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The Retention of Black College Students

LaTreena Kathleen Felegy

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

Requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Education

**Augsburg College  
Lindell Library  
Minneapolis, MN 55454**

Augsburg College

Minneapolis, Minnesota

2016



Thesis  
Felegy  
2016

THE RETENTION OF BLACK COLLEGE STUDENTS

Master of Arts in Education

Augsburg College

Minneapolis, Minnesota

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that the Leadership Application Project of

LaTreena Kathleen Felegy

has been approved by the Review Committee, and fulfills requirement for the  
Master of Arts in Education degree.

Date of Symposium: May 13, 2016

Date Completed: June 8, 2016

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Dedication

For my mom Dina. My mom believed a college degree meant opportunity and success and that in attaining a degree her children would not have to struggle the way that she had. Thank you mom.

### Abstract

This paper explores three factors that contribute to the retention of Black college students: the institutional environment, social support and motivation/resilience. In this paper institutional environment is defined as the student's perceived acceptance and well-being at the institution. Social support is defined as the student's network of family, friends, faculty and staff who are available to assist and encourage the students in their academic pursuits. Motivation/resilience is defined as the willingness of the students to continue on their path to graduation regardless of setbacks and challenges. Each of the factors presented in the paper is supported by research by professionals.

Furthermore, from the investigation of how institutional environment, social support and motivation/resilience relate to Black retention, an educational pre-college workshop is created. The workshop consists of teachable interpretations of the research with the intention of preparing and encouraging all students in their future college endeavors.

**Table of Contents**

## CHAPTER 1.

Introduction.....	1
-------------------	---

## CHAPTER 2.

Literature Review.....	4
The Environment of the College Institution.....	4
Social Support.....	8
Motivation, Resilience.....	13
Historically Black Colleges and Universities.....	18

## CHAPTER 3.

Workshop.....	28
---------------	----

## CHAPTER 4.

Reflection.....	38
-----------------	----

APPENDIX.....	40
---------------	----

RESOURCES.....	60
----------------	----

REFERENCES.....	65
-----------------	----

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Meet Lamar, an 18-year-old Black high school graduate. Lamar was raised by a single mother whose highest level of education was high school. Lamar's mother worked tirelessly at low paying jobs in order to give him and his younger siblings the best life possible. Lamar's mother was able to raise her children in a safe, middle-class, predominantly White suburb in the Midwest. Given, he was one of few Black students at his high school; school was often socially, mentally and emotionally taxing. However, Lamar stayed focused, studied vigorously and now in his senior year has been accepted by a predominately White, four-year university. Regardless of his race, one would think that a hard working student such as Lamar would have no trouble graduating from college. He had the wherewithal to get accepted into college; he should have no trouble completing his degree, right? Not the case.

Although enrollment rates for Black students today are higher than they have ever been, the actual graduation rates of Black students are low. According to The National Center for Educational Statistics, only 39 % of first-time, full-time Black students who began their Bachelor's degree programs in 2002 graduated within six years while 57% of Caucasian first-time, full-time students who began their Bachelor's degree programs in 2002 graduated within six years. Similarly, in 2012 the U.S. Department of Education's IPEDS Graduation Rate

Survey found that in Minnesota 49% of Black Students complete their degree within six years compared to 65% of Caucasian students. Finally, at Augsburg College the 2013-2014 Augsburg College Factbook reports that between 2001 and 2009 36.7% of Black first-year non transfer students went on to graduate compared to 59% of Caucasian first-year non transfer students. The gap in degree completion between Black students and Caucasian students at Augsburg College is greater than that of the nation and state.

It is imperative that college retention among Black students increase. The 2004 ACT Policy Report states that in order to remain competitive in our global economy the United States must produce a high population of college graduates. Also, low student retention, regardless of ethnic background, costs institutions more money than it does to recruit new students (Adams, 2006). Colleges lose thousands of dollars on students who do not persist through college, which in turn creates higher tuition costs for all students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1989). Retaining Black college students is also paramount to the Black individual's quality of life and upward mobility of the culture as a whole. According to *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2007), Blacks who graduate with a Bachelor's degree earn an income that is 95% of that of White's household income. This is a staggering increase in income when taken into account that the national median income for Blacks is just over 60% of that of Whites.

Although there is an abundance of research on minority college retention the majority of this research is predominantly quantitative and therefore lends

little insight into the nuances of this complex issue. The following research will include quantitative data but also account for the personal perspectives of Black students. The purpose of this project is to not only to identify the factors that influence Black college retention but once identified to create a product that will prepare Black college bound students for the challenges that undeniably await them on their road to college completion.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

The study of retention can be described as the examination of external institutional factors that maintain students through schooling. Although at its beginnings, a mere 50 years ago, experts such as Alexander Astin, Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini examined retention as it related to White students attending residential universities, more recently retention has included the experiences of students of varying income, race, gender, orientation and ethnicity. (Tinto, 2006). It is important to differentiate student retention from student persistence as this paper will touch on both. Student retention are the external influences that further success while student persistence are the internal influences that further success.

Research has uncovered many factors that can contribute to Black college student retention. Although a full exploration of the topic of Black retention is beyond the scope of this work, the following review of the literature will concentrate on the environment of the institution, social support and student motivation/resilience.

#### **The Environment of the College Institution and Black Student Retention**

The environment of the institution whether supportive or not has been studied extensively as influencing Black student retention. Holmes, Ebbers, Robinson and Mugenda (2001) reviewed the research on negative factors that



contribute to the attrition of Black students who attend predominately White institutions. These factors included deficient academic preparation, insufficient financial resources, limited exposure to the majority group on campus and poor academic advising in high school. Holmes et al. (2001) also found the environment of the institution to be the greatest positive indicator of college success among Black students, greater even than pre-college preparation. Holmes et al. (2001) concluded that it is through a sense of this validation perceived from the point of first contact on campus and increasing throughout the student's college experience that Black students are able to persist.

More specifically, Hausmann, Schofield and Woods (2007) examined the relationship between a sense of belonging on campus (defined as the psychological sense that one is a valued member of the college community) and first-year college persistence (Hausmann et al., 2007). The study examined all Black students in their freshmen year of college attending a large, public, predominately White institution. Although variables in the study included Tinto's (1987, 1993) pre-college characteristics, social and academic integration and student commitment, the results of the study found that a sense of belonging on campus predicted Black student persistence more than any other factor. The study showed that the greater the sense of belonging within the institution felt by the student the more likely that student persisted to graduation (Hausmann et al., 2007).

Lundburg (2010) sought to find how an institution's commitment to diversity and minority involvement on campus relates to student learning. The

study used a national sample of 3,332 Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Mexican American, Native American, Puerto Rican, multiethnic and other Hispanic students. The participants of the study took the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), a questionnaire that identifies student involvement in the institution.

The results of the study found that involvement in the institution, for example, going to fine arts events, library use, talking with peers about academics and having relationships with faculty, had a positive effect on learning for minority students. According to the study, Black students felt involved in this institution due to learning environments that were perceived as being a safe and supportive place to share their particular viewpoint and instructors who were approachable and open rather than rigid and intimidating. Lessons that included discussion and required students to draw on many perspectives also contributed to a sense of involvement for Black students (Lundburg, 2010).

Institutions with environments that are supportive of Black students often have programs in place that support retention. For instance, Derby and Watson (2007) examined whether orientation courses that focus on developing Black students' educational goals and self-awareness increase degree completion for Black students. The study assessed three college cohorts consisting of 144 Black students. The students attended a public, Midwest, rural community college fall 1999 – spring 2002. During orientation students were put into small groups and told to reflect on their abilities, aptitudes, interests, values and attitudes as they relate to their academic and personal development. Students in the orientation also

developed academic goals, created plans to reach these goals, were given information on resources on campus that would support them in these goals and formed relationships with other participants within the orientation (Derby et al., 2007).

Due to insufficient sample size, chi-square measures could not be computed for the success of retention measures. However, the study did find that Black students who completed orientation were more likely to stay enrolled in the college than those who did not complete orientation and that those students who did not complete orientation completed less than three semesters. In the study no information on the facilitators of the orientation was given. Further data on the facilitator(s) such as race would be helpful in determining whether orientations were successful when led by Black instructors or if the race of the facilitator(s) did not matter.

Johnson, Soldner, Leonard, Alvarez, Inkelas, Rowan-Kenyon and Longerbeam, (2007) examined the sense of belonging on a college campus based on race. The study's sample came from the 2004 National Study of Living-Learning Programs (NSLLP) and included freshman Black, Asian Pacific American, Hispanic/Latino, Multiracial/Multiethnic and White/Caucasian students (Johnson et al., 2007). To identify the student's sense of belonging on campus, students were given a questionnaire which asked them to rate their agreement to the following statements: (1) "I feel comfortable on campus," (2) "I would choose the same college over again," (3) "My college is supportive of me," (4) "I feel that I am a member of the campus community," and (5) "I feel a sense

of belonging to the campus community"(Johnson et al., 2007). The results of the study found that Black and Hispanic/Latino students feel a lesser sense of belonging on campus than White/Caucasian students. Johnson also found that the climate of the student's residence hall had a large influence on the student's sense of belonging. Given the physical immediacy of a student's residence hall a student's experiences there can shape a sense of belonging on campus overall (Johnson et al., 2007).

As the previous studies indicate the environment of the college is paramount to the persistence of Black students. An institution's commitment to diversity and minority involvement on campus creates an environment where Black students feel valued. When Black students perceive a sense of belonging on campus they are more likely to become involved in the institution and continue through completion.

### **Social Support and Black Student Retention**

Social support is another factor that has been studied as having an effect on Black student success. Rendon's (1994) study examined the relationship between social support and academic success and found that when minority students, such as women and students of color, were encouraged to attend college by faculty and administration and told they could succeed they were more likely to persist. Specifically, Rendon's study of freshman Black college students found a sense of validation to be key in degree completion. Rendon defined validation as "an enabling, confirming and supportive process initiated by in-and-out-of-class

agents that foster academic and interpersonal development” (Rendon, 1994, p.44).

An example of in-class validation is when faculty are supportive and approachable, are willing to work individually with those students who show need, and who organize learning in a way that promotes academic confidence within the student (Rendon, 1994). Out-of-class validation consists of peers and family who believe the student can succeed and expect nothing less. Rendon found that validation was most helpful during the student’s first year of college and specifically the first few weeks of class (Rendon, 1994).

Young (2011) conducted a study examining the relationship between social support and academic motivation among Black students. In the study social support was defined as the social assets, resources, or networks that provide aid, advice, approval, comfort, or assistance (Cobb, 1976). To aid his study, Young used Deci and Ryan’s (1985) self –determination theory. This theory defines motivation as being either controlled by one’s self (internally) or as being controlled by outside factors (externally). Young’s study found a positive correlation between perceived social support and both intrinsic and external motivation. An example of social support is the validation that Black students gain while forming relationships with peers within the institution who understand the challenges of college, taking part in campus clubs or simply feeling valued and heard in class. Social support does not only have to come from the institution but can also be gained through the student’s family.

Holland investigated the role peers play in the college experiences of Black students. Of the study’s 53 participants 92% of students identified

themselves as Black, where the remaining 7% identified as Latino, African, Multiracial and American. (Holland 2011). Students were asked to complete a questionnaire and engage in an interview lasting 25 minutes to 1 hour. The results of the study found that peers played an important role in the college experiences of Black students. A theme that continuously emerged during the investigation was that of encouragement (Holland, 2011). Students' peers encouraged them to visit certain colleges, attend certain colleges and enroll in certain programs. For instance one student stated how his peers positively affected his college experience,

Me and my friends [were] all at the same level. We all [went] to school, we all work[ed], and so you know, if I was failing a class my friend [was] like, "Why are you failing? You go to class. Do what you need to do so you can graduate (Holland, 2011, p.1045).

In this student's experience, peers were available for encouragement and support.

In her qualitative case study of two Black men attending a large public university, Simmons (2013) found student connections and relationships to be important factors in Black retention. The two Black students who participated in the study were part of a student support group aimed at assisting and encouraging students as they attend college. One of the participants stated,

The living learning communities here are a great way for people to branch out and to meet people. Academically, if I have trouble getting a concept or if this person gets the concept, then this person can help you out, to understand that concept (Simmons, 2013, p. 69).

Both students believed that the support they received from the support group had a positive effect on their academic achievements and perseverance.

Gloria (1999) studied how social support, the environment of the university and positive self-belief affected persistence for Black students at a predominately White Southwestern state university. Black students at this university make up only 2.9% of the population. The participants of the study included 98 black students from over 20 education and liberal arts classes. These students were given questionnaires that evaluated the social support, comfort at the university, self-beliefs and student persistence.

The results of the study found that although social support, the environment of the university and positive self-belief all had a positive effect on persistence, social support and the environment of the institution were the strongest predictors of persistence (Gloria, 1999). In the study social support was demonstrated by having at least one faculty or staff person who the student felt was supportive of them academically and contributing to their academic success while also having friends and family members who were rooting for them and offered assistance. In this study, relationships with faculty and peers helped mitigate some of the negative experiences of college the Black students in the study faced. It is also important to note that the institution in the study showed dedication to Black student success. For example, networks and supportive groups were available on campus for these students plus faculty and staff were reviewed annually to evaluate their efforts to recruit, retain and work with ethnically diverse students (Gloria, 1999).

Baker and Robnett (2012) examined how the experiences of college at a particular institution varied depending on race and ethnicity and how these

variances contribute to student retention (Baker et al., 2012). The study used data from a survey of 1,684 Black, White, Asian American and Latino students. During the study students were followed through their third year of college to determine which students persisted. The results of the study found that Asian-American students had the highest retention rate at 93%. However, Black students were close behind with 92% with Latino students following at 86%. Black students were more likely than any other group to study with other students and be involved in clubs on campus. Unlike Latino students who were more likely to work more than 20 hours a week off-campus and spend 17 hours or more on family responsibility, among the sample there were no Black students who reported working more than 20 hours outside of school or more than 17 hours tending to family responsibilities (Baker et al., 2012). The Black students in the study were successful because they spent most of their time at the institution and were able to maintain social connections on campus.

Studies show a positive relationship between social support and academic motivation in Black students. When Black students are encouraged by supportive and approachable faculty and maintain social connections on campus with peers they are more likely to remain in college. These relationships with faculty and peers may also mitigate some of the negative experiences of college that Black students encounter.



### **Motivation, Resilience and Black Student Retention**

Getz's (1998) qualitative study pursued how resiliency aided Black students in college persistence. Eight Black students who were sophomore or juniors in college and who had lived through or were currently living through challenging situations were chosen for the study. In the study students spoke of having to "block out" or ignore negative experiences pertaining to race in college in order to persist.

As far as college, being Black, people act a certain way towards you. You gotta pretty much block that out, too. You have to get used to blocking stuff out. Or like, not really block it out—not let it bother you. Cause if you take it personally, let it get to you, then it's going to slow your day down. It makes you tired and it'll start to bother you and you really start to second-guess yourself and other people. And then it will bring a whole lot of problems that you don't need (Getz, 1998, p.466).

The results of the study found that the student's persistence in college involved more than academic preparation but also a resilient spirit.

Griffin's (2006) qualitative study examined the sources of motivation for high achieving Black students and perceptions of how these sources contribute to academic achievement. In her study Griffin identifies what motivates high achieving Black students to succeed academically and how these students react to and perceive challenges. The sample, consisting of six female and three male full-time students, varied in background from high socioeconomic status to low socioeconomic status. The results of the study found that the sources of student's motivation to achieve academically were fueled both internally and externally.

Janice who is in her first year at a state university expressed that her motivation to do well academically came from herself stating, "My motivation to

do well in school, is first and foremost, fueled by my own personal drive” (Griffin, 2006, p. 391).

Other students in the study expressed their motivation to do well was so that they could dispel stereotypes of Blacks and the Black race.

It definitely drives me to work harder knowing that, you know, I have to achieve this, you know in order to make the rest of my Black race proud of me...And it's definitely motivation to work harder (Griffin, 2006, p. 393).

Many of the students claimed that they overcame academic challenges by assessing what they could be doing differently instead of blaming professors or other external factors.

Ford (1996) studied the factors that contribute to the resilience of Black male college students. The study's sample included 104 male college students who grew up in urban areas. Ninety percent of the participants were attending an urban state college while the other ten percent were from various colleges (Ford, 1996). The results of Ford's study found that emotional intelligence was an important factor in the resilience of Black male college students. Ford stated that many Black males often experience racial discrimination and negative encounters having to do with race. These encounters cause them to respond with anger and rebelliousness that has a negative effect on academic success. However, those Black males with a high emotional intelligence are able to channel negative emotions into a determination to succeed academically in spite of any negative experiences or circumstances (Ford, 1996). Ford's study is an indicator that the Black students who are able to draw on their need to overcome challenging experiences and to change their circumstances are more able to persist through college.

Gayles (2005) examined the resiliency of three Black male college students. All three young men grew up in “non affluent homes” and attended “non affluent” schools, yet were the first members in their family to graduate high school with honors and attend college. Gayles’ interviews with the young men regarding their personal experiences and opinions of school resulted in an emergence of themes. For instance, Gayle notes that all three men seemingly downplayed their achievements by asserting that their success did not make them special but was simply a result of knowing how to work the system:

I see myself as a person who gets good grades but I’m just like them. I believe that everybody can get it, they can do it too if they wanted to they could do it too. So I see myself as average. I don’t see myself as “Oh he’s a scholar, he’s accelerated...” I’m just average, man. I know how to play the game. (Gayles, 2005, p. 255)

Similar to Cokley’s (2003) findings all three students also viewed academic success in practical terms and as a means to end, one student said:

I know that if I got to pay the price now, I won’t have to work as hard in the future ‘cause it’s always the people that work the hardest that don’t get paid the best, they get paid the worst. So if I pay now, I do it now, get it out of the way now, I reap the benefit later on (Gayles, 2005, p. 256).

In Gayle’s study the three students viewed college as yet another obstacle to overcome on their way to a better life. The students felt that anyone could be successful if they put in the proper amount of work and followed the rules and guidelines.

Hamilton (1996) studied the causes of academic motivation among 11 Black college students and found that Black students are not only motivated to attend college in order to benefit their own life but also to benefit their community

and culture. Unlike most studies on gifted or high-achieving Black students, Hamilton's sample consisted of 11 students attending a two-year New York state college who would be considered average to low average compared to other students in a college pool. Each student in the sample was asked interview questions relating to academic motivation. The results of the study found that all of the women in the sample were motivated firstly by a need for individual economic growth and secondly (all but one woman) by the advancement of the Black community as a whole.

Morale's (2008) qualitative study examined the psychology of highly resilient Black college students. Using open-ended in-depth interviews, Morales recounted the experiences and thought patterns of 50 students who persisted academically. One commonality in all 50 resilient students was that each student lived with an inordinate amount of stress stemming from challenges such as living bi-culturally, being looked at as the spokesperson for one's race, the pressure to succeed for one's entire race and asserting one's self image and self-esteem. For instance, Morales states that Black students exist in an atmosphere and culture that says overtly and covertly that Blacks are not smart. One student recounted,

Part of me always believed that black people were dumb. Even as a kid, I'd look around and see that the teachers and principal were white, the janitors black. In high school, I was the only black kid in honors algebra. I sometimes doubted I could compete. I was like, what the hell am I doing here? (Morales, 2008, p.162).

This student, along with other Black students, must affirm self-esteem and self-image in order to be successful. Morales also found that for the Black students in

the study academic resiliency required inordinate amounts of consciousness, creative problem solving, emotional management and steadfastness.

As studies show there is a high level of academic vulnerability that exists for those students who are a member of any minority group, are of low-socioeconomic status or even more so both (Morales et al., 2004). These students encounter unique personal setbacks, challenges and negative experiences. For this reason practicing resiliency, motivation and the ability to persist through college despite challenges is especially important for Black students.

This literature review identified how college environment, social connectedness and motivation/resiliency play a role in Black college retention. The research shows that Black students are successful when they feel a sense of belonging in the institution. This perceived belonging is created as a result of feeling validated at the point of first contact, the student's social and academic integration in the institution and the institutions commitment to diversity. Secondly, Black students require social relationships that support them in their academic pursuits. This support comes from their college peers, staff, faculty and familial and peer ties outside of campus. Lastly, this literature review indicated the importance of self-motivation and persistence as a responsibility of Black students. The studies on resiliency showed that academically successful students took ownership of their academic lives and were motivated to overcome any cultural, emotional and economical obstacles in order to reach their academic goals.

### **Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Black Student Retention**

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) emerged after the Civil War in order to educate Black students who were not allowed to attend institutions serving White students. A survey compiled by *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* found that half of the 27 HBCUs in the survey had a graduation rate of less than 33%. However, the highest six-year graduation rate for Black students who entered HBCUs from 2003 to 2006 were 79% at Spellman College, 64% at Howard University, 59% at Morehouse College and 56% at Hampton University. As HBCUs are still viable today, the following studies examine the experiences of Black students at HBCUs relative to predominantly White institutions (PWIs).

Allen (1992) studied the difference in college experience for Black students attending HBCUs and Black students attending PWIs. In the study Allen expands on the results of many other related studies and examines data from the National Study on Black College Students (NSBCS). At the time, the NSBCS was one of the most comprehensive data sets on Black college students' characteristics, experiences and achievements (Allen, 1992). Analysis of the data began with a general examination then a more intricate exploration using correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. Multivariate analysis was employed to investigate relationships between student outcomes of academic achievement, social involvement, and occupational aspirations and students' educational backgrounds, educational goals, demographic characteristics and personal adjustment to college and the college environment (Allen, 1992).

In the study self-reported data was collected from a total of 2,531 students of which 953 were from HBCUs and 1,578 were from PWIs. PWIs in the study included University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; University of California, Los Angeles; Arizona State University, Tempe; Memphis State University; and the State University of New York, Stony Brook, University of Wisconsin, Madison and Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti (Allen, 1992). HBCUs in the study included North Carolina Central University, Durham; Southern University, Baton Rouge, LA; Texas Southern University, Houston; Jackson State University, Jackson, MS; North Carolina A&T State University, Greensboro; Central State University, Wilberforce, OH; Morgan State University, Baltimore, MD; and Florida A&M University, Tallahassee (Allen, 1992). Data was collected using questionnaires that were developed over a two-year period. The questionnaires were then mailed to students and returned to the University of Michigan. Some questions were taken from previous studies while others were created originally.

The study's findings suggest that academic achievement is highest amongst those students who have high educational aspirations, who are certain that their college choice was correct and who report positive relationships with faculty (Allen, 1992). Campus racial composition was not only correlated with academic achievement, high school grades relations with professors and class level but was also a strong predictor of social involvement and occupational aspirations. College experience was most positive for Black students attending HBCUs. Black students who attended HBCUs reported higher academic

performance, greater social involvement and higher occupational ambitions than Black students who attended PWIs. Black students attending PWIs reported significantly lower levels of social involvement, lower college grades and less favorable relations with their professors (Allen 1992).

The implications of the findings suggest Black student college outcomes are influenced by their immediate social environment. Black students on historically Black campuses highlighted feelings of engagement, connection, acceptance and extensive support and encouragement while Black students on predominately White campuses highlighted feelings of alienation, sensed hostility, racial discrimination and lack of integration (Allen, 1992).

Schwartz and Washington (1998) studied the academic accomplishments and retention of 442 Black freshman students attending a private, historically Black liberal arts college in the southeast. Instruments used in the study included The Non-Cognitive Questionnaire-BC (NCQ-BC) (Tracey et al., 1984) which consisted of items which examined college expectation, educational aspirations and self-awareness, a self-assessment and an open-ended section involving goals and accomplishments. The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) (Baker et al., 1989) was also used as a measurement. The SACQ is composed of 67 self-reporting items assessing the student's level of adjustment on a nine-point scale and includes four sub-scales on academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment and institutional adjustment (Schwartz et al., 1998).



The study found that from semester to semester, social adjustment and attachment to the college were the best indicators of persistence, although social adjustment was marginally more significant. The study also found that for Black students the presence of a support person- on or off-campus- was essential (Schwartz et al., 1998). According to Schwartz et al. (1998) and in agreement with Tinto's (1975, 1987) integration model, "academic success is a function of the ability to adjust to the academic environment and to receive appropriate and adequate support" (Schwartz et al., 1998, p. 53). These findings verify the importance of student integration into the campus environment as an expectation of Black student retention. These findings may also indicate that HBCUs provide environments in which Black students are more able to adapt and feel supported (Schwartz et al., 1998).

Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) examined the experiences of Black students attending PWIs and HBCUs. The purpose of the study was to identify experiences that were challenging and experiences that were supportive. The study used a qualitative approach that included extensive interviews and focus groups. An example of the interview questions were: *(a) What challenges have you encountered in your academic and social life on campus?* and *(b) What do you do when you need academic help?* Data was gathered from 34 Black, junior and senior college students as part of a larger study conducted at a HBCU and a PWI within a multi-campus system on the East Coast (Fries-Britt et al., 2002). Of the 34 participants, 15 students attended the PWI and 19 attended the HBCU.

The findings of the study uncovered three emergent themes. One of these themes being Establishing Support. Students at the HBCU described experiences of feeling at home on campus and making connections with faculty and peers. A male student who had transferred from a PWI to a HBCU described the Black students at the HBCU as being more helpful than those at the PWI: "In class people are friendlier...If you need help the person sitting next to you would help." In contrast, students at the PWI shared experiences of discomfort in the classroom. None of the students attending the PWIs used images of "family" or a "strong foundation" of support on campus when describing their experiences. One student described feeling uneasy, misunderstood and without allies at the PWI (Fries-Britt et al., 2002).

Another theme was Involvement. At the PWI students perceived the campus as being geared for White students and not offering any social outlets for Black students. One student stated, "We [Black students] only have like one big social event and even that is overrated. It doesn't appeal to the Black environment at all. They try, but it doesn't work." While another woman attending a PWI stated, "You have to look past the parties and everything. I have come to terms with the fact that this campus doesn't have the umph that other campuses have." Students attending the HBCU felt that there were many social options available to them and described themselves as being very involved on campus. One student commented:

I know for sure when I was at the White school I went to I didn't have any desire to be involved in anything. It was, like, go home, forget it. Here [at the HBCU] you see people. Here everything is geared toward us, and I have more of a desire to do stuff.

Lastly, The Cultivation or Diversion of Energy was also a theme in the study's findings and can be described as the academic progress and momentum Black students gain from attending a HBCU. (Fries-Britt et al., 2002). One student described the "adrenaline" and "confidence" the HBCU gave him to go out into the world and accomplish his goals. Another student attending a HBCU described how her confidence increased after transferring from a PWI to a HBCU, "I don't think I would have had the confidence to pursue it [academics] if I had been at a White institution. I have a lot of support here and more confidence being here to do it." In contrast one woman attending a PWI stated:

Ignorance is different than blatant dislike, so I think I have found a lot of people who want to know and who want to learn. And sometimes it puts you at a disadvantage because it makes you the voice and that is really uncomfortable and really kind of unfair because I don't represent Black people. I represent myself and my experiences. Because even though I am Black, not all Black people have the same experiences.

Like this woman, students attending a PWI gave examples of how their "academic energy" was drained by having to represent Blacks and deal with negative stereotypes.

Applewhite, Livingston and Negga (2007) studied the difference between self-esteem, social support and school racial composition on students' stress at PWIs and HBCUs. Information for the study was collected using a self-administered questionnaire in addition to the Student Stress Survey (SSS). The SSS is composed of 40 items and a four-point scale in which students rate themselves on academic stress, interpersonal stress, intrapersonal stress and environmental stress. A non-probability sample of predominately Black students

was taken at a HBCU while 165 students attending a PWI made up the nonprobability sample of White students (Applewhite et al., 2007).

The results of the study found significant differences between the stress levels of Black students and White students. In general Black students attending the HBCU reported lower levels of stress than Black students attending the PWI. Black students attending the PWI and HBCU showed higher levels of academic stress than the White PWI students. HBCU students reported higher levels of interpersonal stress such as, death in the family. Compared to HBCU students, Black students attending the PWI were similar in experiences of interpersonal stress. Significant negative correlations were found between self-esteem, sense of control, social support and total stress for HBCU students. That is, greater levels of self-esteem, sense of control and social support were strongly related to lower levels of stress for HBCU students. Black students attending the PWI also reported lower levels of social support than their White counterparts (Applewhite et al., 2007).

The findings of the study indicate that levels and type of stress vary depending on race and school composition. Black students attending PWIs may need added mediation related to coping, racial discrimination and isolation (Applewhite et al., 2007). Although stress was a concern for all students, academic stress was a primary concern for HBCU students. For this reason, HBCU students would specifically benefit from intervention strategies that lessen academic stress and increase academic social support. The social support received

at HBCUs may contribute to the lower levels of stress reported by HBCU students.

Palmer and Young (2009) studied the factors that affect the academic success of 11 academically unprepared, Black men who persisted from a pre-college program to graduation at a mid-Atlantic four-year HBCU. A qualitative approach was taken in the study in order to gauge the social experiences of the sample. Participants were given 70-90 minute interviews involving 25 questions in which they were asked about their academic and social experiences while in college. Several of the questions were open-ended and observations regarding how the participants responded to questions and their willingness to respond at all were recorded, audio-taped and transcribed (Palmer, 2009).

Going Beyond and Above their Role: Faculty and Academic Success was a major theme in the findings. Participants commented on how supportive faculty positively enhanced their academic success. A strong evidence of literature has characterized Black students' interaction with faculty at HBCUs as positive as the faculty at HBCUs are strongly interested in Black students and also promote a sense of self-efficacy (Palmer et al., 2009). Robert stated:

I had an assignment to write an essay talking about something that happened in the past. I wrote an essay...I don't even remember what the essay was about, but the professor came to me after class and was like, "Oh, XYZ, you know I went through the same thing or you know if you have any problems, you can call me." She gave me her phone number, her email address. I was able to call her if I had problems with homework or if I needed help with an assignment.

Intrinsic Motivation: Personal Responsibility for Success was also a theme. The participants expressed that personal drive was necessary in order to be successful. Anderson stated:

To get up in the morning and say "I'm not gonna sleep the day away, I'm going to get up and do something productive today. To say, I'm not going to pick up that bottle and drink, knowing I should be studying." Before you can lead anybody, you got to be a leader to yourself.

Likewise, A Sense of Belonging: Campus Involvement and Integration was another theme that emerged. Chris explained how student involvement allowed him to develop relationships with the campus community. He stated:

Through campus involvement, you're able to interact with people. You're able to socialize. I swim a lot. I mean I haven't swum a lot this trimester but last time, I swam just about every other day. And through that I was able to speak to different people. I was able to see how many races and...cultures go to this school, and see how many people of different ethnic backgrounds...I didn't know there were so many different people...in this world. I met this one guy, he's from Egypt, and I met this other guy from Ethiopia. I met a guy from Trinidad and Jamaica.

In this study students attending HBCUs expressed themes such as Faculty and Academic Success, Personal Responsibility for Success and Campus Involvement and Integration. It is the experience of these themes created by HBCUs that guided the Black students in the study to academic achievement. Although today many HBCUs struggle with issues of inadequate funding and operating with large deficits one cannot ignore that the environment of HBCUs are ones that are supportive and encouraging to Black students.

The previous chapter defined retention as the examination of external institutional factors that maintain students through schooling and provided a brief

review of the evolution of the study of retention. This evolution began 50 years ago with experts such as Alexander Astin, Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini concentrating on residential White students and eventually included the occurrences of students of varying income, race, gender, orientation and ethnicity. Finally, chapter two explored a review of the professional literature on institutional environment, social support, motivation/resilience and historically Black colleges and universities as they apply to Black student retention. The Literature Review found that an institutional environment perceived by the student as supportive, social support from family, peers, administration and faculty and an inherent degree of resiliency and motivation are all factors that strongly influence Black student retention.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Workshop**

In order to raise the retention rates of Black students, we must begin preparing them for the challenges they will encounter during their post-secondary education well before they ever set foot in a college institution. Although the literature review concentrates on Black students, the need for validating institutional environments, positive social support and self-motivation/resilience may be representative of and beneficial to students of other ethnicities as well. The following chapter will present a pre-college workshop designed to prepare all students for the aforementioned needs.

The following workshop, composed of seven sessions, are teachable interpretations of the information from the literature review created to aid in the retention of Black students. Although this workshop is created for Black students who plan on attending a two or four-year college or those who are unsure but possess potential and promise, all students, parents, teachers and administrators would benefit from the material. The workshop would be appropriate as an after school elective for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders or at an educational or Black nonprofit organization.

Some of the sessions within the workshop will feature ethnically diverse speakers who have recently graduated from college. These speakers will share their experiences as they relate to the sessions and answer questions from



students. By bringing in live speakers who have recently experienced and succeeded in college, students are less likely to feel far removed from the material and more likely to relate to the speakers and their experiences.

### **Workshop Pedagogy**

This workshop deals with the topics of diversity and of why Black students have a harder time graduating than other student populations. Since diversity is essentially a personal and often difficult subject to broach, the teaching has to come from a place of support and understanding. It is my responsibility to create an environment where the students feel encouraged to express their opinions and thoughts and where their thoughts and opinions are all perceived as valid and warranted.

In *The Quality School* Glasser (1998) states that in order to make students feel comfortable and empowered, it is necessary to shed the “boss” mentality. During the duration of this workshop instructors are not the boss; they are hardly “the teacher”. The students will get the most out of this workshop if the instructors are more like guides, broaching issues along with solutions and aiding students in pondering and applying to their own lives what is learned during the workshop.

Van Cleve Morris (1966) stated, “Let education be the discovery of responsibility! Let learning be the sharp and vivid awakening of the learner to the sense of being personally answerable for his own life” This workshop should awaken in the students a sense of control and responsibility for themselves;

because when all said and done it is the student's responsibility to graduate from college. They can and should find a campus that supports them and surround themselves with positive and supportive friends and family who can be of assistance, but as the section on Motivation and Resilience in the Literature Review states, a significant portion of success is in their control.

### **Workshop Goals**

Students will recognize the challenges of retention in order to meet them once they are in college.

Students will apply the college experiences and advice of speakers to their own lives in order to offset isolation and fear.

Students who are unsure of their own ability to succeed in college will gain confidence and inspiration to embark in college.

### **Workshop Framework**

#### **Session 1: Icebreaker**

During this session each student receives a bingo card. Each box on the bingo cards contains descriptions such as "Wants to attend college." and "Does volunteer work." Armed with their bingo cards, students mingle throughout the room finding students who match a description on their bingo card. Once a match is found the student writes the corresponding student's name in the box. When a student has completed a line they may yell "bingo!" Students matching the descriptions are then identified.

**Objective:**

The purpose of this session is to initiate social connections with other students attending the workshop.

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Students will network and make connections with other students who also share a desire to attend and complete college.
- Students will recognize the goals and hobbies of other students attending the workshop.

**Session 2: Retention and Black College Students**

During this session students are given a notepad, writing utensil, and Workshop Agenda (see Appendix A). Students are then informed on current Black retention rates, asked to record reasons they think Black students graduate at a lower rate and participate in a discussion on their responses. At the end of the session students are given the three factors affecting Black student retention that will be covered in the workshop; Environment of the Institution, Social Support and Motivation/Resilience.

**Objective:**

The purpose of this session is to inform students on the current rate of retention for Black college students. This session will give students an overview on how and why Black students graduate at a lower rate.

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Students will identify and define the three factors of non-retention that will be covered in the workshop.
- Students will read the Workshop Overview in order to recognize the workshop's mission which is to identify potential obstacles to retention and provide them with resources to continue college.

**Session 3: Workshop Overview- 3 Factors of Retention in Black Students**

During this session students are given a description of each factor affecting Black student retention along with a description of the projects, assignments and worksheets to be completed during the workshop.

**Objective:**

The purpose of the Workshop Overview is to provide the students with an outline of what will be covered in the workshop.

**College Environment**

Black students are more likely to persist when they seek campuses in which they feel a sense of belonging and support.

**Social Support**

Black students are more likely to persist when they form positive relationships with faculty and peers.

**Resilience/Motivation**

Black students are more likely to persist when they are able to overcome setbacks and negative experiences.

**Session 4: Apprehension Surrounding College**

During this session students will complete a journal entry on any fears they have of attending college. Students are then asked to rate their fear level with their on a scale of 1-5. A brief discussion of student responses follows along with a speakers account of their own fears when attending college.

**Objective:**

The purpose of this session is to advise students that every college student has anxieties surrounding college, to give the students a chance to voice their own fears and anxieties and to lessen those fears and anxieties as college graduates are just like them.

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Students will analyze the concerns students have when embarking on college in order to become aware that they are not alone in their fears.
- Students will network and make connections with other students who also
- Share a desire to attend and complete college.

**Session 5: Researching Acceptable Colleges: Is a HBCU Right For You?**

During this session the instructor provides information on a local college and instructs students on how to research other colleges on their own. Students then investigate 1-2 colleges independently and are asked to share whether they think the college they researched would or would not be a good fit.

**Objective:**

The purpose of this session is to demonstrate that the environment of the institution is an important factor in succeeding in college. Although some aspects of the campus environment can be out of the students control they do have control over how they relate to that environment. For instance, students who are socially and actively engaged in the campus are more likely to graduate therefor students seek out institutions that provide supportive environments and offer programs that are of interest.

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Students will demonstrate the ability to research acceptable campuses in order to practice navigating college websites.
- Students will research activities/clubs/groups of interest at college institutions in order to locate ones that may support them as Black students and unique individuals.
- Students will be given the tools to make their research easier in order to have these skills once they are ready to research actual colleges later in high school.

**Session 6: Social Support**

During this session students are shown a video about the importance of establishing positive relationships with peers, family and faculty and avoiding those relationships that are negative. During the video students write down any

ideas they found important. After the video students whittle their idea down to one word and discuss how this word summed up the main idea of the video. Students are then given the Social Support Worksheet (see Appendix B) to complete as “homework”.

**Objective:**

The objective of this session is to illustrate the importance of positive social relationships and networks when attending college. The support you gain from these relationships are instrumental in staying motivated and supported through college.

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Students will find possible support persons who will be valuable support systems during college.
- Students will demonstrate the importance of connecting with possible support persons by utilizing and gaining feedback via the Social Support worksheet.
- Students will be able to summarize the content of the video and then condense and analyze the material to reveal student reaction to the central message.

**Session 7: Motivation and Resilience**

During this session the term “resilience” is discussed along with what it means to be resilient. The students will then complete the online SCORE My Resilience Factors Assessment and SCORE My Resilience Action Plan. An assessment where students reflect on what they have learned about their own resilience and a journal entry on overcoming challenges follows.

**Objective:**

The objective of this session is to teach students that they need to be resilient in order to finish college. During college there will be times when the student feels unsupported, unmotivated and even feels like giving up. This is true for most students regardless of race. It is important to find ways to cope with such environments and circumstances and stay the course.

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Students will define and implement resilience in their own lives in order to persevere through college.
- Students will reflect on circumstances where there may feel unmotivated and apply strategies to persevere.

The previous chapter outlined a workshop composed of seven teachable sessions. A brief list of resources and materials that could be beneficial in teaching the workshop was included. This workshop, created to support pre-college, black students in their pursuit of a college degree, drew from research and studies on



Black student retention in the literature review. The purpose of the workshop is to enlighten students on the challenges of retention, share the college experiences of those who have been successful and to inspire students in their academic pursuits. The pedagogy for the workshop is one based on an understanding and supportive environment, guidance and student self-empowerment.

## Chapter 4

### Reflection

When I began this project I knew the subject matter would have something to do with Black student retention as it is a subject that has always interested me. I was curious and eager to find answers to questions like, “Why don’t Black students graduate at a similar rate as other students? What is going on there?” In developing my project I started with these questions, hunkered down in the library and sought answers from educational journals. It took a while for me to get in the flow of research writing and formatting but once I did, the literature review took shape quickly.

The process of completing this project was slow-going and many times frustrating to say the least. As much as I would have liked to have sped right through uninterrupted, as it often does, life happened along the way causing a few delays. There were so many times I had to push myself to work, regardless of how slow my progress. However, I knew that every day actions, even the smallest, would eventually add up and get me that much closer to completion. I hadn’t come this far in the program for nothing, so I never quit.

The most challenging part of this process was creating the final product; a workshop for pre-college Black students. During my courses I struggled with creating appropriate learning outcomes and objectives and here I was having to do so again. Let’s just say I was no expert going in but I learned so much.

Since my project includes a workshop for Black high school students, high school educators may benefit from it. High school counselors of Black students would especially benefit from the Literature Review portion of the project, as would all other educators of Black students. The qualitative studies on Black student retention in the Literature Review provide insight into Black student psychology as it relates to academics, something that I feel a lot of educators just don't understand and would benefit from.

## Appendix

### Session 1: Icebreaker

#### Objective

The purpose of this session is to initiate social connections with other students attending the workshop.

#### Learning Outcomes

- Students will network and make connections with other students who also share a desire to attend and complete college.
- Students will recognize the goals and hobbies of other students attending the workshop.

#### Resources/Materials

Writing utensil

Bingo card (see Appendix C)

#### Procedure

1. Print and copy a bingo card for each player.
2. Players circulate to find group members who match descriptions in the bingo squares.
3. When a match is found, the player writes the name of the individual in the square. Different names must be used in each square.
4. When players have filled a row with names, they yell "Bingo!"
5. With the group, check the squares and identify the individuals described.
6. Continue the game for a second round, with the new goal of filling the entire card. (Set a five minute time-limit and then award the person who came closest.)
7. When player have filled the entire cards, they yell "Bingo!"
8. Check the entire card, identifying group members matching each description.

9. Read through card and have all participants stand when a category applies to them (Hoganson, 2008).

## **Session 2: Retention and Black College Students**

As students enter the workshop they will be given:

1. A notepad and writing utensil in order to take notes and complete Journal Entries
2. A Workshop Agenda (see Appendix A).

### **Objective**

The purpose of this session is to inform students on the current rate of retention for Black college students. This session will give students an overview on how and why Black students graduate at a lower rate.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Students will identify and define the three factors of non-retention that will be covered in the workshop.

Students will read the Workshop Overview in order to recognize the workshops mission which is to identify potential obstacles to retention and provide them with resources to continue college.

### **Resources/Materials**

Notecard or Post Its

Colorful Writing Utensils

### **Procedure**

1. Inform students that the 2012 the U.S. Department of Education's IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey found that in Minnesota only 49% of Black Students complete their degree within six years.

2. Ask students to record reasons they think Blacks have a hard time graduating from college. Ask students to consider in their answers economic, demographic family support, peer support or lack thereof and any other factors that may contribute and to elaborate on why these factors would have an effect. The idea is not to lead students to the factors that will be discussed during the workshop but to gauge their thoughts and understanding. Students will write their responses on notecards or sticky notes. Give students around two minutes to respond.
3. After students have recorded their responses collect the note cards and post them on a board to review.
4. Lead a brief five to ten minute discussion- as not to become repetitive, on the student responses by asking questions such as, “Who agrees with this statement, why or why not? Who disagrees with this statement, why or why not?” Although the environment of the class should already be set up as one where students feel safe in voicing contrasting ideas and opinions, let the students know that they are free to disagree without judgement.
5. After the discussion share the three factors that affect retention that will be covered during the workshop: the environment of the institution, social support both on and off campus and motivation/resilience.

### Session 3: Workshop Overview

The goal of this workshop is to provide you with the information and tools needed to be successful and to graduate from college.

#### 3 Factors of Retention:

1. **College Environment:** Black students have a better chance of graduating college when they seek campuses in which they feel a sense of belonging and support. This belonging and support can be provided through activities and sports of interest and also through programs and groups that are specifically geared towards Black students.
2. **Social Support:** Black students have a better chance of graduating college when they form positive relationships with faculty and peers. This support can also come from family although it is important that students form relationships with people on campus. Social support ties directly to college environment in that the more comfortable you are on campus, the more likely you will form positive bonds with others on campus.
3. **Resilience/Motivation:** Black students have a better chance of graduating college when they are able to overcome setbacks and negative experiences. This includes taking responsibility by reflecting on what they as the student could be doing differently instead of blaming professors or other external factors.



**Projects/Assignments:****Journal Assessment**

- During the duration of the workshop some sessions will include a brief journal entry. The journal entries will be completed during the workshop and will center on the topics, books, videos and discussions specific to each session. There are no parameters on journals other than that you share your thoughts, questions, concerns etc. on the topic.

**Pamphlet**

- At the end of the workshop you will create a pamphlet for yourself. The pamphlet will provide you with college tips and suggestions. You will use the information you have learned in the sessions to create the pamphlet.

**Social Support Worksheet**

- The purpose of this worksheet is for you to get feedback from a family or friend on the gifts, skills and attributes you possess that will make you successful in college.

**SCORE My Resilience Factors Assessment.**

- The SCORE My Resilience Factors Assessment will assess your ability to work through and overcome challenges.

### **SCORE My Resilience Action Plan**

- The SCORE My Resilience Action Plan is a plan you will create to increase your ability to cope with stress and to work through and overcome challenges.

## **Session 4: Apprehension Surrounding College**

### **Objective**

The purpose of this session is to advise students that every college student has anxieties surrounding college, to give the students a chance to voice their own fears and anxieties and to lessen those fears and anxieties as college graduates are just like them.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Students will analyze the concerns most students have when embarking on college in order to become aware that they are not alone in their fears.

Students will network and make connections with other students who also share a desire to attend and complete college.

### **Resources/Materials**

Notepad

Speaker

### **Procedure**

1. Journal Entry: Have students briefly write about any fears, anxieties or concerns they may have about attending or completing college.
2. On a scale of 1-5, with one being very uncomfortable or fearful and five being not uncomfortable or fearful at all, ask students to show by holding up their hands their level of comfort with attending college.

3. Remark on what students show. How many people are pretty fearful? How many are pretty comfortable?
4. Ask students to write down what about attending college causes them fear.
5. Speaker: One young female and one young male African-American speaker who has completed a college degree will share why they were unsure, hesitant and or fearful of attending college and if or how those fears actually played out in their college experiences. Speakers will also share how they overcame their fears. Ask students for comments or questions.

**Session 5: Researching Acceptable Colleges: Is a HBCU Right For You?****Objective:**

The purpose of this session is to demonstrate that the environment of the institution is an important factor in succeeding in college. Although some aspects of the campus environment can be out of the students control they do have control over how they relate to that environment. For instance, students who are socially and actively engaged in the campus are more likely to graduate therefor students should seek out institutions that provide supportive environments and offer programs that are of interest.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students will demonstrate the ability to research acceptable campuses in order practice navigating college websites.

Students will research activities/clubs/groups of interest at college institutions in order to locate ones that may support them as Black students and unique individuals.

Students will be given the tools to make their research easier in order to have these skills once they are ready to research actual colleges later in high school.

**Resources/Materials:**

Library/Lab for online research.

Notepad

Writing utensil

**Procedure:**

1. Instructor will provide information on one local college. The information provided should be focused on how the student may fit in to the college and not about tuition or acceptance guidelines. The information provided will include:
  - The groups/ activities/ athletics etc. available on campus.
  - The programs/clubs/groups geared toward Black students that are offered.
  - The demographics of Black students.
  - The graduation rate of all students including Black students.
2. Give pointers on how you found the information on the colleges such as, search terms etc.
3. Have student research one or two colleges on their own. You can provide students with a list of colleges to choose from or students may research colleges that they are interested in. Ask students to try and find the following information:
  - The groups/ activities/ athletics etc. available on campus.
  - The programs/clubs/groups geared toward Black students that are offered.
  - The demographics of Black students.
  - Bonus: The graduation rate of all students including Black students.

4. Ask students to share if they think the college they researched could or could not be a good fit for them. Not all students will get to present. The idea is that the students learn how to research colleges that will compliment them so that they can graduate.
5. Ask students to volunteer to present their findings. If no one volunteers call on students and ask questions about the college that they researched.

## **Session 6: Social Support**

### **Objective**

The objective of this session is to illustrate the importance of positive social relationships and networks when attending college. The support you gain from these relationships are instrumental in staying motivated and supported through college.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Students will find possible support persons who will be valuable support systems during college.

Students will demonstrate the importance of connecting with possible support persons by utilizing and gaining feedback via the Social Support worksheet.

Students will be able to summarize the content of the video and then condense and analyze the material to reveal student reaction to the central message.

### **Resources/Materials**

Video “The Right People” Joel Osteen

Social Support Worksheet (see Appendix B).

### **Procedure**

1. Introduce video about how the people you surround yourself with, both on and off campus, affect your college success as these people can either lift you up or hinder you.



2. Assessment: Text Rendering: While watching the video, students note 2-3 sentences that stand out to them, they found important or gave them an “ah-ha!” moment. The students then whittle one sentence down to a phrase and finally one word. Have students discuss with the person sitting next to them if the words phrases, and sentences they chose sum up the main idea of the text and how.
3. After watching the video ask students for feedback. What was the message about? Could any of the students relate to the message in their own lives or in the lives of those they know? Was there anything in the message that students agreed or disagreed with?
4. Handout the Social Support Worksheet and give students directions as to how to complete the worksheet. Students are to give the worksheet to a family relative, friend, or mentor to complete. The worksheet asks that that person give reasons why the student will be successful in college, how they may be a support while the student is in college, and so forth.
5. The Social Support Worksheet is to be given to the students as “homework” and to be kept by the student.

**Journal Entry:**

Who are possible supportive/motivating people in your life and how do they motivate/support you?

Are there people in your life who may be hindering you? In what way?

Who do you give motivation/support to and how?

## **Session 7: Resilience and Motivation**

### **Objective:**

The objective of this session is to teach students that they need to be resilient in order to finish college. During college there will be times when the student feels unsupported, unmotivated and even feels like giving up. This is true for most students regardless of race. It is important to find ways to cope with such environments and circumstances and stay the course.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

Students will define and implement resilience in their own lives in order to persevere through college.

Students will reflect on circumstances where there may feel unmotivated and apply strategies to persevere.

### **Resources/Materials**

Computer Lab.

Davis, R. (2004). *Black students' perceptions: The complexity of persistence to graduation at an American university*. New York: P. Lang.

SCoRE (Student Curriculum on Resilience Education) program found at [scoreforcollege.org](http://scoreforcollege.org)

### **Procedure:**

1. Introduce the idea of resilience to the class. Instructor will ask if the students have ever heard the word resilience and if anyone knows what it means. This is a term that may mean different things to different students

so it is important that you call on at least a few students for their definition.

2. Take the SCORE My Resilience Factors Assessment. This session works best in a computer lab or media room where each student has access to their own computer and headphones.
3. Complete SCORE My Resilience Action Plan.  
Young, male Black college graduate shares his experiences with unsupportive college campuses/circumstances and overcoming challenges in order to graduate from college.
4. Assessment: Quick Write: For 2-3 minutes at the end of the session students will reflect on what they have learned about resilience and about their own resilience. Students will be prompted with the questions such as, what does resilience mean in your own words? Are you resilient, why or why not? How may you practice resilience in college? Students will hand in their "Quick Write" for the instructor to view.
5. Journal Entry:
  - What has been your greatest challenge yet and how did you overcome this challenge?
  - What challenges do you for see in the future and how will you meet them?
  - What thoughts or behaviors will keep you going when faced with challenges or when you want to give up?

### **Evaluation and Final Project: College Pamphlet**

At the end of the unit each student will individually create a pamphlet for incoming college freshman at a college they create. The pamphlet will provide students with tips and information on how to complete college successfully. Students will use the information they learned during the workshop to create the pamphlet.

**Appendix A**  
**Workshop Agenda**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Description</b>
	<b>Session 1: Retention and Black College Students</b>	<b>In this session we will examine the current rate of retention for Black college students. Why do Black students graduate at a lower rate and what are their unique struggles during college?</b>
	<b>Session 2: Workshop Overview</b>	<b>3 Factors of Retention in Black Students</b>  1. College Environment 2. Social Support 3. Resilience/Motivation
	<b>Session 3: Apprehension Surrounding College</b>	<b>In this session we will explore and lessen college fear/anxiety and to lessen.</b>
	<b>Break</b>	<b>Break</b>
	<b>Session 4: Researching Acceptable Colleges: Is a HBCU Right For You?</b>	<b>In this session we will discuss how the environment of the institution is an important factor in succeeding in college.</b>
	<b>Session 5: Social Support</b>	<b>This session we will explore the importance of positive social relationships and networks when attending college.</b>
	<b>Session 6: Motivation and Resilience</b>	<b>In this session we will explore how motivation and resilience are essential to college completion.</b>

Hello and thank you for joining us today! Your unique thoughts and opinions are essential to the success of this workshop so please share them. Your participation is also vital to the amount of knowledge you and your peers gain from the sessions. Let us learn from each other! Participation can be in the form of joining in discussions, asking or answering questions, volunteering to hand out supplies/papers etc. or even meeting with the instructor/speakers one-on-one to discuss topics covered in the workshop.

**Appendix B****Social Support Worksheet**

Give this worksheet to a person in your life who is a positive influence. This person can be a friend, family member, teacher etc. Have the person fill out the worksheet and return to you.

How do you know \_\_\_\_\_ (student) \_\_\_\_\_?

How has \_\_\_\_\_ (student) \_\_\_\_\_ been a positive influence, inspired, or affected you?

Give 4 reasons you think \_\_\_\_\_ (student) \_\_\_\_\_ will be successful in college.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Provide any ways you are able to support \_\_\_\_\_ (student) \_\_\_\_\_ while he/she is in college.

(Support does not have to be monetary but can also include spending time with student, studying with student, being available to connect with student during difficult times etc.)

## Appendix C BINGO Card

B	I	N	G	O
Does volunteer work	Would like to go out of state for college	Is a ninth grader	Speaks more than one language	Has been on the honor roll at school
Has a leadership role in his/her school	Is active in a church, temple or mosque	Wants to attend a small college	Wants to be a writer	Has parents or brother or sister who attended college
Wants to be a teacher	Was born in a country other than the US	FREE	Has visited a college campus in the last year	Participates in at least one extracurricular activity at school
Has moved in the last two years	Plays on a sports team	Wants to be a performer (music or drama)	Is a tenth grader	Wants to attend a large university
Plays a musical instrument	Studies at least an hour a night	Has parents who did not attend college	Wants to attend a community college	Wants to be a doctor or scientist

## Resources

The following is a brief, non-exhaustive list of additional resources and materials beneficial in preparing for, teaching, supporting and expanding the workshop.

Bain, K. (2012). *What the best college students do*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Not all resources for teaching Black retention have to come from sources that focus solely on Black students. Although Black students have unique circumstances, beyond those circumstances they are like any other student who want to do well. *What the Best Students Do* is a resource primarily for students but is also useful for educators who want to teach students how to get the most out of their education and surpass any so-called limitations. According to Bain, it is those students who “follow their intellectual curiosity, solve useful problems and take risks in order to grow” that really gain the most from their college experience.

Byfield, C. (2008). *Black boys can make it: How they overcome the obstacles to university in the UK and USA*. Sterling, Virginia: Trentham Books.

Although there has been much research on the underachievement of Black males, this text researches the positive achievement of Black male students in the



US and the UK. Byfield exposes the factors that have led to the success of Black students and also examines their struggles with racism, negative attitude and misbehavior. Given that the retention rate of Black male students is that much lower than of Black female students this text is a relevant resource.

D'Augelli, A.R. & Hershberger, S.L. (1993). *Black undergraduates on a predominantly White campus: Academic factors, social networks, and campus climate*. *Journal of Negro Education*, 62(1), 67-81.

This study examines Black student achievement while attending a predominately White college. The study draws from Vince Tinto's 1975 model of student retention which identifies four factors of student departure: family background, high school experience, campus interaction and personal attitude. This is an excellent source for instructors to use as a basis for their research and teaching student retention.

Davis, R. (2004). *Black students' perceptions: The complexity of persistence graduation at an American university*. New York: P. Lang.

In this text Black students share their thoughts and experiences on attending predominately White colleges. The students share their experiences with racism, how they found the will to continue their studies plus what the others deem "safe spaces" and "hostile environments". This text is informative in its emphasis on the actual perceptions of Black students. When teaching or researching Black retention there is no better source than the students themselves.

Bell, B. P., Gallner, K., Parris, T., Simien, J., Thompson, T., Williams, T. J.,  
Roadside Attractions (Firm), Lions Gate Films. (2015). *Dear white  
people*. Santa Monica, CA: Lionsgate

*Dear White People* is a modern day satire about the issues Black students face while attending a predominately White college, Winchester University. The film covers a number of topics that Blacks encounter while in college such as issues of dark skin/light skin, homosexuality, economic disparity and White privilege. With a young, small cast of characters of varying racial, sexual and economic issues, compared to the other works in this list *Dear White People* may be most entertaining and relevant to Black students today.

SCoRE | Preparing Students for Success in College. (n.d.). Retrieved  
August 6, 2015, from <https://www.scoreforcollege.org/>

SCoRE is an educational online resilience program which aids students in learning how to deal with stress, create healthy relationships and most importantly move forward in attaining their goals regardless of setbacks and/or challenges. Although the website offers a full curriculum, items such as the My Resilience Factors Assessment and the My Resilience Action Plan can be used independently to assess student resilience and provide students with tools to become more resilient. SCoRE is the only online resource on this list and adds a multimedia dimension to the workshop that many students will respond to.

Seltzer, R., & Johnson, N. (2009). *Experiencing racism: Exploring discrimination through the eyes of college students*. Lanham, MD.: Lexington Books.

This text is a collection of essays written by college students. The essays chronicle students' experiences with racism both in and out of school. It is important to include resources that give voice to young people and not just resources from scholars and experts. This is a valuable resource as it includes the student voice so that hopefully other students can relate. In the text the authors explain the ramifications of racism on the aggressor and the victim and also offer suggestions on how individuals can cope with racism

Swim, J.K., Hyers, L.L., Cohen, L.L., Fitzgerland, D.C. & Bylsma, W.H. (2004). Black college students' experiences with everyday racism: Characteristics of and responses to these incidents. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 29(1), 38-67.

In this day and age many people believe that racism, as it has to do with Blacks, is no longer an issue; however, this is not the case. Many Black students are met with racism in college and beyond, whether overtly or covertly. The study that examined the incidents and responses to racism of 51 Black students can be used as a guide in validated Black student experiences with racism and teaching Blacks productive coping strategies.

Strayhorn, T. (2010). *The evolving challenges of Black college students new insights for policy, practice, and research*. Sterling, Va.: Stylus.

This text examines the unique and vast challenges of Black students. Strayhorn argues that although many of the challenges that Black students today encounter are similar to those of students attending school during integration, the students themselves are very different. Educators and students alike will benefit from this text as it provides real solutions and new understanding of today's Black college student.

Vye, C., & Scholljegerdes, K. (2007). *Under pressure and overwhelmed coping with anxiety in college*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.

This text identifies the anxieties that students face while in college. The pressure to do well in school, choose a profession plus maintain a social and family life can be very taxing on college students. In this book the authors offer techniques and skills to cope with and overcome the demands of college life. This book is a good resource for educators and students. Often students are under the impression that they should be able to do it all and handle it all. However, it is important that students be aware that during college there is often a great amount of pressure and stress, that all students struggle at some point, and that there are healthy ways to cope.

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