A. Moore, 1996; Q. E. Moore, 1996)	4 Carla: Used support services			4 Ben: Did not let pride get in the way but took advantage of support systems	1 Sam: Never tried to use support services	
Targeted support programs (Allen & Haniff, 1989; Brown, 1991, 1996; Allen et al., 1991; IBHE, 2000; Williamson, 1999)						
Social climate/social activities (Brown, 1991; IBHE, 2000)	4 Stacy: Few African-American-centered activities, but those few make a big impact					
Academic and social integration (Astin, 1993; Padilla et al., 1997; Stage, 1989; Terenzini et al., 1994; Tinto, 1998)	12 All female respondents involved academically and socially			8 All male respondents involved academically and socially		

(continued on following page)

Table 47 (continued)

Institutional Factors Contributing to Student Success	Females			Males		
	Confirms Literature	Disconfirms Literature	Extends Literature	Confirms Literature	Disconfirms Literature	Extends Literature
Some nontraditional students needing help integrating academically and socially (Rendon, 1994)				1 Carl: Male mentoring program helped maintain focus		
Family (Allen & Haniff, 1989)	11 Gail: Parents			5 Allen: Family and friends supportive		
Background preparedness (Allen & Haniff, 1989; Astin, 1982; Morgan, 1990; Tinto & Wallace, 1986)	8 Carol: Foundation, upbringing, and schooling			3 Rudy: Coming from a balanced life; father was present		
High motivation (Allen & Haniff, 1989; Tinto, 1998)	9 Stacy: First in family to attend college, which provided more motivation			3 Sam: Worked hard; expectations from parents to work hard and succeed		
Setting strategy to deal with transition and coping (Padilla et al., 1997)	2 Stacy: Setting strategy and a good foundation to establish career			1 Rudy: Setting goals and being organized		

Table 47 (continued)

Institutional Factors Contributing to Student Success	Females			Males		
	Confirms Literature	Disconfirms Literature	Extends Literature	Confirms Literature	Disconfirms Literature	Extends Literature
Goal attainment/commitment (Allen & Haniff, 1989; Tinto, 1998)	12 Ruby: Setting goals, which is the motivation			8 Andre: Setting goals		
Independent students functioning successfully academically and socially (Allen & Haniff, 1989; Rendon, 1994)				1 Carl: Perceives self as an independent student		
High-school preparedness (ACORN, 2001; Allen & Haniff, 1989; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Tinto, 1993)	8 Cindy: High school helped play a part in success	2 Gail: High school (public school in city) did not prepare		4 Andre: Attended diverse school in suburbs, which helped	1 Steve: High school did nothing; attending a private K-6 school helped a lot	
Positive identity as a self-starter and persistent in meeting own needs (Allen & Haniff, 1989; Padilla et al., 1997)	2 Kathy: Personal organization and planning					

Table 47 (continued)

Institutional Factors Contributing to Student Success	Females			Males		
	Confirms Literature	Disconfirms Literature	Extends Literature	Confirms Literature	Disconfirms Literature	Extends Literature
Student-to-student relationships (Allen & Haniff, 1989)	3 Kathy: My friends are from different ethnic backgrounds (White, Black, and Latino) I joined diverse study groups and found them to be successful			1 Ray: I talked to people who have taken classes in my area		
Time management (Padilla et al., 1997)	4 Stacy/Carol: Time management important					

females perceived some of the same concerns as females that they perceived as African-Americans. Both groups perceived academic success for African-Americans as different from that of other students. Both groups mentioned educational background, upbringing, and perceived notions from others of their ability to do the coursework as factors.

Respondents stated three major themes related to institutional and individual factors that contributed to their success: (1) academic and social integration, which include family support, educational background, motivation, involvement on campus academically and socially, and support service programs; (2) parental influence/prior schooling; and (3) spirituality and motivation. Half of the female respondents (n = 6) stated that their spirituality was a key factor to their success. Only one male respondent listed spirituality as a contributing factor to academic success.

CHAPTER 5

STUDY LEARNINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Presented in this chapter is a focused review pertaining to the current study of female and male African-American undergraduate senior student leaders' perceptions of factors influencing their academic success at selected public doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois. The following are addressed: overview of the study, presentation of findings and conclusions, discussion and implications for higher education, and recommendations for further research.

Overview of the Study

This qualitative study examined female and male African-American senior undergraduate student leaders' perceptions of factors influencing their academic success at selected public doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois. Study participants attended one of the following public doctoral degree-granting institutions: ISU, NIU, SIUC, UIC, and UIUC. Collectively, these institutions enroll approximately half of the African-American undergraduate students who attend baccalaureate institutions in Illinois. A total of 20 graduating African-American student leaders participated in the study, 12 females and 8 males.

The literature on baccalaureate retention and graduation has focused largely on those factors contributing to student persistence, typically based on quantitative research conducted primarily with respect to predominantly White campuses. Resulting research data typically reflect the aggregate views of the majority student population on campus. (Petersen & Christensen, 1996: Stage, 1992). Additionally, prior research typically has focused on factors related to student failure based on quantitative studies. Notably, little research has been done on individual students and their own stories of factors they believe enabled them to succeed.

Further, Livingstone and Stewart (1987) noted the need for research on the perceptions of students from the same ethnic background as opposed to examining all ethnic groups collectively. Padilla et al. (1997) suggested that examining student success in college would provide a different perspective on student retention, which could lead to developing new theoretical models for student success. Emerging from this perspective, this study focused on African-American students' own perceptions of the factors they believed enabled them to achieve academic success.

Previous research has demonstrated that schools with high baccalaureate graduation rates among students of color, particularly African-American students, are associated with a number of factors. Related institutional factors include campus location and climate, financial aid availability, curriculum, support services, multicultural environment, and academic and retention programs. Related individual factors include how students perceive and react to their campus environment, student relationships with faculty and peers, students' level of campus involvement,

students' social and academic integration into campus life, how students are able to cope, and student educational and family background.

Taking these factors into account, this research focused on academically successful undergraduate senior female and male African-American student leaders' perceptions of factors influencing their own success in selected doctoral degree-granting institutions in Illinois. The researcher used a qualitative methodology that consisted of in-depth interviews and a respondent profile form that participants completed to provide student demographic information. Information about the five public doctoral degree-granting institutions from which study participants were drawn was obtained from the IBHE (2000) *Data Book* and from Petersen's (2000/2001) *Almanac of Colleges and Universities*.

For females, males, and females and males together, the three research questions for the study addressed student perceptions of factors influencing their academic success in public doctoral degree-granting institutions on Illinois. Student perceptions were addressed in terms of perceived meanings of academic success, factors contributing to their success, factors making it difficult to achieve success, and recommendations for improving academic success for African-American undergraduate students.

Data collection was consistent with these research questions. Individual interviews were conducted with all 20 participants, in person or over the phone. The interviews were structured and open-ended. This approach enabled the researcher to explore individual student stories of their student success. Additionally, this

approach provided a base from which to analyze data collected from the interviews and attend to emerging themes.

Participants completed a respondent profile form (see Appendix A) that consisted of 14 profile questions requesting information on such factors as gender, age, enrollment status, cumulative GPA, financial aid received, employment status, hours worked, major, degree type, career goals, graduation date, how the students rated themselves as successful students, how the students rated their leadership activities as contributing factors to their success, and a listing of involvement in activities on campus and off campus.

An interview guide (see Appendix B) was used to gather information on factors that the 20 African-American student leader participants perceived as influences on their academic success at the baccalaureate level. A total of five questions (with subquestions) were asked of each participant. The five questions asked were focused on participant sense of the meaning of academic success; important factors contributing to their success; important factors making it difficult for them to achieve academic success; their recommendations for improving African-American students' academic success; their advice to university administration, faculty, and professional support staff related to academic success for future African-American students; and any other comments.

The data collected from this investigation provided a basis for interpretive analysis and yielded fruitful grounds for understanding factors that African-American undergraduate students may perceive as contributing to their academic

success. Although data are limited to only study participants, the study provides a basis for further research on African-American student success at the baccalaureate level.

Findings and Conclusions

Findings for the study are presented for all three research questions combined. Research questions are treated together for purposes of integration of data. Similarities and differences between the reported perceptions of female and male participants are noted as appropriate. Then a statement of conclusions for each research is presented, for females only, males only, and females and males.

Research Question Findings

Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 dealt, respectively, with female, male, and female and male African-American student leaders' perceptions of factors contributing to their academic success at the baccalaureate level. For each research question, participating students were asked about their sense of meaning of academic success; important contributing factors; important factors causing difficulty in achieving success; their recommendations for improving African-American students' academic success; their advice to university administration, faculty, and professional support staff related to academic success for future African-American students; and any other comments. Additional comments were not offered and thus are not reported.

Meaning of Academic Success

Taking student responses in the aggregate, the results of this study indicate that for females only, the primary meanings of academic success reported were achievement of educational goals, maintaining a high GPA, and learning the required course materials. For individual females, other reported meanings included establishing a foundation for their career, finding a job in their major field, being involved academically and socially, setting strategies for accomplishing goals, managing time well, networking, coping, realizing potential, working to their highest ability, and maintaining honors status.

In contrast, for males only, the primary meaning reported was achievement of academic goals. For individual males, other reported meanings included how well they move through the educational system, achieving good grades, learning the subject, setting strategies for accomplishing goals, and enduring to their highest potential.

For females and males together, the most frequently volunteered meaning of academic success reported by both was achieving educational goals. Other similarities in meanings included achieving a high GPA or good grades, learning the material or subject, setting strategies for academic success, and achieving highest potentials. Males differed from females in their reported orientation toward career goals, academic and social involvement, time management, networking, coping, and maintaining honors status. These were clearly absent in the responses of male

participants. The only additional meaning of academic success reported by male participants concerned their ability to move through the educational system.

When asked about perceived differences in meaning of academic success for females and males of all racial groups. a strong majority of participating females (9 out of 12) reported that there were no differences. The remaining three individual females did identify differences. Two indicated that females were more focused. One indicated that males received better grades, that females were stereotyped as inferior to males, and that females did not realize their full potential. In contrast, all eight males reported there were no gender differences in meaning of academic success.

When asked about perceived differences in meaning of academic success for African-American students, 5 out of 12 participating females reported no differences. However, a majority of participating females (7 out of 12) reported that there were racial differences. Several differences were noted. First, African American students were seen as having to prove themselves in comparison to students of other racial backgrounds. Second, African-American students were seen as having unequal (inferior) educational preparation in comparison to White students. Third, African-American students were seen as being more isolated and alienated and less apt to seek assistance than other students, in part due to the lack of an African-American presence on campus. Fourth, African-American students were seen as being less integrated into campus clubs and other campus life and thus more segregated for learning. Fifth, African-American students were seen as less able to navigate their

way through the educational process than White students. Sixth, African-American students tended to believe that they had less potential than White students.

In contrast, when asked about perceived differences in meaning of academic success for African-American students, only participating males reported no differences. A majority of participating males (6 out of 8) did note racial differences. First, African-American students were seen as less likely to be acknowledged for their academic achievement. Second, African-American students were seen as needing more support systems for academic success.

Factors Contributing to Success

Again taking student responses in the aggregate, the results of this study indicate that for females only, factors reported as contributing to their success were primarily the influence of parents and family as well as motivation to succeed, educational background, institutional support services, religion or faith, time management, relationships with professors, relationships with friends and peers, and being a first-generation student. For individual females, other reported success factors included being a wife and mother, "proving wrong" the people who doubted them, being away from home for school, having self-discipline, not wanting to go back to precollege living conditions, and not having to work while in school (one participant).

In contrast, for males only, the factors reported as contributing to their success were primarily parents and family as well as faculty support, educational

background, institutional support services, motivation to succeed, hard work, and upbringing. For individual males, other reported success factors included being focused, stress management, friends, study groups, religion or faith, time management, and being older and more mature.

For females and males together, the most frequently volunteered success factors reported by both were parents and family, educational background, self-discipline or focus, motivation to succeed, institutional support services, faculty relationships or support, friends and peers, religion or faith, and time management. Females differed from males primarily in their orientation toward parenting and proving doubters wrong. In contrast, males differed from females in their orientation toward participation in study groups and being older and more mature students.

When asked about perceived differences in success factors for females and males of all racial groups, half of the participating females (6 out of 12) reported no differences. However, the remaining six did note gender differences. First, males were seen as being positively impacted by their higher levels of involvement in sports. Second, males were seen as being more driven to academic success by money factors. Third, females were seen as working harder than males and being more disciplined.

In contrast, when asked about perceived success factors for females and males of all racial groups, five out of eight participating males reported that there were no gender differences. Three of the eight did identify differences. First, males saw males as being more subject to negative peer pressure and thus less motivated to

learn than females. Second, males saw males as more subject to pressure to be leaders based on academic success.

When asked about perceived differences in success factors for African-American students, only 1 of the 12 females reported no differences. Also, one student was not sure. However, 10 of the 12 did note differences in success factors based on perceived racial barriers. African-American students were seen as needing to work harder than other students to prove themselves, needing more positive role models, being less well prepared because of race, being more pressured to succeed as a first-generation student, being more disadvantaged in terms of family economics, and needing to overcome racial stereotyping in selected majors.

In contrast, when asked about perceived differences in success factors for African-American students, three out of eight participating males reported no differences. Five did report racial differences. African-American students were seen as less privileged than students from other racial groups. Also, the responding males saw African-American males as less willing to utilize available institutional support systems.

Factors Contributing to Difficulty

Once more taking student responses in the aggregate, the results of this study indicate that, for females only, the primary difficulty factor was difficulty in staying focused as well as staying motivated, exposure to racism, expectations from others that they will not do well, alienation from other students in required group projects,

peer pressure, competition with White students, low numbers of African-Americans on campus and in major, getting through the first year of general education courses, and maintaining a high GPA. For individual females, other reported difficulty factors included male-dominated majors, personal insecurities, females not being supported by instructors in science courses, and being wives and mothers.

In contrast, for males only, the only difficulty factor reported by the majority of male participants was peer pressure. For individual males, other reported difficulty factors included not pushing oneself, having to prove oneself, the predominantly White campus environment, having friends at home who were not in school, and taking classes outside their comfort zone. One male reported having no difficulties.

For females and males together, the most frequently volunteered difficulty factor reported by both was staying motivated. A second similarity in reported difficulty factors for females and males was perceived racism in the campus climate. Females also differed from males in their reported orientation toward career goals, academic and social involvement, time management, networking, coping, and maintaining honors status.

When asked about perceived differences in difficulty factors for females and males of all racial groups, 4 of the 12 participating females reported no gender differences. The remaining eight females reported gender differences: greater pressure for women to prove themselves, a past history of women being perceived as inferior to men, and male dominance in selected major fields.

In contrast, when asked about perceived difficulty factors for females and males of all racial groups, five of the eight participating males reported no gender differences. The remaining three males reported gender differences. First, males saw females as facing greater difficulties based on the capacity to become pregnant and historical discrimination against women. Second, the males saw African-American males as facing greater difficulties based on their being stereotyped as inferior to other students.

When asked about perceived differences in difficulty factors for African-American students, 2 of the 12 participating females reported no differences. The remaining 10 females did report racial differences: greater pressure for African-American students to prove themselves; exclusion of African-American women from some male-dominated fields, particularly mathematics and science; and perceived tendency for African-American women to be seen as inferior.

In contrast, when asked about perceived differences in difficulty factors for African-American students, all eight of the participating males reported racial differences: inadequate educational preparation, negative experiences of racism, challenges in adjusting to a predominantly White environment, stereotyping of African-American males as inferior, and economic disadvantage.

Student Recommendations

Again taking student responses in the aggregate, the results of this study indicate that for females only, the primary recommendations for achieving academic

success for other African-American students were staying focused as well as setting goals, not secluding oneself, using support services, being assertive, getting to know professors, and not giving up. For individual females, other recommendations were having more diversity in campus clubs and other campus life, not socializing in the first year, and getting the most out of classes.

In contrast, for males only, the primary recommendation for achieving academic success for other African-American students was staying focused as well as getting involved socially and academically, participating in study groups and group projects, and getting involved in student activities. For individual males, other recommendations were being assertive, talking to professors, and making grades a priority.

For females and males together, all offered recommendations for academic success for African-American students. Five recommendations for the institution were offered, including working to better integrate all students into campus life (including greater diversity in student organizations), providing diversity training for campus staff members, demonstrating greater awareness of the African-American campus presence, and taking more time to know students. Additionally, several recommendations were offered for African-American students: setting goals and staying focused; becoming more involved in campus life and less isolated; being assertive in talking with professors and others; making academic success the highest priority; getting the most out of classes; and utilizing and seeking satisfaction with available faculty, staff, and services.

Recommendations for academic success for all female and male students and for African-American students that were offered by participating students were essentially the same as previously noted. This included recommendations for both the institution and students.

Research Question Conclusions

Based on study findings, a statement of conclusions for the research questions for the study is warranted. Conclusions are treated at a broad level and are not specific to the four thematic areas addressed in interview subquestions (as stated above).

Research Question 1, "females only," addressed participating female students' perceptions of factors influencing academic success. Three central conclusions can be drawn:

1. Participating female students demonstrated what can be interpreted as high levels of awareness and breadth of concern regarding factors influencing their academic success, both on the basis of gender and their identification as African-American students.

2. Participating female students' perceptions appeared similar to each other in that they consistently related their academic success to what appeared to be key factors: their high levels of motivation, clear and consistent focus on academic success, high degrees of academic and social involvement with the institution, use of

institutional support services, religious or spiritual life, and family and educational background.

3. Participating female students' perceptions appeared different from each other in the following reported aspects: their reasons for being motivated to achieve academic success and their approaches to assertiveness in achieving academic success.

Research Question 2, "males only," addressed participating male students' perceptions of factors influencing academic success. Three central conclusions can be drawn:

1. Participating male students demonstrated what can be interpreted as mixed levels of awareness and breadth regarding factors influencing their academic success. This awareness was focused far less on gender factors and substantially more on their identification as African-American students.

2. Participating male students' perceptions appeared similar to each other in that they largely related their academic success to what appeared to be key factors: their family and educational background, focus on educational and career goal attainment, and motivation to succeed.

3. Participating male students' perceptions appeared to differ from each other in the following reported aspects: levels of academic and social involvement with the institution and levels of use of institutional support services.

Research Question 3, "females and males," addressed participating female and male students' perceptions of factors influencing academic success. Three central conclusions can be drawn:

1. Participating female and male responses demonstrated what appeared to be clear differences in the bases and breadth of females' reported awareness regarding factors influencing their academic success, as compared to males. Females' volunteered responses were offered on the bases of both gender and identification as African-American students. Males' volunteered responses largely excluded gender as a factor influencing academic success. Instead, their responses focused primarily on identification as African-American students as influencing academic success.

2. Participating female and male students' perceptions appeared similar to each other in that they largely related their academic success to what appeared to be key factors: their ability to deal with the stigma of racial stereotyping, being motivated to succeed, focus on academic success, and educational and family background.

3. Participating female and male students' perceptions appeared different from each other in the following aspects, as reported by females only: attention to gender as a factor in academic success, levels of social involvement in the institution, use of institutional support services, and religious and spiritual life. Additionally, males reported more career orientation than did females.

In all. respondent data, findings, and conclusions provide a grounded basis for institutional attention and commitment regarding African-American student success at the baccalaureate level.

Discussion and Implications for Higher Education

Discussion and implications for higher education are based on study findings and conclusions and take into account the contexts of the institutions represented in the study.

Discussion

Based on study data, it is evident that academically successful African-American students are involved academically and socially on campus. The participants' levels of involvement varied. Academic success does not require a high level of involvement in social activities for all students. Tinto (1998) noted that academic and social integration affects students in various ways. Females in this study were more involved in on-campus activities. Female participants averaged 4.25 on-campus activities. compared to 2.37 on-campus activities for male participants. All participants in this study were involved in activities relating to their major. However, female participants were more likely to use various support services, participate in extracurricular social activities, join honor society organizations, participate as members of student government, and serve as mentors. Although male participants did participate in a wide range of activities, their level

and frequency of involvement were low and few in numbers. Only one male participant was involved in support services. compared to all 12 of the female respondents. More than half of the female respondents were involved in extracurricular activities, compared to one male participant. Four female participants were involved in mentoring. compared to two males students' involvement.

The pattern was the same for participants in off-campus activities as well. Female respondents averaged 1.9 off-campus activities, compared to 1.1 for male respondents. Volunteer. mentoring, and religious activities were the primary off-campus activities for both groups. However, the frequency of male participation in these activities was low. Thomas (1984) stated that academic performance is related to student satisfaction with social involvement. Male levels of involvement on campus may have some impact on males' need to work to cover living expenses when in school. One male stated that he had to work. although other male students who were part of the mainstream tended to rely on resources from family.

What is significant and is supported by the literature is that female respondents were more likely than male respondents to acknowledge and experience gender stereotyping. However, both male and female respondents stated that there was no difference in academic success based on gender. Female participants were more likely to participate in a wide range of activities more frequently than the male participants in this study.

Although male participants did not experience gender stereotyping as an issue, they did acknowledge racial stereotyping. In fact, a majority of the

participants in this investigation experienced some form of racial stereotyping. They coped with it by recognizing that it existed and then moving on to accomplish their purpose in school. Most of the students had attended diverse schools and believed that their previous exposure to diversity enabled them to cope and adjust on campus and keep their focus.

However, it is worth noting that the most common form of stereotyping experienced by these participants occurred when they were assigned to group class projects. They were sometimes not taken seriously and had to be aggressive to prove that they were capable of performing at or above the same level as other students. Steele (1997) stated that this kind of stereotyping often occurs and is experienced by African-American students. Articles in *Black Issues in Higher Education* (Lancer, 2002; Mauveaux, 2002; "New Report," 2002; "Tufts University," 2002) reported that skin tone in African Americans is associated by both Blacks and Whites to their level of intelligence. None of the respondents in this investigation made reference to having experienced this type of association.

Most students stated that their success was influenced by their background preparation and the level of motivation that drove them to stay focused and complete their studies. The majority of the students stated that their prior educational background influenced and contributed to their success in college. Half of the female participants noted that their spirituality was a contributing factor to their success. Allen and Haniff (1989) stated that academic outcomes are influenced by how bright the student is, the level of background preparation, and the intensity of

personal ambition and striving. He further stated that educational goals and activities are acted out in specific social environments. which affects their context and realization as well.

Half of the respondents in this investigation stated that motivation or their intense drive to succeed were factors contributing to their success. It appeared that this high level of intensity enabled them to succeed and overcome barriers. More than half of the respondents stated that they set strategy. whether it was time management. self-motivation. stress management. communicating with faculty. support services. or study groups. and they found a way to persist. Padilla et al. (1997) stated that successful students employ a number of actions in overcoming obstacles. They set strategy in dealing with their transition to college. They appear to be assertive and comfortable with their identity. They have no problem in seeking assistance from support services or faculty on campus. Females. in particular. not only joined groups that targeted minority students but also joined groups that were within their major or the general population on campus.

This study's participating students used a number of strategies that enabled them to succeed. These strategies support the literature regarding overcoming barriers. getting involved. seeking out resources. and. when necessary. creating their own organizations. These students were aggressive and assertive. They had no problem getting involved with others outside their ethnic group. One female student stated that it was important not to isolate herself from others who did not look like

her. Students' level of involvement could be seen by the number of on- and off-campus activities in which they were involved.

All students experience adjustment in college. There they develop strategies to cope with and adjust to their environment. Academic performance varies in relation to each student's background, campus experience, and personality orientation. The more students interact with other students and faculty, the more they are likely to persist (Astin, 1984).

Although this study focused on the academic success factors of female and male African-American student leaders, it may have implications for other students as well. This study found significant perceptions associated with gender. Although males stated that there were no differences in academic success based on gender, more than half of the female participants noted a difference based on how they were perceived in certain major subjects. These findings support the literature by Steele (1997) and Mauveaux (2002) regarding the negative stereotyping of women. This thinking can impact higher education not only for women but for institutions. Females represent more than half of the undergraduate enrollment in higher education. Not long ago, women did not have access to certain fields of study in college. Further, although there has been present-day progress, females are still faced with perceived subtle biases on campus.

This same perception is also true for African Americans and other students of color. Most students in this investigation noted their negative experiences arose basically from their peers more than from their instructors. This may indicate a need

for a closer look at campus climate and student interactions on college campuses. As

colleges become increasingly diverse, more tolerance and more sensitization of the

college environment to diversity is required. Higher education administrators may

need to look at their institutional policies and practices to promote the real meaning

of inclusiveness. Literature suggests that true diversity is woven into the fabric of

the institution seamlessly and that there is a real commitment to diversity not only in

the student body but throughout the campus as well (Hurtado, 1994; Tinto, 1993;

Winbush, 2001). However, the findings in this study do not support the Astin (2002,

cited in Hamilton, 2002) survey results of college freshmen as being more liberal in

their views and perceptions of students from different ethnic backgrounds.

A major implication for higher education may be the actions and strategies

employed by students in this study to achieve academic success. These tools may be

used as a model or a framework for better understanding student persistence. Padilla

et al. (1997) noted that successful students use heuristic knowledge and actions to

overcome barriers to academic success. Successful students initially enter the doors

of college with a certain level of heuristic knowledge and acquire the rest through

informal communication with other students. This knowledge is not known to the

general student population but, for the most part, through student organizations and

orientation in informal settings. It may be passed on from an experienced student to

a new student.

For both female and male participants in this study, family was the major

factor that they perceived as contributing to their success. Motivation and

educational background were also key factors. However, more than half of the

female respondents cited their spirituality. These factors support Padilla et al.'s

(1997) model regarding successful students nurturing themselves or seeking out

nurturing through others. Although religion was not mentioned in the literature,

further investigation may need to be documented regarding religion as a nurturing

factor in actions and strategies for academic achievement.

Another implication that may have an impact on higher education is student

participation in organizations on campus, such as support programs for minority

students and organizations that are not readily used or joined by students of color.

Successful students, for the most part, take advantage of all available resources.

However, for students who need additional nurturing and coping skills to help them

navigate their way successfully to degree completion, these support programs must

be integrated into the institution. Successful students, for the most part, have been

exposed to college preparation sessions prior to enrolling in college. The skills they

have acquired are used successfully when they enter the doors of higher learning.

However, for students who may not have been provided the same opportunity within

their communities, the university should consider rethinking its approach to how

students obtain information on campus in orientation or other support programs.

African-American students continue to seek out minority support services. This may

suggest that these students are still more comfortable seeking support where they

believe they are being nurtured.

Implications for Higher Education

Two broad areas of concern are evident for addressing issues of academic success for African-American students at the undergraduate level: institutional leadership and action with respect to African-American student success and African-American student awareness and related action.

Regarding institutional leadership and action, clearly how institutions perceive and address academic achievement for African-American baccalaureate students can have an impact on student success. Given nationwide concerns for retention and graduation of female and male African-American undergraduates, institutions need to act on African-American student needs. Based on study data, the following key leadership actions are recommended:

1. Reconfirm institutional commitments and enhance resources allocated to programs and services that address the academic success of African-American students. Different needs of female and male students should be addressed in this process.

2. Reassess and enrich the institutional environment for African-American students, paying very particular attention to authentic support for diversity in the campus climate, including an African-American presence across the institution, integration in student life, appropriate academic and social support services, availability of financial aid and/or work opportunities, the different needs of female and male students, mentoring and role models, and academic curriculum.

3. Work systematically and intensively to sensitize all campus personnel and students to gender and racial diversity issues and the academic and support needs of female and male undergraduate African-American students.

All of these factors must become leadership issues--part of an institution's identity and mission--if African-American student success is to be further nurtured. Although not addressed in this study, other undergraduate students of color as well as majority and graduate students may benefit as well. Further, this may impact positively both recruitment and retention of more diverse faculty, professional and support staff, and campus administrators.

Regarding student awareness and action, clearly how African-American students themselves address their own academic university experience also can impact their student success. Assuredly, study participants and many other African-American students are highly successful in their educational endeavors. Based on data provided by participants, the following key actions are recommended for African-American students to support their own academic success:

1. Female and male African-American students must actively participate in understanding their own needs for achieving academic success and actively pursue appropriate experiences and programs and support services as needed. Student leadership is recommended.

2. African-American students must invest themselves by developing strategies for their own success and consistently acting on those strategies. For example, African-American students should seek inclusion rather than isolation on

predominantly White campuses. They should become actively involved in campus academic and social life. They should join diverse study groups. They should make every effort to connect with campus staff and programs targeted to meet their specific needs as African-American female and male students. They should become campus leaders.

3. African-American students must share their own experiences and seek to understand the experiences of others, both female and male. They should initiate and maintain mutually supportive and educative relationships with campus faculty and staff as well as with students from other gender, racial, and ethnic groups. Where necessary, they should provide leadership to initiate activities and programs that help to meet their academic success needs.

Particularly at this time in the history of American higher education, it is imperative that higher education institutions and students work collaboratively to meet student success needs.

Recommendations for Further Research

Academic success for undergraduate African-American students is a compelling concern for all of higher education. Several recommendations for further research are warranted based on the current study. All recommendations are focused on contributing to student success.

1. Further research should be conducted on the nature of campus environments, focusing on race as well as gender. Particular attention should be paid

to campus leadership, depth and authenticity of diversity and means to address same, racial and gender stereotyping and effects, and authentic inclusion of diversity in campus staffing and academic curricula and instruction.

2. Further research should be conducted on programs and support services that target African-American student retention and graduation, for example, focusing on student orientation, student mentoring, academic assistance, student organizations, and other related programs and services.

3. Further research should be conducted on the experiences and stories of academically successful African-American students, focusing on the differing needs of female and male students, student leaders in comparison to students who are not in active campus leadership roles, African-American students from various educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, and students who are experiencing some academic difficulty.

Although not addressed in this study, further research also should be conducted that addresses the issue of skin-tone stereotyping. This warrants further study based on the findings reported in current literature (Lancer, 2002; Mauveaux, 2002; "New Report," 2002; and "Tufts University," 2002).

Research in these areas can be expected to contribute richer understandings of factors influencing the academic success of female and male African-American students at the baccalaureate level. In addition, such understandings can be expected to contribute to effective higher education leadership.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

RESPONDENT PROFILE FORM

RESPONDENT PROFILE FORM

The purpose of this survey is to gather information about the student population being studied at the institution. The information being asked will remain confidential.

1.   Gender:_____ Male   _____ Female

2.   Age: _____

3.   Enrollment Status: (check appropriate box)   _____ Full-time   _____
      Part-time

4.   What was your cumulative grade point average? _____

5.   Did you receive financial aid? ____Yes   ____No

6.   Were you employed: ____ Yes ___No If yes hours worked per week ____

7.   Major:_____

8.   Degree type: _____

9.   What is your career goal? _____

10.   Graduation Date _____ Spring _____Summer _____FallYear_____

11.   To what extent do you consider yourself a successful student: (Circle the appropriate number on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being very unsuccessful and 5 being very successful.)

                  1   2   3   4   5

12.   To what extent do you believe your student leadership activities contribute to your student success? (Circle the appropriate number on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being very unsuccessful and 5 being very successful.)

                  1   2   3   4   5

13.   Campus activities: (List on the back of this form clubs/organizations of which you are/were a member.

14.   Outside activities: (List on the back of this form clubs/organizations outside of school in which you are/were involved, including office[s] you held).

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The purpose of this interview is to gather information on factors that you, as an African-American student leader, believe influenced your academic success at the university. The information being asked will remain confidential.

As a (female or male) senior student:

1. How do you define "academic success"? What does it mean to you to be an "academic success" student? How do you perceive your academic success in comparison to the academic success of other students? Do you see academic success as different for female students as compared to male students? For African-Americans as compared to other students?

    PROBES:

    Individual factors:

    Institutional factors:

2. What do you see as the most important factors contributing to your academic success? What helped you to be successful? Do you see important contributing factors as different for female students as compared to male students? For African-Americans as compared to other students?

    PROBES:

    Individual factors:

    Institutional factors:

3. What do you see as the most important factors making it difficult for you to be academically successful? Do you see important challenges as different for female students as compared to other students?

    PROBES

    Individual factors:

    Institutional factors:

4.   What are your recommendations for improving African-American student academic success? What advice would you give to future African-American students? To administration? To faculty? To supportive professional staff? Is your advice any different with respect to female students as compared to male students? To African-Americans as compared to other students?

PROBES

Individual factors:

Institutional factors:

5.   Is there anything else you would like to say about the subject?

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND REQUEST

TO UNIVERSITY STAFF MEMBERS

TO IDENTIFY PARTICIPANTS

Letter of Introduction and Request to University
Staff Members to Identify Participants

Dear _____:

Thank you for agreeing to identify potential participants for my doctoral research study. As stated to you over the phone, I am currently a candidate for the doctorate in Education Administration at NIU. I am at the dissertation stage of my program and will be completing my research in the near future. My dissertation is entitled *African-American Senior Undergraduate Student Leaders' Perceptions of Factor Influencing Their Academic Success in Selected Public Doctoral Degree Granting Institutions in Illinois: A Comparative Analysis of the Stories of Academically Successful Female and Male Student Leaders.*

My research will focus on African-American undergraduate student leaders who have reached the pinnacle of their academic achievement at the undergraduate level. I am attempting to ascertain their views of perceived factors which influenced and contributed to their academic success. This study is limited to African-American female and male student leaders who are near graduation and have earned a minimum grade point average of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale and are identified as members in a student organization regardless of their rank and hierarchy within the organization. At least four student leaders are needed from your institution to participate in this study, preferably two female and two male student leaders.

If you still agree to identify students for this study, I have enclosed student consent forms to release information to me. I intend to interview students in person or by phone and also ask that they complete a respondent profile form. The interview process will take approximately one hour. In order to satisfy the validity of this research, it will be necessary for me to tape record the session. Students' participation in this research study is voluntary, and they are free to withdraw their participation at any time.

Information gathered from this study will remain confidential, and participants will not be identified in the data analysis by name. Should you require additional information, I can be reached at (773) XXX-XXXX. You can also contact my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Muriel Mackett, at NIU, (815) 753-5603, for further information regarding this study. Your cooperation in facilitating this request is greatly appreciated. Again, thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Paula D. Causher
Doctoral Candidate - NIU

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, _____ have been informed of the study, *African-American Senior Undergraduate Student Leaders' Perceptions of Factors Influencing Their Academic Success in Selected Public Doctoral Degree-Granting Institutions in Illinois: A Comparative Analysis of the Stories of Academically Successful Female and Male Student Leaders,* and agree to be a study participant. I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that responses will remain confidential and used only for the purpose of collecting data for the study.

I understand that questions or concerns regarding this study can be directed to Dr. Muriel Mackett, dissertation chairperson, at NIU, (815) 753-5603.

I indicate that I agree to participate in this study by printing my name below and then signing on the line.

Participant_____
                                     (Please Print)

Signed _____ Date_____

Researcher: Paula D. Causher
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois