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A study of an African American male initiative program in relation to grade point
average and credits earned in the community college

By

Jermi Dan Coleman

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Community College Leadership
in the Department of Educational Leadership

Mississippi State, Mississippi

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2016

A study of an African American male initiative program in relation to grade point
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The number of African American males who are incarcerated is extremely high and alarming. African American males have the lowest attainment of associate degrees when compared to other ethnicities and to females. This places a monumental task on institutions of higher education, particularly community colleges, to enroll, retain, and graduate African American males.

The purpose of this study was to examine the performance of an African American male initiative program at a small, rural community college in Mississippi. This study utilized a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to look at variables of Grade Point Average (GPA) and number of credits earned between African American male participants of the program and those who did not participate in the program over a period of six semesters.

Results from this study showed a significant difference in number of credits earned between the students who participated in the program and those who did not, with non-participants earning an average of one to two credits more than participants. The study also showed that students who did not participate in the program had a slightly

higher GPA than the students who did participate in the program for three out of the six semesters. This study enhances the ability for community college and university administrators to implement policies and best practices to engage African American male students.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to my wife Ameka, my daughter Olivia, and my mom Louise who are three of my biggest fans. You all are my biggest support system and the best family a man could have in life. I also want to dedicate this to my brothers Alvin, Alven, Jermacus, Vernell, Broderick, Desmond, and Demon. Thanks for everything you do.

Proverbs 3: 6 “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

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you to continue to experience His goodness and mercy daily. Thank you for going the extra mile daily. Thank you for being a wonderful mother.

To my lovely daughter, Olivia Faith you have given me a new boost in life. Your presence has reminded me that God is true to His promises. You are a blessing to me and your wonderful mother. You came into my life with force. Olivia, I desire for you to give your best in everything and to always know your worth in God and yourself. Thank you, Olivia for gracing me with your beautiful smile.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Having a college degree provides a tangible benefit for employment and security; increasing degree attainment would likely reduce unemployment figures. Today, educational attainment provides African Americans a pathway for career advancement, financial gain, and upward social mobility, and it provides opportunities for racial equality (Harris, 2008; Herndon & Hirt, 2004). The College Completion Agenda organization, the Obama Administration, the Gates Foundation, and others have as their goal to make the United States the world leader in higher education attainment. The overall goal for institutions is to ensure that 55% of young Americans hold an associate degree or higher (Hughes, 2012). From a national perspective, there are twice as many African American females as African American males in higher education (Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, 2009). And, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2010), African American males are at the lowest attainment of all degrees ranging from associates to doctorates. The data reveal that African American males hold 30.3% of associate degrees in the United States, while Whites hold close to 49% (Lee & Rawl, 2010).

Slater (2006) conducted a study that highlights factors that contribute to the percentage of African American males attaining a degree. Those factors could be the location of the college and the distance a student may be from his or her family. Other

factors could be related to the curriculum at the college and how the faculty interacts with students. Educators are aware of the alarming number of African American males who are not successful in their higher education endeavors and have gathered with others from across the country for meetings, workshops, and conferences. Some factors related to the low success rates of this group can be traced back to the high school dropout rate from K-12. Other factors may be the lower rate of college attendance by family members and the amount of student debt accumulated while attending college. African American male students are likely to be placed in remedial or special education courses. The idea of being placed in these remedial courses creates numerous challenges for these students in the higher education area. This notion of being confronted with challenges will result in many of them not accepting those challenges and withdrawing from college. They are also more likely to be in the prison system than any other race. African American males are much more likely to be incarcerated than to earn a bachelor's degree (Strayhorn, 2012).

According to Nealy (2008), there are nearly 1.5 million African American males incarcerated and another 3 million on probation. These numbers are quite alarming since African American males consist of more than 70% of the entire prison population despite their only making up close to 6% of the U.S. population. The time spent in prison may later lead to unemployment since a quality education is vital for African American males to become productive members of society (Nealy, 2008). Lacking a sufficient educational background may cause some African Americans to look to other means for financial support.

The strain theory can be associated with the declining rate of African American males who obtain a college degree. Ellis (2002) described the strain theory as one “which posits that a strain develops in an individual who realizes that the products and pleasures of life available to other members of society are personally out of reach” (p.17). This theory supports the idea that once African American males identify themselves as not being able to obtain the products and pleasures that others have; they begin to look at other options. Those options are most likely outside of the academic realm and more related to gaining a job. Thus, it is imperative to engage African American males early in order to allow them to feel a part of the campus culture by integrating them into the mainstream of campus (Perrakis, 2008). Tinto’s theory (1975) focuses on the importance of getting African American male students involved in college during their first year on campus. Tinto believes that social integration into the institution will allow the students to feel comfortable and adjust to the new environment.

According to Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998), another key barrier beyond the walls of incarceration that African Americans males face with the pursuit of higher education is that their parents lack a college degree. The lack of a family member with a college degree can create an unknown environment for these students who find it extremely hard to navigate through college. Many families may agree that higher education is extremely important, but without the knowledge and guidance to obtain the degree, many of these students find it extremely difficult to reach this goal of graduating from college.

Increasing the percentage of African American males with associate degrees will provide them with opportunities ranging from better income to a much better quality of

life (Baum & Ma, 2007). Many of the African American male students will enter the community college since they have an open admission policy, but these students are at risk as compared to their counterparts (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Many community college leaders have taken the rates of failure among African American males as an alarming wake-up call and are looking at strategies to implement on their campuses. Community college administrators are developing initiatives and strategies to change the way they interact with African American males in order to engage them in a more effective way. The strategies are to have a plan that allows African American male students, faculty, and administrators to collaborate on efforts to improve success (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012).

Many colleges have created specific programs and strategies that are designed to promote student success of this underrepresented population. One example of a program implemented was one established by Kennesaw State University (KSU). The goals of the African American male initiative programs at KSU were to focus on increasing enrollment, retention, and graduation rates through mentoring and leadership (KSU African American Male Initiative, 2005). The recommendations that were given to KSU were to increase retention, graduation, and enrollment. However, the need was to track African American males within the K-12 system, increasing the number of high quality teachers in less academically rigorous schools. One of the main reasons why African American males aren't as competitive in today's society is because they are educationally deficient in the K-12 system. KSU male initiative programs received a large grant to help improve the college preparedness of students from certain high schools. The male initiative program at KSU was a model program that became successful and has allowed

other colleges like the entire University of Georgia System to implement similar programs at their campuses. As combined campuses, the system saw an increase in the fall of 2007 with enrollment of African American males increasing by 7.4%, the largest ever single year percentage increase (Hafer, 2007).

Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (2009) conducted a study and concluded that the recruitment and retention of African American male students is one of the biggest challenges for a community college administrator. In 2008, there were approximately 8,000 African American males students compared to 17,000 African American females students in the Mississippi community college system (Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, 2009). This huge disparity has forced community college administrators in Mississippi to create a task force to study the decline of African American males in Mississippi community colleges.

The low graduation rate of African American male students attending community colleges is problematic. Increasing African American male participation in higher education and graduation rates, especially in community colleges, is crucial in order to increase the educational attainment of African American males. All racial/ethnic groups have seen a huge increase in enrollment on all levels, with a gender gap between African American females and males. In 2008, African American females contributed to 64% of the undergraduate enrollment growth for African Americans (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010). Over twice as many African American females received their degrees as did African American males (NCES, 2010). Of students who attend community colleges, 70% of Asian males, 43.9% of White males, and 16% of Hispanic males obtain an associate degree (Lee & Ransom, 2010). The graduation rate of African

American females is 68.5% in comparison to a rate of 31.5% for African American males when looking at attainment of the associate degree. This is a huge disparity between African American males and other ethnic groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is the extent to which there is a difference in Grade Point Average (GPA) for students who participate in African American male success initiative programs and African American males who do not participate, as well as to determine if there are differences in credits earned by these students.

Purpose of the Study

The study explored the performance of an African American male initiative program on one community college campus in Mississippi. The African American male initiative program at the community colleges is geared toward increasing enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. The program has a focus of mentoring and providing academic support outside of the classroom.

Research Questions

The growing trend of declining retention and graduation rates among African American males has become a concern for the community college system. The research questions for this study focused on the effects of a male success initiative program at a community college in Mississippi.

This study examined the following questions:

1. Is there a difference in GPA between students who participate in an African American male success initiative program and African American males who do not participate?
2. Is there a difference in persistence (number of credits earned) between students who participate in an African American male success initiative program and African American males who do not participate?

Definition of Terms

1. *Academic integration*, according to Tinto (1975), is partially evaluated by the student's ability to perform well academically and meet the expectations of the institutional goals for achievement. Students who are academically integrated who feel like they have a sense of belonging are less likely to drop out from college when they transition into the college community.
2. An *academic intervention* is a plan put in place to teach a new skill, develop confidence in a skill, or encourage a student to apply a current skill to new situations or settings. An intervention can be thought of as "a set of actions that, when taken, have demonstrated ability to change a fixed educational trajectory" (Methe & Riley-Tillman, 2008, p. 37).
3. *African American* refers to students who are black or of African descent; which includes students whose parents were born in the United States as well as those who had a parent or parents who immigrated to the United States (American Heritage College Dictionary, 2002).

4. *The Minority Male Student Success Database* provides institutions with an approach to evaluate creative programs to advance the academic and career goals of men of color (American Association of Community Colleges, 2013).
5. *Retention* is the ability of an institution to keep a student enrolled and in good standing from semester to semester, leading to graduation (Roberts & Styron, 2009).
6. *Social integration* is an attitude of students integrating themselves to social and academic life, while becoming committed to graduation and the institution. The social integration approach states that students involved in extracurricular activities build relationships with faculty and persist toward graduation (Tinto, 1975).

Overview of the Method

The students were selected based on their participation in the African American male success initiative program at the selected community college. The independent variable is participation in an African American male success initiative program, and the dependent variables are GPA and credits earned. The study focused on the GPA of participants in the program as compared to those who did not participate in the program and the difference between the number of credits earned between those who participate in the program versus those who did not participate in the program. This study used secondary data from a community college in Mississippi to determine the performance of the African American Male Success Initiative Program.

Delimitations of the Study

There are two key delimitations within this study. For convenience for the researcher, the study was limited to one community college in Mississippi. Second, the study was limited to a program for African American males; the study does not explore other ethnicities and genders. There are other students of color who are experiencing struggles at the community college, but an evaluation of programs to help them was not included in this study. However, the intent of the study dictated participant type in that the focus of the study is the African American male degree-seeking community college student.

A much larger participation of community colleges may provide additional data and other perspectives and strategies to help measure the success of African American male initiative programs in community colleges. Additionally, this study may have been enhanced by the researcher interviewing the students who participate in the programs and by interacting with faculty on campus. The researcher would have been able to ask students open-ended questions and follow up with the previous questions and answers and to understand more clearly the backgrounds of the students (e.g., if the student is a first generation college student or other factors that are related to students attending college). There may be other factors that are related to the student motivations of excelling in college.

In spite of the delimitations of the study, the findings and the conclusion are expected to help community colleges identify experiences and other issues African American males face while at the community college.

Significance of the Study

The study analyzed those relationships of the African American male success initiative programs at the community college to determine best practices and provide implications/strategies that other community colleges may implement to increase the success of their African American male students. Hampton (2002) summarizes the importance of these programs with this quote, “The under-representation of African American men has serious repercussions not only for the men themselves but also for the nation as a whole. Whenever a group of individuals is not interacting and achieving at optimum levels, the country is robbed of talents that could enrich the lives of many” (p. 4).

The significance of this study is that it helped determine if African American male success initiative programs are successful in assisting African American male students in the attainment of associate degrees. Engle and Lynch (2009) summarize the significance of degree attainment among underrepresented student populations with providing higher education access and achievement: “America cannot afford to fail to develop the talents of young people from low-income and minority families. It’s not good for our economy. And it’s not good for our democracy” (p. 1). Community colleges are the open door access for many of these students. The access to higher education for many African American males starts at the community college. This study is important for college administrators who are dealing with a low percentage of African American males graduating from college. It provides them with a foundation of research on the topic and saves them time and resources on studying these programs to see the success of these programs. Administrators can use these results to determine if these strategies or

programs would be effective on their campuses. Administrators can also use the results when looking at other areas to focus on related to the male success initiatives programs.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Harris (2008) and Herndon and Hirt (2004), the acquisition of a college education is one of the most highly valued assets any individual can aspire to for social mobility in today's society. African American males are the lowest among any ethnic or gender group in attaining an associate degree. There are many factors that have discouraged African American males to not continue with their degrees. The College Board (2010) released information from a national discussion, and *The College Completion Agenda 2010 Progress Report* has recommended the need for programs and strategies to be implemented to challenge African American males to follow after their dreams. The following literature review is composed of three major sections: (1) community college students, (2) African American males in higher education and (3) community college initiatives to increase African American male success.

Community College Students

Community colleges are extremely vital for providing access to various opportunities that many would not be able to obtain from a university. The open admission process is one of the many ways that students view the community college as a gateway to higher education. The characteristics of the community college include lower tuition, convenient location, and technical/vocational programs as well as the academic curriculum. These characteristics give many students who typically would choose

otherwise the opportunity to enter the doors of post-secondary education (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009; Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Rouse (1995) refers to the expansion of higher education to the community colleges as the “democratization effect” (p. 218). The open admission enrollment attracts students from a diverse range of backgrounds with different goals and objectives.

Students at the community college are typically older than those at other institutions of higher education, and they are from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The Association of American Community Colleges (AACC, 2014) reported that 45% of undergraduates who attend community colleges are first-time freshmen. The female enrollment is higher than the male enrollment by 57% to 43%. Of all community college students, 59% attend classes part-time, and 41% are full-time students (AACC, 2014; Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2012). The ethnic breakdown of students at the community college nationally includes White students comprising 51% of community college enrollment, African Americans 14%, Hispanics 19%, Asian/Pacific Islanders 6%, and Native Americans 1% (AACC, 2014). Bailey, Jenkins, and Leinbach (2005) report that 29% of community college students are first-generation college students compared to 16% of public 4-year university students.

Mississippi community college enrollment is broken down into key demographic areas. According to Mississippi Community College Board (2012), the average age of a student in Mississippi who attends the community college is 24.4, with an average ACT score of 18.5. Of the total students attending community college, 41.5% of the students are first-time freshmen. The ethnic breakdown of students at community college in Mississippi includes 59% White, 36% African American, 2% American Indian/Alaska

Native, and 1% Asian/Pacific Islander. Of the total student body, 73% attend classes full-time, and 27% are part-time students. The female enrollment outpaces their male counterparts by 61% to 39% (AACC, 2014).

Looking directly at students of color, 45% of minority undergraduates in the nation are enrolled at community colleges. In certain states, minority enrollment exceeds the national average. For example, minority students make up 75% of Texas' community college freshmen and sophomore enrollment (Texas Association of Community Colleges, 2011; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2011). Over 84% of first-time college students who attend community colleges in California are from minority groups (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2013).

These minority students who attend community colleges are likely to come from a lower socioeconomic status background and not be ready for the volume of coursework on the college level (Bailey, et al., 2005; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Minority students are more likely to earn a certificate as opposed to an associate's degree. Minority students graduate from the community college with a certificate at a higher rate than do White students (Bailey, et al., 2005; Oseguera, 2005). The attendance number mirrors the populations of the location of the community college and its community. These types of enrollment numbers give a glimpse of the importance of community colleges to minority populations.

African American Males in Higher Education

African American males struggle with the attainment of associate's degrees and advanced degrees. The presence of African American males in higher education is significantly less than the presence of African American women and is even smaller at

universities with a higher population of White students. African American students are viewed as being less prepared than White students when they enter college. They are viewed as unprepared due to standardized test scores, graduation rates, enrollment numbers, and attrition rates (Roach, 2001).

Harper (2006) conducted a study on the African American male enrollment at 50 flagship universities in America, which revealed that African American males in the age range of 18-24 made up 2.8% of the undergraduate population in 2004. Out of the 50 universities, African American males made up less than 500 in enrollment. The graduation rate was 44.3% for African American males as compared to 53.2% for African American females, with White males at 61.4%. The percentage of African American male college students three decades ago was 45.5% compared to 35.8% in 2002. African American males continue to be an ethnic group that is underrepresented in higher education in comparison to their counterparts of African American females and Caucasian males (Harper, 2006).

African American males have encountered different factors that have contributed to their struggles in college. The following research was conducted to study the collegiate experience of African Americans at Predominately White Institutions (PWI). Davis (1999) conducted a study to help understand the struggles African American males faced when completing a degree at PWI. Davis (1999) found that “they struggle to become socially integrated in a community of peers who are supportive but often confining; they struggle to overcome academic hurdles created by inadequate precollege preparation; and they struggle against a hostile schooling environment that marginalizes their presence on campus” (p. 135).

There are factors from previous studies that have been conducted on a college campus that are vital in contributing to the success of African American males at PWIs. Strayhorn and Terrell (2007) studied a population of 554 African American students and found that faculty mentoring is a major contributor to providing an academic environment for a positive collegiate experience. McClure (2006) studied 20 African American males to explore the impact a historically African American fraternity experience in college had on their academic success. She found being a part of a fraternity or joining a fraternity gave students a sense of belonging on campus along with an environment of support, which increased their retention and academic success.

Kimbrough and Harper (2006) explored factors that inhibited success related to African American males at eight public and private historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The study consisted of a group of campus leaders in a focus group. The study showed that professors who had low expectations for students had an effect on African American males and their academic success. Another key element from the focus group was the lack of positive role models, which was reported as a factor that contributed to students moving through college. Allen, Epps and Haniff (1991) found that students who attended an HBCU and had more positive relationships with the faculty would accomplish higher grade point averages and social involvement than those African Americans student who attend PWIs. Overall, Allen (1992) noted that students who attend HBCUs are provided an engaging community that allows African American students to feel engaged and satisfied.

The U.S. Department of Education (2006) reported that two-thirds of all African American males who enter college are more likely to drop out prior to earning their

college degree. Strayhorn and Devita (2009) highlighted that African American males face challenges in college with guidance, seeking help, and becoming active on campus in extracurricular activities. Prior research has been conducted on the importance of engaging students in college. Engagement is defined as “the time and energy that students devote to educationally purposeful activities and the extent to which the institution gets students to participate in activities that lead to student success” (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006, p. 150). The notion of student engagement goes beyond the classroom and helps shape the experience of students with interactions among their peers.

Strayhorn and Devita (2009) investigated the experiences of African American males within and outside the classroom with students from other ethnic groups and their interaction with faculty. The study consisted of 79 African American male participants who were full-time students, lived on campus, and attended HBCUs and PWIs; it was used to determine if the institutional type as a private or public or the size of the institutions factored into a learning environment. It was limited to first and second-year students. The study was based on secondary data from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire, which focuses on three areas: college activities, college environment, and estimates of gain.

There were two key findings that emerged from the study. Strayhorn and Devita (2009) results indicated that African American males attending liberal arts colleges are less likely to engage in activities with peers or be involved in extracurricular activities outside of college. The study yielded that African American males experience student to faculty contact and active learning regardless of the type of institution. The faculty at research institutions had greater interaction with students. This study provides support

and guidance for the institutions on ways to interact with students more in order to enrich their college experience and learning outcomes.

Research is continuing to show that African American males are less prepared for the academic rigors of college as compared to their peers. They are more likely to be less engaged in the academic setting, as well as extracurricular activities outside of the classroom. Harper (2012) noted that in California, African American males graduated within six years at an average of 27.7% compared to 46.7% of students overall. The reason these numbers are disturbing is because it agrees with national data, which indicates that less than one-third of African American males earn a bachelor's degree within six years. This is one of the lowest college completion rates among the different ethnic and gender groups in the United States (Harper, 2012).

Campbell (2009) investigated the absence of African American males in higher education. The qualitative study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the social, economic, and cultural factors that have contributed to the decline in college enrollment of African American men?
2. What perceptions do some African American men hold on the social, economic, and cultural experiences that enable them to pursue post-secondary education? (p.12)

His research indicated that the following were crucial to retaining African American males: the power of positive influence, a high school culture that is supportive, and the power of knowing that one is going to college, the power of positive peer relationships, and the power of expecting a good return on one's education.

Community colleges Initiatives to Increase African American Male Success

The College Board (2010) released a report titled *The College Completion Agenda 2010 Progress Report*. The report highlighted that students of color fall behind their White peers with completing their associate's degree in three years or less. Pluviose (2008) highlighted a summit called by the President's Round Table of African American Chief Executive Officers. The objective of the meeting was to offer answers that would help reduce not only the high school dropout rates but the incarceration rates of African American males. Members of the summit developed an outline to put in place best practices that would influence policy to change the African American male crisis in higher education on a national level.

A similar summit hosted by Jackson Community College (2008) met to improve the experience of African American males in community colleges. The purpose of the summit was to study conditions, look at ways to correct problems, and to provide stakeholders vital information consisting of findings from the summit. Out of the summit more than 100 recommendations were suggested to improve the success rate of the African American male in higher education. These recommendations were a roadmap for educators to help improve success for African American males. Two recommendations included establishing a mentoring program and hiring more minority teachers.

The Jackson Community College (2008) summit highlighted that community colleges are seen as the gateway to higher education, yet administrators at four year colleges and universities argue that they have a negative effect on baccalaureate degree attainment with minorities. African American males who enroll at the community college, out of all ethnicities and genders, are less likely to graduate with an associate

degree or higher. They are more likely to drop out of college and look at other options to make a living. A growing number of scholars have examined the need to implement different strategies and initiative programs at 2-year and 4-year institutions. Limited literature informs us about the success rate of these African American male initiative programs at the community college. Further study is needed to evaluate if these programs are impacting African American males and in which areas they are impacting the students.

The American Association of Community Colleges (2013) has created a Minority Male Student database that houses information on successful African American male success programs. The following section reviews research based reports from the colleges' websites that document improvements in African American male success as an outcome of intervention programs:

San Jacinto College District - Men of Honor

The American Associate of Community Colleges (2013) highlighted that San Jacinto College District explored the impact on African American male achievement of participation in the Men of Honor program. Prior to the program implementation, 92 of every 100 African-American males who enrolled each semester dropped out. In fall 2009, 71 African-American males joined the Men of Honor program. Of the 71 who participated, 70 were enrolled for the spring semester of 2010, a highly significant improvement. Leaders credit mentoring as a key role of the program having success with retention.

Chattahoochee Valley Community College - Future Leaders Program

The Chattahoochee Valley Community College (CVCC) District initiated a program from an annual meeting between the administration of CVCC and African American community leaders (AAAC 2013). During one of the meetings, a statement was made that there are more black males in prison than there are in college. This statement gave birth to the program. In fall 2008, four African American males enrolled in the program. The students in the program are required to complete 50 hours of servant leadership per semester and mentor at least one student. These students earn scholarship by staying active in the program and completing the requirements. The goal of the program is to provide an opportunity for college success within and outside of the classroom for African American males. The program has made strides with the young men who started the program who have subsequently graduated and are successful in their careers. The college president has doubled the number of scholarships given to the students with the goal of the program.

St. Louis Community College - African-American Male Initiative

The African American Male Initiative (AAAC, 2013) was created due to the needs of African American males who enrolled on campus. The goals of the program were to increase the persistence rate of these students to graduate and to maintain good academic standing. The program introduced many faculty members to challenges African American males face when they enter college, including lack of on-campus support, legal issues, and under preparation for college. Previously at the two campuses, the GPA for African American males combined had been a 1.7 on a 4.0 scale. During fall 2009,

African American Male Initiative participants on the combined campuses had a cumulative grade point averages of 2.8 or better.

The review of literature in this study showed that there are many programs that exist and have impacted African American male students. The literature reviews shows a need for engaging programs for African American male students. Many institutions have implemented the programs with a written plan and objectives to achieve. The researcher examined the literature reviews and observed the struggles African American male experience with attending college and understands a need to engage more with these students.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Chapter three will present the method that was used to explore the performance of African American male success initiative programs at the community college. It will detail an overall design of the study, research questions, research site, participants, instruments and procedures for data collection and analysis.

Research Design

Creswell (2014) describes research design as an approach that allows one to conduct a study involving plans and procedures for collecting data and understanding complex models. The design choice is based on the researcher's paradigm or view and the research problem. The constructivism worldview seeks subjective meanings or conclusions to use different perspectives from the participant of the group being studied. This study seeks to understand the performance of African American male success initiative programs, and this research fits the constructivist paradigm. The study may assist the researcher to understand the success of African American males in the male success initiative programs. This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design with two dependent variables (GPA and credit hours earned) and one independent variables (participation in an African American male success initiative program).

Research Questions

This study sought to examine the performance of an African American male success initiative program in a community college in Mississippi. The following research questions guided the research design:

1. Is there a difference in GPA between students who participate in African American male success initiative programs and African American males who do not participate?
2. Is there a difference in persistence (number of credits earned) between students who participate in African American male success initiative programs and African American males who do not participate?

Research Site

Research was conducted at a community college located in Mississippi. The community college enrolls a heavy population of African American students. It enrolls just under 3,000 students and awards both associate and technical degrees. Its male-female enrollment ratio is 37% to 63%. About 22% of the students are enrolled part-time while the remaining 78% are full-time students. African American students make up the majority of the undergraduate population at 64%, followed by White at 33%, and other at 3%.

The college is well suited for this research for several reasons. First, it enrolls a large number of African American students. Second, it is located in an area where many students can enroll and transfer to the universities. Third, the African American student population has continued to increase over the years at the institution. Finally, the

enrollment figures reflect the community colleges in Mississippi with a large percentage of students who are African Americans.

Participants

For this study, students were selected based on their participation in the African American male success initiative program at the selected community college. The participants were African American males who were selected based on their ethnicity and gender. These students were active in the program by attending meetings and had an academic record that had been monitored by the director of the program. The other group of participants were a group of randomly selected African American males who did not participate in the African American male success initiative program. This other group of students, who were not in the program, had a background (or: were chosen because they had a background) of a slightly higher socio economic status and were not at risk of having bad grades. This group has a greater advantage by starting with a solid academic background.

Instrumentation

Irwin (2013) explains that secondary data help us understand a different method or meaning to answer new questions to data previously collected. Irwin further adds that use of secondary data is a way to explain or reach a population for which it may be difficult to explain their behavior. The secondary data collected with this study were used to measure the performance of African American male success initiative programs.

Names of participants were collected from the directors of the African American male success initiative program. Credit hours earned and GPAs were collected for

participants and a random sample of African American male non-participants from the college's institutional research office.

Data Collection Procedures

Secondary data were obtained from the program director as well as the college's institutional research office. The researcher sought permission from the community college and the Mississippi State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to collecting data from the community college. After approval (Appendix A), the researcher worked closely with the director of the program to obtain names of the students participating in the program. The names of the students in the program were given to the community college campus institutional research office to gather data on the students. The data for the program participants were compared to the data for African American male students not in the program.

Data Analysis Procedures

The following statistical analysis techniques were used for each research question. Is there a difference in GPA between students who participate in African American male success initiative programs and African American males who do not participate?

1. The secondary data report provided overall GPA at the end of the semester. The data was analyzed using an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test. The ANOVA allowed the researcher to look for differences between participants and non-participants comparison groups. The ANOVA test was used to see if there are any significant differences among the group with multiple semesters.

Is there a difference in persistence (number of credits earned) between students who participate in African American male success initiative programs and African American males who do not participate?

2. The secondary data report provided numbers of credits earned at the end of each semester. The data was analyzed using an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test. The ANOVA allowed the researcher to look for differences between participants and non-participants.

Summary of Method

Chapter III presented a discussion of the research design used in this study. The criteria for the selection of the college required that it have an African American male success initiative program. The characteristics of the college were described along with the population and goal of the programs. Each of the research questions was stated, and the different methods for the investigation of each research question were described. Those methods used allowed the researchers to answer the questions in an effective way.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This study was conducted to examine the performance of African American male initiative programs at the community college. The students were from a small rural Mississippi community college and the study was conducted to see if the program was having an impact on the successes of African American male students with their grade point average and persistence with total credits earned.

Relationship of Research and Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the performance of African American male success initiative programs in community colleges within Mississippi. The research answers the following questions:

1. Is there a difference in GPA between students who participate in African American male success initiative programs and African American males who do not participate?
2. Is there a difference in persistence (number of credits earned) between students who participate in African American male success initiative programs and African American males who do not participate?

This chapter establishes a brief synopsis of the problem for this study, identifies the populations surveyed, and presents the results of the completed study. Results are

presented for the two research questions individually. The data collected are presented along with a discussion of the statistical analysis.

Demographic Information

The individuals involved in this study were all African American male students at the selected community college. There were 2,375 participants in the study. The data displayed in the following table provide a better understand of the number of students in the program and the comparison group of students.

Table 1 displays the frequency counts for group participation. There were 1,907 program students (80.3%) against 468 comparison students (19.7%).

Table 1

Frequency Counts for Group Participation (N = 2,375)

Group	<i>n</i>	%
Comparison	468	19.7
Program	1,907	80.3

In this study, eta coefficients (η , the Pearson correlation between a categorical variable (comparison student versus program student), and a continuous variable (GPA and earned credits) were included to identify the strength of the relationships (effect sizes) found with the ANOVA tests. Cohen (1988) suggested some guidelines for interpreting the strength of linear correlations. He suggested that a weak correlation typically had an absolute value of $r = .10$ (about one percent of the variance explained), a moderate correlation typically had an absolute value of $r = .30$ (about nine % of the

variance explained) and a strong correlation typically had an absolute value of $r = .50$ (about 25 % of the variance explained).

Research Question 1 asked, “Is there a difference in GPA between students who participate in African American male success initiative programs and African American males who do not participate?” To answer this question, Table 2 displays the results of the one-way ANOVA tests comparing student GPA based on student group across six semesters. Inspection of the table found comparison group students to have significantly higher GPAs in three of the six semesters. However, based on the Cohen (1988) criteria, all six eta coefficients were considered to be weak correlations (Table 2).

Research Question One

Table 2

ANOVA Comparisons for Student GPA Based on Group

Semester	Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	η	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Fall 2011					.10	8.63	.003
	Comparison	155	2.22	1.08			
	Program	757	1.88	1.32			
Spring 2012					.03	0.90	.34
	Comparison	158	2.14	1.00			
	Program	681	2.04	1.29			
Fall 2012					.10	9.86	.002
	Comparison	197	2.38	0.93			
	Program	731	2.09	1.20			
Spring 2013					.05	1.72	.19
	Comparison	171	2.31	0.88			
	Program	631	2.18	1.18			
Fall 2013					.10	9.00	.003
	Comparison	178	2.33	0.97			
	Program	661	2.04	1.20			
Spring 2014					.05	1.69	.19
	Comparison	176	2.25	0.99			
	Program	588	2.12	1.20			

Research Question 2 asked, “Is there a difference in persistence (number of credits earned) between students who participate in African American male success initiative programs and African American males who do participate?” To answer this question, Table 3 displays the results of the one-way ANOVA tests comparing student earned credits based on group across six semesters. Inspection of the table found comparison group students to have earned typically one to two credits more across all six semesters. All six ANOVA tests were significant. However, based on the Cohen (1988) criteria, all six eta coefficients were considered to be weak correlations (Table 3).

In summary, this study used archival data from 2,375 students to examine the performance of an African American male success initiative program in a community college in Mississippi. Comparison group students had significantly higher GPAs in three of the six semesters (Table 2) and had earned significantly more credits in all six semesters. However, the weak eta coefficients would suggest that although those ANOVA comparisons were significantly different, the mean scores were essentially the same. In the final chapter, these findings are compared to the literature, conclusions and implications are drawn, and a series of recommendations are suggested.

Research Question Two

Table 3

ANOVA Comparisons for Student Earned Credits Based on Group

Semester	Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	η	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Fall 2011	Comparison	155	16.80	2.62	.19	33.73	.001
	Program	761	14.98	3.71			
Spring 2012	Comparison	158	17.41	3.86	.23	47.57	.001
	Program	683	14.87	4.25			
Fall 2012	Comparison	199	15.48	3.27	.12	13.34	.001
	Program	733	14.35	4.01			
Spring 2013	Comparison	171	15.87	3.66	.10	8.70	.003
	Program	632	14.75	4.62			
Fall 2013	Comparison	179	16.17	3.09	.16	21.60	.001
	Program	662	14.62	4.15			
Spring 2014	Comparison	176	16.48	3.89	.18	26.69	.001
	Program	588	14.39	4.91			

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter includes a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations based on the results. The summary states the purpose of the study and describes the procedures used in collecting the data. The conclusions answer the research questions based on the findings. Recommendations for further research are given.

1. Is there a difference in GPA between students who participate in African American male success initiative programs and African American males who do not participate?
2. Is there a difference in persistence (number of credits earned) between students who participate in African American male success initiative programs and African American males who do participate?

Summary of the Findings and Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the results of the study and examine the performance of African American initiative programs among African American males attending a community college in the state of Mississippi.

The population for the study consisted of 2,375 African American male students across six semesters enrolled at the selected community college. The following conclusions are based on the results of the study:

Research Question 1

Is there a difference in GPA between students who participate in African American male success initiative programs and African American males who do not participate?

Out of the six semesters, the study indicated that African American males that were a part of the comparison group (i.e., non-participants) had a significantly higher GPA than those in the program group. The high GPAs for the comparison group occurred in the fall semester of the academic year. The difference shows the significant struggle that African American males experience during the transition of the start of a new year. The difference among the GPA between the fall and the spring semesters were significantly different.

The program group students were considered to be at risk and were expected to struggle during college. However, during the fall semester there were a few points difference among the two within their GPA. This was quite interesting considering the fact that the program group student's GPA was only a few points different in some semesters compared to those in the comparison group. The program group students did much better during the spring semester than the fall semester. This difference could be the result of them being acclimated to the program by the additional resources that were provided by the African American male initiative program.

Finally, the comparison group and program group students are both excelling in the classroom. There are only a few points difference among the GPAs.

Conclusion 1

The comparison group students performed slightly better than the program group students by earning a higher GPA over six semesters. Three of the six semesters there was significantly higher GPAs for the comparison group. However, given the circumstances these program group students come from and the number of remedial courses they are required to take, results show that over a period of time there is a glimpse of success for the program.

Research Question 2

Is there a difference in persistence (number of credits earned) between students who participate in the African American male success initiative program and African American males who do not participate?

The persistence factor between African American males in the initiative program group and the comparison group shows that the comparison group had slightly more credits earned over the course of the six semesters. The comparison group, over six semesters, had typically earned one to two credits more.

Finally, the difference between the two groups shows a slight difference but it gives a glimpse of hope that the program group students are being impacted by not falling too far behind the comparison group students. The program students were advised by their counselors to take no more than fifteen hours per semester. This could factor into the comparison group earned more credits each semester.

Conclusion 2

The comparison group earned more credits per semester than the program group students. Over the six semesters, the study data shows that the comparison group had much better success than the program group students with earned credits.

Discussion of the Findings

Community College Students

The students who attend the community college are all from different backgrounds with different objectives in mind. Rouse (1995) describes these students who attend the community college as experiencing the “democratization effect.” The democratization effect allows those students who typically would not attend community college the opportunity to attend and achieve their goals and experience success in the classroom. It gives them a gateway to higher education to prepare them for the university level that many would never experience or obtain. These findings show that community college students are all looking for different pathways from vocation/technical to academic curriculum (Bowen, et al., 2009; Cohen & Brawer, 2008). The Association of American Community Colleges (2014) reported in their findings that 45% of the students in the nation who attend community colleges are first-time freshmen. It is reported that minority students make up 45% of the undergraduate level at the community colleges in the nation. There are some states that reported that their minority students exceeded the national average. These findings are in agreement with the state of Texas and California. The state of Texas reported that up to 75% of Texas’ community college freshmen and sophomore enrollment are minorities (Texas Association of Community Colleges, 2011; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2011). The state of California also reported

in its findings that 84% of first-time college students who attend community colleges in California are from minority groups (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2013). In reference to my study, these findings are similarly related in proving that African American males are more likely to attend community colleges vs. universities as freshmen. This gives them the opportunity to move at a pace that would be conducive to allowing them to receive a solid foundation and succeed in their academic performance.

Research shows that minority students are from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less prepared for the amount of coursework on the college level (Bailey, et al., 2005; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Minority students are more likely to earn a certificate as opposed to an associate's degree. Minority students graduate from the community college with a certificate at a higher rate than do White students (Bailey, et al. 2005; Oseguera, 2005).

Research indicates that community colleges are a gateway to higher education for minority students. It provides them an opportunity to experience success but without struggles that could inhibit that success. Those students who enter the community college from a lower socioeconomic status are more likely to have to take remedial courses and are not academically prepared for the rigorous academic curriculum. African American males who do enroll in the community college are already behind with keeping up with their counterparts due to having to take remedial courses. These students are less likely to seek additional help outside of the classroom. These viewpoints show why African American male students need to be engaged more on a level of one on one mentoring and provided guidance to help them succeed in college.

A previous research study conducted by Campbell (2009) studied the absence of African American males in higher education. His study was a qualitative study looking for answers to two essential questions. The study was aimed to look at the factors (social and economic factors) that are responsible for the decline in enrollment of African American men. The next question was designed to get a clear understanding of the perceptions of African American men from a cultural perspective that challenged them to pursue higher education. The findings from the study indicated that there are important practices that are vital to the retention of African American males. The practices reported from the study included the power of positive influence, the power of knowing that one is going to college, the power of positive peer relationship, and the power of expecting a good return on one's education. Schreiner's (2009) research agreed with the findings of Campbell (2009) on the retention of students. Schreiner found it to be extremely crucial for first-year students in college to have a sense of belonging and comfort; these factors were found to have a huge impact on their academic careers. If students feel welcomed at an institution, they are likely to continue their matriculation through college. This relates to my study by confirming that if you academically integrate these students into the college community then they are likely to perform better and achieve a more favorable outcome.

African American Males in Higher Education

African American males struggle with the attainment of associate's degrees and advanced degrees. According to Roach (2009) African American males are less prepared than White males to enter college. The lack of preparedness creates and sets them up for failure in the classroom. There are many factors that lead African American males to not

excel in college that range from standardized test scores, graduation rates, enrollment numbers, and attrition rate. Davis (1999) conducted a study to help better understand the struggles of African Americans and he indicated “they struggle to become socially integrated in a community of peers who are supportive but often confining; they struggle to overcome academic hurdles created by inadequate precollege preparation; and they struggle against a hostile schooling environment that marginalizes their presence on campus” (p. 135). The findings of his study furthermore show the need for programs that will help African American males overcome those hurdles. A previous research study conducted by Strayhorn and Devita (2009) noted that African American males face hurdles in college with seeking guidance and becoming engaged in college with extracurricular activities. Kezar and Kinzie (2006) described engagement as “the time and energy that students devote to educationally purposeful activities and the extent to which the institution gets students to participate in activities that lead to student success” (p.150).

Kimbrough and Harper (2006) explored other factors that deter African American males from having success in college. The study showed that professors who had low expectations for students had an effect on African American males and their academic success. This low expectation contributed to the negative effect of African American males matriculating through college. Strayhorn and Devita (2009) researched the experiences of African American males outside of the classroom with their interaction with faculty. The study consisted of 79 African American male full time students that lived on campus and attended HBCUs and PWIs; it was used to determine if the institutional type as a private public or the size of institutions factored into success. The

study was based on secondary data from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire. There were two key findings from the study: African American males attending liberal arts colleges are less likely to become engaged in activities on campus with peers and faculty at research institutions had greater interaction with students and allowed them to have an enriched college experience.

Wood (2012) investigated the epidemic of African American males' dilemma of excelling in the community college system. He conversed with African American males and interviewed the students about their experience. In his research, Wood found that several practices identified by African American males that can be implemented to build a rapport between faculty and students.

1. Illustrate a friendly, caring demeanor- Faculty must appear to authentically care for their students by verbally or non-verbally showing concern.
2. Listen to student concerns-If a student raises concern about their performance, course material or structure, faculty should be attentive to the concerns they present. Faculty must pursue all outlets that are within reason to help accommodate their students (Wood, 2012, p. 32).

These two practices are vital for their success as described by African American male students to establishing a productive relationship between African American males and faculty.

Community College Initiatives

There have been numerous meetings to identify the need to address the crisis of African American males downward trend of not graduating from college and entering the prison system. The College Board (2010) released a report titled *The College Completion*

Agenda 2010 Progress Report. The reports' finding was that students of color fall behind their White peers with completing their associate's degree in three years or less. Pluviose (2008) highlighted a summit called by the President's Round Table of African American Chief Executive Officers. The meeting consisted of different type of leaders with a goal of reducing high school dropout and increasing the number of African American men that attended college. There have been numerous recommendations from establishing mentoring programs and engaging them more on the collegiate level. These programs help African American male students make the transition from high school to college. African American males are likely to enter the prison system and take a different route compared to their counterparts. If African American males are engaged with these programs that provide guidance to them on daily basis, have academic support, and having smart practices could help contribute to the success of African American male students graduating with associate degree or higher. As indicated by Kaltenborn and Bjerke (2002) a sense of belonging is related to a place of attachment. As stated with previous research, when people feel welcomed as a group or as a whole, they feel at home, which also mean their beliefs, cultures, values; lifestyle is normal and accepted (Scannell & Gifford, 2009).

The previous literature indicates the motives and need for African American male initiatives program. It shows that institutions must address the crisis and come up with best practice to put in place that will allow students to feel a part of the campus that would promote a sense of belonging that leads to academic success.

Implications of the Study

The current study can serve as a guide for community colleges, faculty, and administrators. The number of African American males attending college and not graduating is very alarming in higher education. Administrators are constantly looking at ways and options to engage African American males and reverse the downward spin with African American males entering college. The number of African American males who are incarcerated is disturbing for our nation. The results of this study suggest strategies for administrators to look at as options to make the best possible decisions, based on currently enrolled African American males. Acting on this awareness allows staff and administrators to look at the effective practices in specific areas that will contribute to the achievement of African American males. Most importantly, it can help administrators make effective judgments toward policy making and program offerings for student retention through the use of factual data. Finally, in order to address the crisis and turn the trend upward, these programs are vital and can be used to help implement strategies from the high school to the collegiate level.

Limitations of the Study

After conducting the research, limitations became apparent to the researcher. The number of colleges included in this study was low; the researcher sought the participation of other institutions but was denied access to data. The results may have limited generalizability when compared to those of other community colleges or other states. Additionally, the data were given for this study and the researcher did not have control over how the data were collected and organized.

Recommendations

The downhill slope in regards to academic performance, graduation, retention and engagement of African American male college students, requires colleges to explore strategies and best practices to address this absence in higher education. The future research relating to the success of African American male initiative programs will continue to grow as funding remains an issue for community colleges. Future studies regarding African American male initiative programs could help administrators become more engaged with strategic planning and implementing best practices. Although the results of the current study provided a better understanding of the success of African American male initiative programs from a rural community college in Mississippi, more research and studies are needed with more colleges. First the current study was narrowed to a rural community college district in a poverty area. Future research could encompass a larger group of students that makes up the overall population of the United States to show if these programs are impacting African American males at colleges with a diverse population. Secondly, this study did not investigate if these students were first generation college students, if their parents had any higher education experience, or their motivation for college. Future research could investigate how parent's educational background impacted students attending college. Third, the current research study investigated GPA and credits earned with African American males in the male initiative program and non-participants of the African American male initiative program at the community college. Future research could investigate African American male and non-African American male college GPA and credits earned at the community college along with the graduation rate. Fourthly, the current research study was informed by secondary data

from one institution. Future research should be replicated at other institutions with African American male initiative programs to determine their success through open ended questions and qualitative data. Finally, an in-depth study investigating the amount of money, number of staff, and resources that are allocated to African American male initiative programs annually should be undertaken. These results would give colleges and universities the opportunity to explore the options of creating similar programs.

If future research were conducted based on the recommendations listed in the current study, these findings would give community colleges vital information with enrolling, retaining and graduating African American male students. These results would allow administrators to be more effective and efficient with resources along with looking at similar ethnic groups that are experiencing similar struggles.

Summary

Chapter V summarized the research study findings and presented conclusions drawn by the researcher. Each of the research questions was examined. The findings were discussed and conclusions were drawn based on the data. Implications for practice and recommendations for researchers interested in future research relating to the performance of African American male initiative programs at the community college were discussed. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the study findings and their comparison to other research studies.

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APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Protocol Title: The effectiveness of African American male success initiative programs

Protocol Number: 15-103

Principal Investigator: Mr. Dan Coleman

Date of Determination: 3/24/2015

Qualifying Exempt Category: 45 CFR 46.101(b)(4)

Dear Mr. Coleman:

The Human Research Protection Program has determined the above referenced project exempt from IRB review.

Please note the following:

- Retain a copy of this correspondence for your records.
- Only the MSU staff and students named on the application are approved as MSU investigators and/or key personnel for this study.
- The approved study will expire on 5/31/2016, which was the completion date indicated on your application. If additional time is needed, submit a continuation request. (SOP 01-07 Continuing Review of Approved Applications)
- Any modifications to the project must be reviewed and approved by the H! RPP prior to implementation. Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project.
- Per university requirement, all research-related records (e.g. application materials, letters of support, signed consent forms, etc.) must be retained and available for audit for a period of at least 3 years after the research has ended.

- It is the responsibility of the investigator to promptly report events that may represent unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This determination is issued under the Mississippi State University's OHRP Federal wide Assurance #FWA00000203. All forms and procedures can be found on the HRPP website: www.orc.msstate.edu.

Thank you for your cooperation and good luck to you in conducting this research project. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at nmorse@orc.msstate.edu or call [662-325-5220](tel:662-325-5220).

Finally, we would greatly appreciate your feedback on the HRPP approval process.

Please take a few minutes to complete our survey at

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PPM2FBP>.

Sincerely,

Nicole Morse, CIP

IRB Compliance Administrator

cc: Stephanie B. King (Advisor)