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# THE BLACK MALE DEGREE ATTAINMENT PROJECT

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## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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### ATHLETES

**Messer, Kenya LeNoir (2006). African American male college athletes. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American Men in College* (pp. 154-173). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.** The prominent African American scholar Henry Louis Gates has stated, “the blind pursuit of attainment in sport is having a devastating effect on the Black community”(154). This chapter explores the college environment for Black men involved in intercollegiate athletics and presents various strategies for degree attainment. African American athletes are graduating at lower rates than their White counterparts. The graduation rate of African American athletes is especially low at PWIs (predominately white institutions), particularly in the revenue-generating sports of football and basketball. African American males have the highest dropout rate among college athletes, with academic variables most often cited as the contributing factor. On the other hand, these athletes have a higher graduation rate than African American men who are not involved in athletics. The author reviews the literature on this topic, which includes research describing African American male student athletes on campus and the factors that impact them: academic support, faculty and community support, academic and social integration, and race and class stereotypes. Some recommendations for increasing persistence include the development of comprehensive advising and orientation programs, the sharing of best practices, and adapting successful programs that have aided other populations. The PWIs could look to HBCUs for best practices in retaining students of color and for community outreach. The chapter concludes with some of the positive aspects of many Division I athletic departments and stresses the importance of taking into account the specific needs of African American male student athletes to create an environment that helps all students achieve success.

**Person, Dawn R., and LeNoir, Kenya. Retention issues and models for African American male athletes. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *Helping African American Men Succeed in College*, (pp. 79-91). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.** With approximately 1 out of every 9 African American male college students as an athlete, research that addresses this particular segment of the college student population can have a significant impact on the retention of Black male students in general. This chapter provides a review of the demographic and social background of this population to establish a context and finds that African American male student athletes, while a diverse group, also share some

common concerns. They tend to come from the lowest socioeconomic quartile, mostly from women-headed households, and they are often the first in their families to attend college. Academically, the majority scored in the lowest quartile of the SAT and ACT and placed in the lowest quartile for college grade-point average, spending an average of more hours preparing for their sport than for the classroom. Among the many challenges they face when they arrive on campus are realities of race and socioeconomic status, as well as the myths and stereotypes associated with athletes. The authors also explore the advantages for African American male athletes, including special aid and more acceptance by the majority community. Several theories and theoretical models of retention are explored to see if they can be translated into interventions. Essential elements of an effective retention strategy are identified and include assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, and reformation. Other strategies and initiatives, such as mentoring, academic advising, and life skills programs, are also reviewed. Data analyzed from a persistence and evaluation study show that the African American student athlete retention rate was 48 percent, which is a slightly higher rate than the Black male non-athlete. Retention was more likely when these student athletes were involved in a summer program and worked in study groups. The chapter proposes three general organizational models for coordinating and administering retention programs.

## CAMPUS CLIMATE

**Bonner II, Fred A. and Bailey, Kevin W. (2006). Enhancing the academic climate for African American college men. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American Men in College* (pp. 24-46). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.** The authors examine a series of critical factors that help promote a climate of academic success for college men. These include peer group influence, family influence and support, faculty relationships, identity development and self-perception, and institutional environment. The peer group is identified as extremely important in influencing positive academic outcomes. By better understanding peer group subcultures, institutions of higher education can be better equipped to design interventions to ensure that African American men are well prepared to pursue academic growth and master interpersonal coping skills. When these students face isolation and alienation, the absence of peer connections, and lack of support, the familial network plays an even more vital role in academic development, providing the needed encouragement and resources to tackle such issues as campus-based racism or prejudice. The author recommends a proactive approach by institutions to involve families in recruitment and retention efforts. Faculty mentors can help improve faculty relations for African American male students. Unfortunately, a critical mass of Black male faculty is not always available, so non-Black faculty in the students' field should be encouraged to fill these roles. A multicultural curriculum is another method of integrating the Black male experience into the classroom. Identity development and self-esteem are explored, particularly in regards to classroom behavior and academic performance. To help foster their academic success, further research is required on the specific issues affecting the experiences of African American males in college, at both HBCUs and PWIs.

**Brown, Charles (2006). The impact of campus activities on African American college men. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American Men in College* (pp. 47-67). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.** This chapter argues that improving the overall campus climate and enhancing the involvement of African American men in campus organizations and activities is extremely important to retention efforts. Student affairs educators are identified as having a significant role in providing an understanding of student needs, though some scholars believe that these professionals still lack the necessary expertise to address the specific needs of African American male students. Based on research documenting the isolation, alienation, and hostility experienced by these students at PWIs, institutions must make greater efforts to create receptive campus environments that encourage student involvement and academic success. The author presents an exploratory descriptive study using qualitative research methods conducted at a predominately white public research university to collect information on these factors. Twenty-five African American male students in four focus groups provided information about their perceptions of the importance of campus involvement to their social and academic success. The study found that most of these students believed they were viewed negatively by faculty and their white peers, and these stereotypes affected their campus involvement. Various perceptions of the campus social nonacademic environment were explored, including student government association, intramural athletics and recreation, and the student union. Participants in the focus groups also believed that mentoring by faculty, staff, and administrators was important in enhancing the campus environment, while the lack of positive peer relations could be a negative influence on successful matriculation.

## **CLASSROOM**

**Dawson-Threat, Janice. Enhancing In-Class Academic Experiences for African American Men. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *Helping African American Men Succeed in College*, (pp. 31-42). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.** This chapter explores academic success among Black male students and examines the role of racial identity formation and how it contributes to that success. It presents examples of how development theory can be incorporated into the teaching of African American men and provides examples of in-class activities and classroom experiences. Reviewing the influence of college environments on the academic success of African American men, the author analyzes the importance of racial identity formation and its relation to classroom learning. The author presents the stages of Cross's model of racial identity development (1971, 1978) and aligns them with suggestions for classroom practice. Further recommendations for enhancing in-class experiences for Black male students include exploring issues of personal experience, difference, and Black manhood. The final step in the theory-to-practice model is the evaluation of interventions and teaching strategies, which is facilitated by greater collaboration between faculty and student affairs professionals.

## COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Pope, Myron L. (2006). Meeting the challenges to African American men at community colleges. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American Men in College* (pp. 210-238). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.** The climate at most community colleges is different than that at four-year PWIs. These differences have some important impacts on African American male students. This chapter explores these impacts and focuses on the diminishing emphasis on preparing students to transfer to four-year colleges. A brief history of the American community college system, established for increased affordability and accessibility, is presented, along with data on student demographics, which has changed over the years. The number of minorities in the system has increased, students are older on average than in four-year colleges, and they receive less support from their parents. Many are part-time and first-generation students with lower-income backgrounds. The economic benefits of access to affordable higher education are an important motivation for these students, particularly African American males. The chapter reviews some explanations for the diminishing transfer function of community colleges, including more emphasis on vocational and technical programs, remedial education, continuing education, increasing numbers of part-time students, and increased competition from four-year institutions. Critics have suggested that with the enrollment boom, community colleges have neglected their minority students and have turned the “open door” into a “revolving door,” a reference to the ease of enrollment and dropping out (216). Community colleges have also been perceived as tracking and sorting African American males to remedial and vocational tracks instead of transfer programs. The decline in enrollment, retention, and graduation numbers is examined, as are the results of the author’s research study. Findings from the responses of 74 African American males at 15 community colleges reveal that they do not perceive the community college administration to be supportive of diversity efforts, and they lack mentors and role models. The author puts forward several retention strategies: focus on academic and social integration; eliminate racism and promoting diversity; provide support services; enhance counseling; provide effective orientation programs; evaluate program effectiveness; hire more African Americans; create social support groups; and create programs that connect with African American males’ communities. To ensure successful transfer for students, it is also vital that external and internal articulation agreements be improved, along with the creation of transfer centers and the hiring of transfer counselors. African American males should be paired with mentors at four-year institutions. Unlike other minorities, the enrollment of African American men in community colleges does not comprise the majority of their enrollment in higher education, but it is still an important point of entry into postsecondary education and as such, requires adequate resources to address the challenges of retention and graduation.

## FRATERNITIES

**Harper, Shaun R. and Harris III, Frank (2006). The role of black fraternities in the African American male undergraduate experience. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American Men in College* (pp. 128-153). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.** Black Greek-letter organizations (BGLOs) have had a significant impact on the lives of African

American undergraduates. This chapter places BGLOs in an historical context, examining their changing roles from the early 1900s to contemporary campuses. Alpha Phi Alpha was officially founded in 1906 at Cornell. In the wake of racial hostility and isolation, a national movement was created and spread quickly to other campuses. Despite differences in their origins, BGLOs shared similar commitments to brotherhood, scholarship, and service. The author explores what African American men gain through fraternity membership, including racial identity development, leadership development, practical competence, and cognitive development. Also explored are contemporary issues and negative aspects of Black fraternities. Among the negative aspects are hazing, which is described in contrast to pledging. Incidents of hazing have received more attention with the reporting of hazing-induced deaths and other serious abuses on college campuses. The author analyzes reactions to these incidents, efforts to counter such disturbing practices, and possible reasons for the continued practice of hazing at BGLOs. Despite some claims to the contrary, academic mediocrity, as shown in lower than average GPAs among BGLOs, is another negative impact. The diminished public perception of their usefulness and effectiveness is also explored. Although BGLOs have affected the lives of more than one million men, their current usefulness has been called into question. The author concludes, however, that they still have a potentially positive role to play in improving campus involvement for African American men.

## **GENDER GAP**

**Harper, S. R., Carini, R. M, Bridges, B. K., & Hayek, J. (2004). Gender differences in student engagement among African American undergraduates at historically Black colleges and universities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45(3), 271-284.** This article analyzes differences in student engagement between men and women at HBCUs using data collected from 1,167 African American undergraduate students at 12 four-year HBCUs participating in the National Survey of Student Engagement. The authors found that, despite the conclusions of some previous researchers, African American females enjoy an equally engaging experience as their male counterparts. Black male students no longer dominate the academic and social settings at HBCUs. On the other hand, low persistence rates among African American male students continue to exist at HBCUs, as well as in predominately white institutions (PWIs). The data reported in this study suggest that insufficient time and effort given to study and other forms of academic preparation may partially contribute to the retention problem at HBCUs. The authors recommend additional research to compare the engagement experiences of Black male students at HBCUs with those of their counterparts at PWIs. **Also see Leadership and Engagement.**

## **GAY**

**Washington, Jamie, and Vernon A. Wall (2006). African American gay men: Another challenge for the academy. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American Men in College* (pp. 174-188). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.** According to the literature on sexual orientation, an estimate 10 to 20 percent of the American population would identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (174). Despite these numbers, little scholarly

research exists on the college experiences of gay and bisexual men of African descent (GBMAD). This chapter draws from other bodies of literature to explore issues of identity development, role models, and self-naming, among others. Most models of homosexual identity formation include the linear stages of moving from identity confusion to exploration and comparison, to tolerance, deepening commitment, and acceptance. However, models are of limited usefulness because they do not address the complexity of the race and religion intersection with which many GBMAD are coping. The authors examine these limitations, the challenge of finding role models and mentors and the complexities of labels and naming (“Are you Black first or gay first?” 179). They also examine the term the *down low* or DL, used to describe men who can “pass” as heterosexual and do not share their same-gender involvements with their female partners. This has received much negative attention in the Black and Latino communities and in the popular media, and has been blamed for the spread of HIV and AIDS among African American women. The impacts of class identification and campus community and religion are analyzed. Some recommendations are offered to provide support and help minimize the division between race and sexual orientation. Further research on GBMAD is suggested, including the role of religion in their lives and the experiences of immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean. By minimizing challenges and increasing supports for GBMAD, colleges and universities can become safe spaces in which all students can reach their full potential.

## GIFTED

**Fries-Britt, Sharon. Identifying and Supporting Gifted African American Men. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *Helping African American Men Succeed in College*, (pp. 65-78). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.** While much research on African American men has focused on failure and underachievement, this chapter argues that the needs of gifted and talented Black male students have been neglected in the literature. The unique challenges faced by this group are rarely discussed. The chapter explores some issues of identifying gifted African American male college students, characteristics they exhibit, and factors affecting their retention. The author presents various methods of defining giftedness, including multidimensional concepts and standardized testing instruments. The research on gifted Blacks in general and on gifted Black collegians in particular is scarce, so the author draws inferences from the general literature on the gifted and the limited studies on gifted Black men in college. What the latter research indicates is that peer pressure is a significant theme in the literature, with gifted Black students accused of “acting White.” Therefore, establishing peer group connections for these students is particularly challenging. Other important themes in this literature are the struggle for self-concept and racial identity, the role of parents, and counseling needs. The author addresses several factors that affect the retention of gifted Black male students, including interactions with faculty and institutional and environmental factors. The Meyerhoff Scholars Program is profiled as an example of a successful intervention program for such students (see Baker). Key program components include: recruitment, a summer bridge program, scholarship support, study groups, program values, program community, personal advising and counseling, tutoring, summer research internships, faculty involvement, administrative involvement and public support, mentors, and family

involvement. The author recommends greater support of and research on gifted Black men to raise awareness of this distinct yet often neglected segment of the Black student population.

## HBCUs

**Kimbrough, W. M., & Harper, S. R. (2006). African American men at historically Black colleges and universities: Different environments, similar challenges. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American Men in College* (pp. 189-209). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.** Over the past decade, and since the publication of *Helping African American Men Succeed in College* (Cuyjet, 1997), there has been greater attention paid to the plight of the African American male in higher education by both practitioners and scholars. Despite this, the understanding of the issues facing Black males at HBCUs remains limited. This chapter examines the current challenges of HBCUs, analyzes the data on African American men at HBCUs, and presents the experiences of African American men at HBCUs in their own words. This information was gathered from two focus groups, from which several major themes emerged. Among the explanations of the factors that prevented college men from attending college were the expectation of fulfilling a provider role immediately, the effect of popular culture and its messages of instant gratification and materialism, and the lack of male college-educated role models. In a discussion of why African American men perform poorly in comparison with their same-race female peers, focus group participants identified several factors, including the highly social nature of HBCUs, the influence of peers who prefer socializing to studying, lack of academic preparation among male peers, and the fact that many men do not take advantage of the academic support services available. Participants in the focus groups also discussed low out-of-class involvement among African American men compared to their same-race female peers. Some explanations offered were that campus involvement was not considered “cool,” men have been taught to compete rather than collaborate, and Black male students lack mentors and role models. The impact of the male-female imbalance on interpersonal relationships and excessive sexual activity was also explored. While HBCUs still produce a higher percentage of African American male graduates than PWIs, the qualitative experiences of African American men at HBCUs merit greater attention and research in order to improve success in meeting the challenges of higher education.

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

**Howard-Hamilton, Mary F. Theory to practice: Applying developmental theories relevant to African American men. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *Helping African American Men Succeed in College*, (pp. 17-30). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.** This chapter explores selected developmental theories that may be adapted to better fit the needs of Black male college students. It also analyzes new Afrocentric theories that may prove helpful in fostering self-esteem and improving the college experience of Black men. The chapter presents practical applications of these theories. The author argues that practitioners and graduate faculty require developmental theories that accurately correspond to the issues facing Black male students, and these theories can be translated

into practice to enhance learning outcomes. After a review and critique of traditional development theories, the author recommends a model that employs additional dimensions that focus on issues such as identity, interaction, awareness, interdependence, affiliation, spirituality, and social responsibility, before applying any existing developmental theories to students of color. The chapter includes a review of four theoretic frameworks that could be useful in addressing issues specific to Black male students: 1) Cross's Nigrescence Theory (1991,1995); 2) Robinson and Howard-Hamilton's Afrocentric Resistance Model (1994); 3) Erikson's Identity Development Model (1980); and 4) Bandura's Social Learning Model (1977). The author describes each theory with an appropriate application to practice and recommends a theory-to-practice approach in helping to create group interventions that enhance academic success and degree attainment among African American men.

## LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

**Harper, S. R. (2006). Creating a cyclical culture of leadership and engagement: A model for Black male achievement at HBCUs. In D. N. Byrne (Ed.), *Models of Success: Supporting Achievement and the Retention of Black males at HBCUs* (pp. 149-170). New York: Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund.** According to data from the US Department of Education, nearly 7 out of 10 Black men discontinue matriculation at HBCUs before earning their bachelor's degrees. This article posits that any attempt to address the problematic nature of Black male retention and graduation rates without a focus on increasing purposeful engagement by Black male students is futile. A definition of purposeful engagement is presented, drawing upon the five benchmarks of effective educational practice proposed by the National Survey of Student Engagement: 1) Level of Academic Challenge; 2) Active and Collaborative Learning; 3) Student-Faculty Interaction; 4) Enriching Educational Experiences; 5) Supportive Campus Environment. Student engagement in activities associated with the NSSE benchmarks is considered educationally purposeful, leading to student learning and other positive outcomes. Purposeful engagement is shown to be a significant predictor of persistence, especially during the first year of college. Among African American male students, purposeful engagement contributed to the positive Black identity development, while also improving the ability to communicate across boundaries of race, culture, and gender. However, a counter-trend of disengagement in regards to academic activities among Black male students at HBCUs has been noted in several studies. The author presents an Engagement Model for Black Male Achievement. Key components of this model are empowering agents of engagement, socializing newcomers, increasing participation in clubs and activities, encouraging Black male leadership on campus, exposing Black men to enriching educational experiences, assessing gains and outcomes, and documenting effectiveness of Black male engagement. Institutions are called on to collaborate and to be accountable to their goals and outcomes of purposeful engagement for Black male students.

**Harper, S. R. (2005). Leading the way: Inside the experiences of high-achieving African American male students. *About Campus*, 10(1), 8-15.** This article focuses on

what can be learned from the experiences of high-achieving Black male students. The author argues that a disproportionate focus on the underachievement of Black male students can lead to lowered expectations for achievement. Based on the findings of a 2003 qualitative study he conducted, the author explores the effect of active engagement, leadership, and the investment of out-of-class time on the success of Black male students at PWIs. The high achievers initially chose to join particular campus organizations because older African American male student leaders reached out to them when they were first-year students. They later chose their leadership positions so they could “repay their debt” to those who had encouraged them and to the Black community (10). They assumed responsibility for the advancement of the African American community and for ensuring that minority voices were heard. They identified a set of practical competencies that they acquired from their leadership, including learning to work with people of different backgrounds; effective time management, speaking, and delegating skills; and navigating complex political environments. They also learned important lessons by working closely with administrators. In addition, these student leaders benefited from the opportunity to meet visiting dignitaries and celebrities and attend national conferences. In employment interviews, they were able to offer relevant examples of leadership and learning situations from their experiences in student organizations. However, the article notes that few African American men hold leadership positions at PWIs, in contrast to the number of African American female students in these positions at PWIs. Recommendations for increasing African American male participation include empowering male student leaders to recruit uninvolved peers; conducting campus-specific research on reasons for disengagement; forming a collaborative task force that includes student, faculty, and staff and representatives from various campus units, including athletics; and prominently featuring Black male student leaders in campus publications and events.

**Harper, Shaun R. (2006). Enhancing African American male student outcomes through leadership and active involvement. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American Men in College* (pp. 68-94). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.** Involvement is central to the success of African American male college students. This chapter analyzes the gains and outcomes associated with out-of-class activities, particularly leadership experiences. The author reviews the existing research and discusses current involvement trends. He examines how involvement, defined by A.W. Astin (1984) as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience,” affects student outcomes (70). The research suggests that the benefits of involvement are associated with the extent to which students can connect in-classroom learning with their out-of-class experiences. Involvement in such activities has been shown to influence student learning and leadership in these organizations and has been shown to have a positive effect on critical thinking and problem solving, as well as preparation for post baccalaureate endeavors. The involvement trends among African American male undergraduates indicate that few of these students were actively involved in out-of-class activities on predominately White campuses, and as the enrollment gap between Black men and women increased, male students were withdrawing from campus leadership positions in increasing numbers. The author presents the self-reported gains for highly involved African American men and the perks and privileges of campus involvement and

leadership. Some specific strategies for increasing out-of-class involvement and leadership participation include working with African American men who are already involved to recruit their uninvolved same-race male peers; holding student organizations leaders accountable for reaching out to underrepresented groups; providing support for minority student organizations, which act as a leadership and involvement pipeline for African American men; creating and supporting groups specifically for African American men; and reaching out to African American parents during new student orientation. These and other collaborative efforts can have a positive impact on academic success and retention rates for African American men.

**Sutton, Michael E., Melvin C. Terrell. Identifying and developing leadership opportunities for African American men. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *Helping African American Men Succeed in College*, (pp. 55-64). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.**

This chapter addresses the importance of leadership opportunities within campus organizations for African American male students, with a focus on black fraternities. It encourages student affairs professionals to articulate the benefits of these leadership opportunities so that Black male students will better take advantage of them and become more involved and engaged students. Particularly at PWIs, minority students find it challenging to participate as leaders of college organizations. Many perceive the campus climate as hostile and/or isolating, thereby further reducing their chances of involvement and leadership. The authors review some of the opportunities available for leadership on-campus and find that many African American male students were also not involved in these kinds of activities in high school. Furthermore, they often lacked mentors in positions of leadership within the educational institutions they attend. One option for addressing this is to develop leadership experiences through minority student groups, such as the Black Student Unions and Black fraternities. In comparison to other campus organizations, these provide Black men with opportunities for leadership, community service, and campus planning for their members. Student affairs professionals are urged to support these organizations and encourage collaboration with other campus organizations for planning events such as homecoming. The study used a four-part questionnaire developed by student affairs and assessment professionals to ascertain the perceptions of opportunities for leadership among respondents. The findings indicated that African American men who were leaders in their fraternities were also involved in campuswide organizations. The students who were leaders in their fraternities also perceived themselves as leaders among the African American student population. The authors urge greater support and training to further facilitate and develop leadership opportunities for African American men.

## MASCULINITY

**Harper, S. R. (2004). The measure of a man: Conceptualizations of masculinity among high-achieving African American male college students. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 48(1), 89-107. Reprinted in M. Kimmel & M. Messner (Eds.), *Men's Lives*, 7th edition, Allyn & Bacon Publishers, 2006.** This article examines masculine identity and student engagement and leadership among Black male college students at six PWIs in the Midwest. Building upon previous research findings regarding the

importance of a healthy, conflict-free masculine identity to fostering positive outcomes in many areas, the author explores the nexus between identity development, definitions of self, and positive outcomes, including academic achievement and retention. The author presents an extensive literature review on the topic of masculinity and its role in identity development, but he also notes that much of the literature is not specific to traditional-aged college students. Expressions of masculinity among African American males, which run counter to White masculine ideals due to historical and material factors, are analyzed. Two primary ideals of the masculine code of conduct prevalent among Black males are discussed: the “tough guy” and the “player of women” (93). The author states that understanding the variability and construction of masculine identity is an important step in finding ways to improve positive academic and psychosocial outcomes. Drawing on a sample of 32 high-achieving Black male students from six Midwest PWIs, the study found that their same-race peers used a limited number of variables to describe masculinity, including pursuing romantic and sexual relationships; athletic activity; competition; and the accumulation and exhibition of material possessions. Student leadership was not among the activities cited. By contrast, the participants in the study offered very different definitions of masculinity which included taking care of family and advancing the Black community, citing role models such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, among others. These students did not feel they had to choose between being popular and being smart. The author suggests that these constructions of Black masculinity can help enlarge the perspectives of uninvolved and disengaged Black male students and can help contribute to the resolution of identity issues and thereby improve retention and success in college.

## MENTORING

**LaVant, Bruce D., John T. Anderson and Joseph W. Tiggs. Retaining African American men through mentoring initiatives. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *Helping African American Men Succeed in College*, (pp. 43-53). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.**

This chapter examines the importance of mentoring to the success of African American male students in higher education. Several profiles of mentoring programs are presented. The mentoring process, both formal and informal, is defined and analyzed in the context of postsecondary recruitment and retention efforts. The chapter reviews the limited research on mentoring in higher education for African American men, who report greater levels of satisfaction in their collegiate experience when involved in mentoring relationships. Several models of successful mentoring are profiled: The Black Man’s Think Tank (University of Cincinnati); The Student African American Brotherhood; The Black Male Initiative (Texas Southern University); The Meyerhoff Program (University of Maryland, Baltimore County); The Bridge (Georgia State University); and Project BEAM (Being Excited About Me; West Virginia University). The Faculty Mentor Program, established to address the retention of Black students at the University of Louisville, is also examined. The program showed positive results in degree attainment and academic achievement. Based on observations of several faculty mentoring programs, the authors offer specific recommendations, including the commitment of executive leadership; identification of potential African American male students for inclusion in programs; careful selection of mentors; close cooperation between program

coordinators and admissions; training for selected mentors; external community support for programs; and an unbiased and ongoing evaluation and assessment of program if redesign is necessary. The authors conclude that mentoring remains an effective tool for recruiting, retaining, and graduating African American men and enhancing their college experience.

**Sutton, Michael E. (2006). Developmental mentoring of African American college men. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American Men in College* (pp. 95-111). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.** This chapter describes mentoring from both an instructional and a development perspective to better understand the positive impact of an effective mentoring program on African American college men. The two different approaches to mentoring are examined. Despite positive outcomes, the author argues that traditional mentoring programs that are largely instructional may encourage dependence on the mentor and actually slow progress from a development perspective. There are also cross-gender and cross-race challenges in the mentoring relationship. Mentoring programs based on a development perspective are more likely to foster active learning rather than learning in a passive mode. A mentor in a developmental model can play the role of teacher, guide, gatekeeper, and consultant. Such models have implications for programs designed for African American men. The example of the Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) is explored in greater detail. This program's objective of encouraging development beyond one-on-one mentor interaction is achieved in three dimensions: (1) student-to-student at the collegiate level, (2) Project ACE, collegiate Black males mentoring high school Black males; and (3) advisor-to-student mentoring at K-12 and collegiate levels. The peer aspect of this mentoring is especially important for personal development growth. The program's core values are proactive leadership, accountability, self-discipline, and intellectual development. Collaboration with the institution's student support services is encouraged. The campus environmental factors that influence mentoring are explored, comparing the positive mentoring at HBCUs with that of PWIs. To complement models of mentoring for African American men, the author recommends comprehensive training for selected mentors; financial support of African American male mentoring programs; utilizing multiple mentoring experiences; developing intercampus mentoring symposia; encouraging developmental mentoring experiences within campuswide activities; and institutional affirmation and celebration of African American male contributions.

## OVERVIEW

**Cuyjet, Michael J. (2006). African American college men: Twenty-first-century issues and concerns. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American Men in College* (pp. 3-23). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.** In this chapter, the author shares some of the demographic data about African American male college students and explores its significance. Of particular concern is the relative absence of African American men matriculating in institutions of higher education and the special impact this trend has on society and on African American communities. He briefly reviews some of the statistical information and takes a closer look at the dramatic disproportion between the genders. The proportion of men to women among African American undergraduates is more

skewed than among any of the other governmental ethnic categories. Several impacts of the male-female imbalance are examined and warrant further research, including its effects on relations between men and women on-campus and on the social climate (i.e., issues of relationships and dating) and relations between Blacks and whites at PWIs (i.e., the opportunity to counteract prevailing stereotypes through interracial encounters). The author stresses that non-Blacks must learn about the differences between African American men and women and should address the stereotypes associated with African American men in general and Black athletes in particular. Some possible ideas for interventions are proposed. These include identifying special cultural characteristics, such as issues of manhood and self-esteem, in African American male students to better facilitate adaptation to campus culture; exploring spirituality and its impact on identity development and coping skills; and establishing mechanisms to enhance matriculation and graduation. The author concludes that special interventions for African American male college students can make a significant difference in achieving positive outcomes.

**Cuyjet, Michael J. (2006). *Helping African American Men Matriculate*. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American Men in College* (pp. 237-249). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.** This chapter is a summary of the ideas discussed in “Part One: Issues and Ideas” from *African American Men in College*. The author presents two basic issues and concerns that arise from these chapters: (1) that the data on African American men and women be disaggregated to provide a clearer perspective on the situation of African American male in college and (2) that greater efforts be made to understand the African American male culture as a subgroup distinct from the dominant American male culture. College and university faculty and staff should remember, “Different is not deficient” (239). Regarding the academic climate for African American men, five major areas for interventions are suggested: (1) Peer Group—increasing the positive effects of peer groups and diminishing their negative effects (2) Family—enhancing positive family influence (3) Faculty—improving student-faculty relations and hiring more African American male faculty (4) Self-esteem—developing self-esteem related to academic success (5) Institutional Perception—paying attention to early adjustment of African American men on campus and combating negative stigma attached to academic support services for these students. The chapters on the leadership and out-of-class activities of African American college men, so important to their success, are summarized. The lack of such involvement and efforts to remedy this are also addressed. Greater attention should be paid to the collection of empirical data on how African American male student leaders use their time, and more effort should be made to recruit African American male student leaders and help them succeed in their endeavors. The benefits of mentoring are reviewed, noting the important difference between “instructional” and “developmental” mentoring. The significance of spirituality and religious activity to African American male students coping with the struggle to succeed in higher education merits further research and deeper understanding on the part of campus administrators. Both the positive and the negative impacts of fraternity membership are presented, although no suggestions are made to counteract hazing, academic mediocrity, and declining public perception. Administrators are urged to enhance the social and academic integration of African American male athletes into the rest of campus life. One of the least understood groups among African American male college students is the gay or bisexual population.

In designing successful interventions, administrators should realize the importance of the Black church on African American students in general and on this population in particular. The major themes to emerge from the chapters on HBCUs are: (1) Black male student's lack of predisposition to attend college (2) lack of academic preparation and failure to take advantage of supports (3) lack of involvement in campus activities (excluding athletics) and organizations and in leadership roles (4) deficiency in healthy male-female interpersonal relationships (5) perceptions of PWIs are superior to their own schools, despite a greater understanding of Black culture at HBCUs. Recommendations include tracking men's academic performance to see where problems arise, using peers to attract men to support programs, and facilitating faculty-student interactions outside of the classroom. At community colleges, issues of monitoring academic progress and improving transfer strategies are of paramount importance to the success of African American men. The author suggests further research to understand the challenges of African American men in graduate education, the gifted and talented, the impact of particular campus climates and environments, such as those of small versus large institutions, or rural versus urban. Finally, the author recommends identifying successful models that help African American men thrive in college, nine of which are profiled in Part Two of this book, "Profiles of Some Successful Programs."

**Cuyjet, Michael J. African American men on college campuses: Their needs and their perceptions. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *Helping African American Men Succeed in College*, (pp. 5-16). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.** This chapter provides an overview of the current status of Black male college students and a review of a national survey that reveals some of their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the campus environment. These perceptions are compared to those of their same-race female counterparts. The particular needs of African American male students may not always be met by campus efforts to assist minority students as a whole. The article analyzes the disparity between the academic experience of male and female Black students, starting with the disproportion in representation on college campuses. Black males represent a disproportionately small percentage of the total college population and a much smaller male versus female percentage than in any other ethnic group. The author argues that black male students who do arrive on campus may need some special nurturing to help them adjust to their new environment and to make it less hostile to them than the prevalent American community in general and the inner-city environment in particular. This can be done through a two-pronged approach by providing a campus environment with high expectations of success, and by re-educating majority students about the inaccuracy of popular misconceptions of Black men. The author examines the responses of more than 6,000 self-identified African American college students to a national survey (the College Student Experiences Questionnaire) and breaks these down by gender. Results indicate that Black male students do not perform as well as Black female students in specific areas, including course learning and experience in writing. Black male students frequented the Student Union and the athletic and recreation facilities more often than their female counterparts. However, Black women were more active in clubs and organizations and more likely to turn to their peers for support. The author recommends that student affairs administrators study the results of this survey in order to better address the needs of Black male students.

**Harper, S. R. (2006). Black male students at public flagship universities in the U.S.: Status, trends and implications for policy and practice. Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.** This report reviews the status of Black men in higher education, with an emphasis on public flagship universities in each of the 50 states. Chapters describe national trends in college access and participation, graduation rates and degree attainment, Black male-student athletes, and implications for policy and practice. Several disparities are described, including issues of enrollment, the widening gender gap, problems in degree attainment, and differences in retention and graduation rates. The report also analyzes the preponderance of Black males as student-athletes at public flagship institutions (more than 1 out of 5 at 21 institutions) and compares graduation rates of White male student athletes with their Black teammates. In addition, the report examines racial disparities, economic gains, and the Bowl Championship Series, where Black male student-athletes comprised the majority of players yet graduated in disproportionately lower numbers, while their universities and conferences reaped the financial benefits from their performance in the bowl games. The author concludes that although Black male students are attractive to public flagship universities as athletes, there continue to be persistent inequities in enrollments and degree completion rates and other disparities that disadvantage Black men at public flagship universities throughout the country. **Also see Athletes.**

## **PEER SUPPORT**

**Harper, S. R. (2006). Peer support for African American male college achievement: Beyond internalized racism and the burden of ‘acting White.’ *Journal of Men’s Studies*, 14(3), 337-358.** This study explores the Acting White Hypothesis of Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu (1986). This hypothesis argues that school achievement within African American peer groups is often seen as “acting White.” This negative message of academic success associated with perceived disloyalty to the Black community has also been popularized by rappers like Kanye West in his album, *The College Dropout*. Contrary to this theory and that of internalized racism, through which socially stigmatized groups accept and recycle negative messages regarding their abilities, the study discovered that high-achieving African American males at six PWIs attributed much of their academic success to the support offered by their same-race peers. It explores the importance of peers in the college experience of high-achieving African American male students at six large public research universities in the Midwest. The study found no evidence of internalized racism in the domains of academic achievement and Black male leadership. Same-race peer support and validation were represented in the experiences of the 32 male students interviewed.

## **POLICY**

**Harper, S. R. (2006). Reconceptualizing reactive policy responses to Black male college achievement: Implications from a national study. *Focus: Magazine of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies*, 34(6), 14-15.** The author argues that policymakers can gain greater insight into Black male participation and achievement only if they are willing to undergo a paradigm shift in policy formation. Rather than simply

react to educational deficiencies, such as the lack of progress in Black male participation and degree attainment rates, policy makers would do better to seek insight into the programs and people that contribute to Black male student success, especially for those students who transcend socio-economic barriers. The author calls for an “anti-deficit investigation of Black male student success”(14), building on existing studies to establish a framework for good practices, such as pre-freshmen transition programs and adequate financial support, that contribute to an improvement in access and outcomes for Black males in higher education.

## **RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY**

**Watson, Lemuel (2006). The role of spirituality and religion in the experiences of African American male college students. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American Men in College* (pp. 112-127). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.** Spirituality and religion in the lives of African American college men is a topic that has scarcely been researched. In this chapter, the author presents working definitions of both spirituality and religion, with spirituality as a “belief in some external, animating force,” while religion “is the adherence to an established system of beliefs and practices grounded in spirituality” (113). Both can play an important role in the perceptions of responsibilities of African American male college students. The chapter identifies the role of spirituality in the lives of African American men and how spirituality can contribute to their identity and coping skills in the college experience. Reviewing several perspectives on spirituality, the author considers these within a framework of daily practice for African Americans. A study of 97 first- and second-year African American male college students was conducted at three private HBCUs, each affiliated with a religious denomination. Information was gathered on the students’ educational experiences in general and their spiritual and religious beliefs and practices. The findings revealed that spirituality through religious activities was important to these students and their purpose in life. Most students recognized an important person in their lives as essential to their success and survival. They also believed that whatever came their way could be handled with the grace of a higher being. They exemplified C.F Stewart’s conception of a “resistant soul force” (1999) that helps individuals overcome human oppression, to survive and thrive. The author concludes that in many institutions of higher education, spirituality and religion are not affirmed or encouraged by college professionals, even though these concepts can provide a positive influence in the identity development of African American men.

## **STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS**

**Harper, S. R., & Quaye, S. J. (2007). Student organizations as venues for Black identity expression and development among African American male student leaders. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(2), 133-159.** This article explores ways in which membership in student organizations provide a venue for the development of Black male student leaders. It builds upon previous research asserting that low persistence rates can be attributed to racial identity conflict and reviews the significant models of Black identity development. Authors review William Cross’s model of Black identity development (1971), which includes four stages: Pre-Encounter, Encounter,

Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization, a resocializing experience in which a preexisting identity is transformed from non-Africentric to Africentric to multicultural. The article surveys previous studies of out-of-class engagement and identity development, which led the authors to question the role of racial identity in the engagement of African American male student leaders, the factors that contributed to their selection of mainstream and culturally based student organizations, and in what ways these organizations support the development of Black identities. The article is based on findings from a qualitative study of 32 high-achieving African American male undergraduate student leaders at six large public research universities in the Midwest: University of Illinois, Indiana University, University of Michigan, Michigan State University, The Ohio State University, and Purdue University. The study found that the participants' leadership and engagement were overwhelmingly in Black and minority student organizations, and the student leaders articulated a strong commitment to racial uplift. Students cited the importance of learning cross-cultural communication skills in order to forge relationships with people of different backgrounds. The authors conclude that student organizations are important as venues for engagement and should be fully supported by institutions committed to enhancing outcomes, including identity development.

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