

African American Student Educational Persistence and Graduation at

California State University Bakersfield

By

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By

Kalyn Valentine

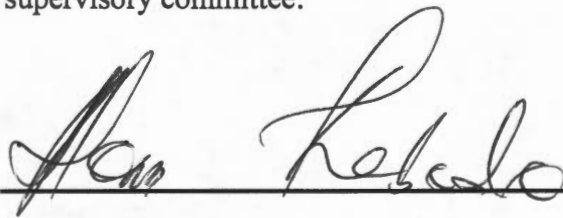
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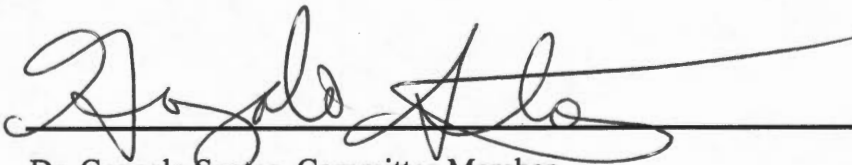
This thesis or project has been accepted on behalf of the Department of Sociology by their supervisory committee:

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Dr. Alem Kebede, Committee Chair

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Abstract

Graduation rates for African-American students at California State University Bakersfield (CSUB) were slightly lower than the national average ranging from 16.3 percent to 38.1 percent between 1995 and 2007. African-American graduation rates during that time period were also at least 10 percent lower than students who identified as Asian, Caucasian or Hispanic (CSUB Institutional Research and Planning, 2015). A mixed methods approach was utilized to explore influences on persistence and graduation that may not be captured solely by institutional data. Based on the interviews conducted for this study, many of the participants expressed that they face racial tension on a regular basis and that they lack the type of institutional support wanted and needed to help with their educational pursuits. A majority of the students, if not a part of an informal social support system, desired to belong to a group in which they “fit in.” Factors that may impact the African-American student population at CSUB were addressed and appropriate policy changes were suggested. Future research should include a comparative analysis of testimonies of current African-American CSUB students and student who have discontinued enrollment. Additional data may allow researchers to begin to identify specific processes that directly impact retention and graduation rates.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The completion of a four-year degree is of increasing importance since higher education is a form of social and cultural capital, which provides increased opportunities to obtain economic capital in the market place. Currently, 35 percent of jobs in the United States require a Bachelor's Degree (Center on Education and the Workforce, 2009). The national average retention rates for first-time, full-time degree seeking students at all four-year institutions in 2001 was 57 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). An analysis of the demographic composition of college student retention and graduation rates indicated that African Americans have one of the lowest retention and degree completion rates nationwide with only 42 percent earning their bachelor's degree within 6 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000). The Digest of Education Statistics (2012) states that the average percentage of persons over the age of 25 years with a bachelor's degree in 2001 was 26.1 percent, while the black degree attainment rate was only 16.1 percent.

Locally, graduation rates for African-American students at California State University Bakersfield (CSUB) were slightly lower than the national average ranging from 16.3 percent to 38.1 percent between 1995 and 2007. African-American graduation rates during that time period were also at least 10 percent lower than students who identified as Asian, Caucasian or Hispanic (CSUB Institutional Research and Planning, 2015). This study will examine institutional, social, cognitive, and socioeconomic factors that may be disproportionately affecting African-American student persistence at CSU Bakersfield.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Researchers have studied a myriad of cognitive, economic, institutional and social factors that may contribute to the achievement gap between white and black college students (Young, Johnson, Hawthorne, and Pugh. 2011; Rowser, 1994; Gay, 1975; Rowley and Bowman, 2009). However, isolated factors have been unable to appropriately address this issue.

Employing an integrated approach, an attempt will be made to understand what factors are associated with and possibly impact African-American retention and graduation rates at California State University Bakersfield. Quantitative data has been collected and disaggregated for this population; however, the data independently cannot adequately account for the disparity in retention and graduation rates. Accordingly, an integrated approach will be utilized to explore influences on persistence that may not be captured by quantitative data. By identifying the factors that impact the African-American student population at CSUB, appropriate policy changes could be created and implemented.

RELEVANCE

There is consistently increasing demand for Bachelor's degree holding individuals within the workplace, thus creating a need for universities to educate and graduate students (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Higher education provides opportunities for employment so that individuals may acquire social mobility and income (Center on Education and the Workforce, 2009). The acquisition and application of knowledge obtained in colleges and universities has the ability to enrich individuals' lives and positively impact entire communities. CSUB's African-American population, as one of the four primary demographic groups, has significantly lower 6-year graduation rates than the national averages for public institutions. (Digest of Educational Statistics, 2015) The African-American population also has significantly

lower graduation rates than that of their demographic counterparts (CSUB Institutional Research and Planning, 2015). Identifying specific factors or processes which contribute to the vast educational attainment inequalities, coupled with providing policy suggestions has the potential to increase retention and graduation rates. Potential policy suggestions may create or increase educational, social, financial, and institutional support for African-American students may increase retention and graduation rates as well as positively impact the campus culture and students' overall university experience.

THEORY OR THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This study utilizes various social psychological and sociological theories to describe the phenomena taking place. Two of the major theories used in this research are the Symbolic Interaction Theory (Ballis 1995) and the Stereotype Threat Theory (Erikson, as quoted in Gleason, 1983: 918). Various theories will be used to describe and support the processes taking place throughout the relevant scholarly literature and within the context of this study.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The nature of this study requires a clear conceptualization of the key terms being studied. Persistence and graduation rates for African-American students at California State University, Bakersfield are the primary focus of this project.

George Yancey (2003) described a boundary between white and non-white groups. Yancey found that African-Americans or black individuals in America experience exclusion in way that Latino and Asian Americans do not. Warren and Twine (1997) and Gallagher (2004) also support Yancey's assertion, due to a lack of distinction between African-American, Africans residing in the U.S. and those who identify as "black," the term African-American will primarily

be used in the study to represent all of the afore mentioned. However, the previously stated terms will be used interchangeably.

Graduation is the completion of all necessary requirements to receive a bachelor's degree, while persistence and retention refer to the continued effort towards one's intended degree aspirations. The persistence or continued effort of individuals in higher education ultimately leads to graduation. Statistics concerning graduation rates will be used in relation to student persistence to determine what factors negatively affect degree completion rates.

CSUB student is defined as an individual who is currently enrolled in a minimum of 12-quarter units as an undergraduate at California State University, Bakersfield.

LIMITATIONS

One year of the secondary data that is utilized in the quantitative portion of the study had a substantially smaller sample size in 2010 than the consecutive years. Although there are differences in sample population the data set remains a representative sample of the total population of CSUB. A second constraint this study possesses is the absence of discontinued students in the sample population for the interviews. Optimally, interviews with discontinued students would provide firsthand information regarding why the students chose not to continue their education at CSUB. This population was not sampled due constraints on resources and time for this particular study. However, future research should include the formerly listed population.

SUMMARY

This study will 1) Provide a quantitative analysis of self-identified African-American or Black students' retention and graduation rates at California State University, Bakersfield and the factors associated with persistence. 2) On the basis of qualitative data gathered by the researcher will determine if current students can provide any supplemental insight into their educational

experience that would account for the educational attainment gap. 3) Provide appropriate policy suggestions based on the specific needs identified.

Personal information regarding the lived experiences of African-American students is pertinent to understanding low retention and graduation rates for this demographic group. As such, socioeconomic background, the sense of belonging, the presence of institutional support, the presence of stereotype threats, along with other processes contribute to students' ability to thrive in an educational setting. The objective of this study is to highlight said factors that are pervasive among the qualitative and quantitative data.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of higher education in the United States is saturated with preferential treatment towards whites, while African-Americans faced discrimination along with social and physical violence. Three distinct processes have led to racial stratification in post-secondary institutions in the United States; first, the dominion of western capitalist culture and the scientific racism Darwinian views which accompanied it lead to social inequities (Golash-Boza, 2015). Second, non-white cultures were destroyed or subjugated during the Anglo-Saxon's quest for power and dominance. Third, Non-white people were socially recognized as unintelligent and deviant. Historically African-Americans were, in many cases barred from or received subpar or no educational opportunities via Jim Crow laws, segregation and inequitable distribution of resources that limited access to quality education (Golash-Boza, 2015). These processes have contributed to the polarization of black educational attainment in the United States.

To fully grasp the intricacies of the racial dynamics in regards to education, a socio-historical background of race must first be established. Domestically, the United States has a history of taking advantage of non-whites. The U.S. was established upon the near genocide of the American-Indian people for the acquisition of the land and natural resources. During colonization white settlers managed the tobacco, rice, grain and cotton industries, while African slaves were used for manual labor. Essentially, "free labor" allowed entrepreneurs to decrease investment costs and maximize profits, creating a booming economy.

"The initial justifications for bringing Africans to the colonies were not racial in nature. In part, this was because no justification was needed: slavery was an accepted social system at the time. To the extent that a justification was offered, it was that Africans were heathens and their enslavement would ensure their salvation (Smedley 2007). Over time, racial justifications for the enslavement of Africans emerged." (Golash-Boza 2015: 17)

Slave codes and social stigmas separated black slaves from all other racial groups. White patrons were told that blacks were biologically inferior, lazy, aggressive, violent, untrustworthy, thieves, rapists and murders. (Golash-Boza 2015). These perceptions were created to ensure other people groups would not align with slaves who sought freedom, thereby solidifying and stabilizing a vast source of coerced labor. Slave owners and legislators simultaneously created a lucrative work force as well as created social and institutionalized racial stratification.

After a long and hard struggle, slavery was brought to an end with the Emancipation Proclamation. Even with the adoption of the 13th and 14th Amendments, blacks were deprived of political rights, access to jobs that provided social mobility and educational opportunities. Limited quantities of black Americans were afforded the opportunity to attend a college or university. However, due to the selectivity and discrimination that took place within white colleges and universities during the late 19th century, many African-American college students found solace and their education at historically black colleges and universities.

Nearly a century later, The Civil Rights Movement legally and politically removed overtly racist hindrances and opened collegiate opportunities to African-Americans for all public educational institutions. Despite legally having “equal” access to higher education, African-Americans still face immense hardships in the pursuit of education. For instance, primary and secondary schools are socially stratified and class segregated. Limited access to quality education for adolescents of color hinders black students’ ability to be admitted to and thrive in college or university settings. Retention and degree attainment disparities between white and black college students in the 20th century were relatively straightforward. The general public and many researchers believed that blacks were innately incompetent in all ways that mattered (Fredrickson, 2002). Yet in reality, blacks did not have access to quality education and support in

their former years, and therefore, educational persistence became increasingly difficult as their educational career progressed. Today, sixty-one years after overt legal institutionalized hindrances were removed from the education system, African-American college students continue to have lower degree attainment rates than their ethnic counterparts from colleges and universities.

The completion of a four-year degree is of increasing importance since higher education is a form of social and cultural capital, which provides increased opportunities to obtain economic capital in the market place. Currently, 35 percent of jobs in the United States now require a Bachelor's Degree (Center on Education and the Workforce, 2009). The national average retention rates for first-time, full-time, degree seeking students at all four-year institutions in 2001 was 57 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). An analysis of the demographic composition of college student retention and graduation rates indicated that African Americans have one of the lowest retention and degree completion rates nationwide with only 42 percent earning their bachelor's degree within 6 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000). The Digest of Education Statistics (2012) states that the average percentage of persons over the age of 25 years with a bachelor's degree in 2001 was 26.1 percent, while the black degree attainment rate was only 16.1 percent.

Previous literature indicates the processes which affect persistence for black students includes teacher expectations, socio-economic background, adequate social support, and stereotype threats, amongst other processes (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013; Fischer, 2010; Steele, 1992, 1997; Kao and Thompson, 2003; Saufley et al., 1983; Sedlacek, 1988). The purpose of this study is to identify those processes, which affect the African-American population at CSU Bakersfield and provide appropriate policy suggestions based on the specific needs identified.

Stereotypes are a way in which the majority-groups are able to categorize, stigmatize and control minority groups. Historically, researchers, politicians, historians, educators, and so forth, have claimed that African-Americans were unintelligent, lazy and incapable of learning. Those ideas have persisted over time and are currently negatively affecting black college students. Research has found that students experiencing the stereotype threat are likely to suppress the anxiety they experience. “This act of suppression depletes mental resources and undermines intellectual performance” (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013; 390).

In a study done at the University of California, Los Angeles, concerning academic experiences, of all the students interviewed, African Americans were the only group to report struggles with stereotypes. In fact, they explicitly cited stereotypes and stereotype threat as the biggest barriers to their academic success (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). During qualitative data collections. Johnson-Ahorlu (2013) reported, “Faculty and some students... believe in the stereotypes that [African-American students] we’re genetically slower than them...” Another went on to say, “I think going to some classes... you’re looked down upon or there’s an assumption that you’re not going to achieve at a high level and then people are shocked when you’re the best in the class, so to speak.” Another student stated, “Faculty and staff have stereotypes about African-Americans. I hear them all the time” (387).

Students often felt that stereotypes about their intellectual capabilities affected the way they interacted with their peers. Oftentimes, students of other ethnic groups refused to share notes or participate in group projects with these students. This finding is significant, as the stereotype threat has been linked to lower academic achievement and degree incompleteness (Fischer, 2010; Steele, 1992, 1997).

Theorists have developed several cultural explanations for the demographic achievement gap. One controversial theory was developed by Fordham and Ogbu (1986), who claimed that African-American students have lower achievement rates because “they equate school success with ‘acting white’” (Golash-Boza, 2015:223). Based on a study of thirty-three students, they also stated African-American students, in response to the discrimination faced in school, created a counter culture in which they oppose school success.

Contrary to the findings of Fordham and Ogbu (1986) and Golash-Boza (2015), blatant academic and social rebellion is not a supported explanation of the attainment gaps between African-American and white students. Studies using nationally representative samples were conducted by Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) and Tyson (2002) helped disprove the argument. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) conducted a study on student attitudes toward school, in which they found that black students had a more positive attitude than white students. Black students also reported having increased positive social outcomes when they did well in school. In a study of black primary school students, Tyson (2002) found that black students were consistently excited about school and strived to do well; however, the students experienced emotional distress when they did not perform well. Performance anxiety and a burden of low achievement are factors that put undue pressure on the academic experience of African-Americans.

Kao and Thompson (2003) found that testing and placement in primary schools consistently put minorities in low-ability courses. In contrast, Whites are more likely to be placed in college-preparatory course work, thus providing whites with the resources and education they need to exceed in higher education, and disadvantaging black students. The stigmatization of

African-Americans through discriminatory placement based on stereotypes and perceptions of ignorance ultimately affects educational outcomes in higher education.

Achievement disparities in education are highly correlated to parental socioeconomic status. Gamoran (2001) found that more than 50 percent of youth from higher income families earned a college degree. In comparison, youth with family incomes in the lower 25 percent margin had a mere 7 percent completion rate. Educational disenfranchisement in college and universities accounts for approximately half of the variance in white-black educational outcomes Golash-Boza (2015).

The educational system has often been accused of reproducing social inequality; one manner in which it does so is through the use of hidden curricula. Schools are purposed to teach students subject matter, which builds their basic knowledge and grooms them to become educated responsible citizens. Teaching processes utilize reward and punishment techniques as sorting mechanisms to separate the future leaders from the general and lower class populations. “The disciplinary techniques used by schools create children who are labeled as ‘good,’ ‘bad,’ ‘gifted,’ and ‘troublemakers,’ and children are judged on their ability to conform to school rules” (Ferguson, 2001:52). As previously stated, stereotypes and the stereotype threat is one of the biggest barriers to the academic success of black students (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013).

Many African-American college students are aware of inequalities based on faculty treatment because of race. They are also “acutely aware of their alienation, isolation and inadequate preparation” upon entering the classroom (Saufley et al., 1983). As a result of undue social pressures and negative stereotypes, anxiety and stress are constant companions of African-American students who attend predominantly white colleges and universities (Rowser, 1994). Nettles (1988) found that black and white high school students with the same height, weight,

grade point average, educational background, and SAT scores should obtain comparable grade point averages in college. However, he found that consistently African-Americans achieve lower than the projected grade point average, accounting for other variables. This study suggests that there are institutional factors that negatively affect black college students.

An aspect of student success that is often overlooked is the impact of teacher expectations on the African-American educational experience. Teacher expectations affect black students' own expectations of success as well as the evaluation of the students' academic performance (Rowser, 1994). Some findings suggest that quality interactions with some teachers are negatively affected by students' race, socioeconomic status as well as other factors (Rowser, 1994). Low expectations of black students from teachers and faculty leads to the continuance of low performance from said students. "Avoiding calling on a minority student in class or expecting the student to provide the minority point of view on a topic both present undue difficulties for the student and the student's self-concept" (Sedlacek, 1988:41).

Rowser (1994) provided a series of suggestions to improve the interactive behaviors between teachers and their students. First, institutions should closely examine the expectations of both faculty and staff on all students, but more specifically, black students. Second, faculty "must convey to all students that they have not only the potential to be successful, but that they are expected to be successful" (Italics in the original 85). Lastly, faculty should select culturally and ethnically diverse sources and curriculum, thus limiting homogeneity and encouraging diversity and inclusiveness.

Institutional factors such as the distortion of minority history, discrimination from peers, alienation caused by teachers and the disproportional recommendations of minority students to vocational rather than the pre-university educational tracks have affected the educational attainment

of racial minorities within the country (Weiner, 2014). The discriminatory treatment of minorities coupled with the lack of consciousness by whites are inequalities that continues to perpetuate and reproduce societal norms that align with the historical supremacist Anglo-Saxon ideology.

The construction of race and the acquisition of social capital are produced and reproduced through educational and social environments. The acquisition of social capital likewise, is imperative to educational development and attainment. Individuals act and respond within societally produced constrains. Dominant groups within a given society determine the parameters to obtain social capital (McKnight & Chandler 2012). Explicitly and implicitly, policies and attitudes towards racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities by minority have created disparities in the access and attainment of higher education.

An additional process which is disputed on whether it creates further disparities in the attainment of higher educational is the involvement of extra-curricular activities. Cognitive and affective growth is maximized in students who are involved in academic and extra-curricular activities (Moore et al., 1998). Dean & Simon (2007) conducted a survey which evaluated the relationship between extra-curricular involvement and overall grade point average. Therefore, it is expected that students with more frequent participation in extra-curricular activities will have lower grade point averages. Conversely, a comprehensive study of indicators of college student success and satisfaction yielded results indicating that higher levels of extra-curricular engagement contributes to higher grade point averages as well as increased levels of educational satisfaction (Weber, Krylow and Zhang, 2013). Due to the ambiguity in the literature this variable will be examined in this research.

Lal (1995) describes the manner in which intergenerational communication affects social collectives. African-American students have communicated the lack of recognition and the unequal treatment received in higher education. This sociological ethnography should be considered when analyzing ethnic relations.

“Social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectives” (Miles, 1989: 75). Biological differences were the former, most effective, argument for differential treatment of minority groups in American history. Biological differences coupled with the inability to obtain an education and forms of capital that accompany it have disenfranchised the African-American population in the United States.

African-American students are faced with a daily conflict, in which “simply put, debate whether to celebrate and retain their ‘likeness’ (which some may come to feel consigns them to the base), or whether to emulate and assimilate” (Blumer & Duster, 1980: 225). The conflict is seen not only in African-American students, but also from individuals within groups at the base of the political and social economic structure.

The above conflict can be tied to identity, which is “understood as something internal that persists through change, in which, the elements of inferiority and continuity are indispensable. Located in the individual’s psyche, although influenced by changes in environment, identity is fundamentally ‘accrued confidence’ in the inner sameness and continuity of one’s own being.” (Erikson, as quoted in Gleason, 1983; 918). These notions suggest that educational and social inequalities are closely linked to the success and perceptions of the racial group as a whole.

The US Department of Education has noted the educational benefits of diversity, which includes cross-racial understanding and dialogue, the reduction of racial isolation and the

breaking down of racial stereotypes (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The persistence of the attainment gap in African-Americans may require institutions of higher education to take an active role in addressing the existing inequities in degree completion. Programs are needed to address this issue. Symposiums, workshops, seminars and retreats for faculty, staff and administrators should be conducted to educate those facilitating the learning process about the effects of expectations and stereotypes on student outcomes.

A multilevel analysis of risk, protection and achievement disparities among African-American high school students examined individual, familial, school and community level risk factors and strengths that affect students. Rowley and Bowman (2009: 308) sought to determine if “risk factors and protective strengths at multiple levels are significantly related to student outcomes among African-American males and females.” A measure of personal motivation, academic performance and higher education expectation was cross tabulated with the risk and strength measures. The study found that religious engagement positively impacted both male and female motivation. Family financial stressors, personal stress, and teacher conflict were negatively associated with student motivation. The results also showed that dark skin tone is negatively associated with academic performance, while supportive teachers are positively associated with academic performance. Although this research is specific to black high school students, its findings are consistent with the literature on African-American student outcomes in all levels of education.

SUMMARY

The aforementioned literature indicates the processes that impact the probability of an African-American student persisting until graduation in an educational setting. These processes include teacher expectations, socio-economic background, adequate social support, and

stereotype threats, amongst other processes. The purpose of this study is to identify those processes, which specifically affect the African-American population at CSU Bakersfield and provide appropriate policy suggestions based on the specific needs identified.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH QUESTION

What factors are associated with and possibly impact African-American retention and graduation rates at California State University Bakersfield?

SETTING

California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB) is located on a 375-acre site in the southern San Joaquin Valley. CSUB is “committed to transforming the lives of its students and community through its established excellence in academia, diversity, service, and community engagement since its founding in 1965” (CSUB, 2015). The institution is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

“The University serves more than 8,720 students at either the main campus in Bakersfield or CSUB – Antelope Valley and counts over 40,000 alumni from its four schools: Arts and Humanities, Business and Public Administration, Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Engineering, and Social Sciences and Education” (CSUB, 2015). CSUB’s population consists of 61% females and 39% males. Based on the 2011 data provided by Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment, the demographic population is as follows, 43% Hispanic, 24% White/Caucasian, 7% Black/African-American, 6% Asian, and 14% Other. The institution is classified as a Hispanic Serving Institution (CSUB Institutional Research and Planning, 2015). CSUB has 793 faculty and staff serving at the institution (CSUB, 2015). Approximately 412 of the 793 are instructional staff. See *Figure 1.1* for the demographic composition of the faculty.

Faculty Race	N
White	233
Hispanic Asian	28
Black	28
Other	36

Figure 1.1 Demographic composition of the faculty (California State University Bakersfield, 2016)

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research used a mixed methods approach. Quantitative analysis was used to analyze factors that may affect African-American student retention at CSU Bakersfield. While the College Student Inventory Part B, which was designed to enhance the usefulness of the Retention Management System at California State University Bakersfield, was used to study said factors.

The College Student Inventory-Form B from 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 was used to longitudinally analyze 20 factors designed to enhance retention management. The survey identified differences in retention factors between African-Americans, Hispanics, Whites and Asians. Five dependent variables from the CSI were used in this analysis, they are as follows: Dropout proneness, predicted academic difficulty, educational stress, receptivity to institutional help and sociability.

In additional, qualitative data was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the persistence of African-American students currently unaccounted for on the CSU Bakersfield Campus. A phenomenological qualitative approach was used to explore the processes that take place in the African-American student experience. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a minimum of 10 African-American CSUB students to explore the lived experiences of African American students at CSUB. The factors taken into account include sense of belonging,

levels of social support, institutional support, their socioeconomic background and experiences with the stereotype threat.

POPULATION

Twelve participants were interviewed for the qualitative portion of this study, 58% were female (n= 7) and 42% were male (n= 5). All of the students interviewed were students at California State University, Bakersfield. Seven participants were first time freshmen at CSUB. Four participants transferred to CSUB with some college credits. One graduate student was interviewed, however for the purposes of this study, the data collected from the interview will not be included in this analysis due to the sample size. Majors from the following disciplinary schools were represented amongst the interviewees: Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, Business & Public Administration, and Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering.

Concerning the quantitative analysis, participants who self-identified in the following categories in CSI 2010-2015 data sets were not included in the data analysis due to the population size or racial ambiguity: American Indian or Alaskan, n=31, Multiethnic or Other, n=209 and Prefer Not to Respond, n=136. Participants who self-identified in the following categories in the CSI 2010-2015 data sets were included in the data analysis. See figure 1.2.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
Black	19	75	88	46	76	61	365
Hispanic	100	599	671	592	711	597	3270
White	31	155	232	107	201	136	862
Asian	10	74	92	58	74	74	412
Total	160	903	1,082	803	1,062	868	

Figure 1.2 Respondents for CSI data categorized by race

DATA SOURCE

The use of secondary data for quantitative analysis was conducted on the College Student Inventory-Form B (CSI). The CSI was distributed to a representative sample of first-time freshmen at CSUB for the following years: 2010-2015. The College Student Inventory-Form B is comprised of 5 category types. The first category is demographic information, which includes race, gender and age. The second category of data is related to academic motivation which includes study habits, intellectual interests, verbal and writing confidence, math and science confidence, desire to finish college, attitude toward educators. The third category of data is related to general coping, which includes sociability, family emotional support, opinion tolerance, career closure, and sense of financial security. The last category of data is related to receptivity, which includes academic assistance, personal counseling, social enrichment and career counseling, and financial guidance.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All data obtained was held in the strictest of confidence. The principal investigator prior to CSI data's release signed a confidentiality agreement. Personal identifiers were not present. The data was secured on a password protected private computer. Likewise, interviewees' names or identifying information were not attached or associated with their interviews. The data and consent forms were kept in 2 separate secure locations. Anonymity and confidentiality were preserved. All participants were told that they could skip any questions they did not want to answer and they could terminate their participation at any time without penalty. These statements were stated in the consent forms, in Appendix 1.1. A copy of the consent form was provided to the interviewees to keep for their records.

If students elicited emotional responses during their interview, they were reminded that

their participation was voluntary and that they could skip a question or discontinue the interview at any time. Each interviewee was debriefed following their interview. During the debrief contact information for principle investigator and the CSUB Counseling Center was provided in the case that the student experience any type of emotional distress due to their participation in the study.

During the interview process each student was assigned a number. The number was not associated with their name or other identifying information. The number was used during the data collection and analysis process. Reviews of the recorded interview and transcription were conducted in a private and secure location and all transcripts are kept in a locked facility.

QUANTITATIVE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND ANALYSIS

Permission to use said data was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) [Protocol 16-50]. The principal investigator completed Human Subjects Protection Training prior to data analysis. Upon consent from the IRB and following agreeing to the terms and conditions set by CSUB's Office of Admissions and Records, a representative from Admissions and Records provided CSI aggregate data and summary reports. The following variables from the 2010-2015 CSI summary reports were entered in to an excel spreadsheet: dropout proneness, predicted academic difficulty, educational stress, receptivity to institutional help and sociability. The data was organized by race, gender and year. Descriptive statistics were run and a line chart was then produced for each variable to visually display the differences between each demographic group longitudinally. Reference Appendix 1.3- 1.7.

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT AND PROTOCOL

Participants for the qualitative portion of the study were solicited via word of mouth and fliers. Snowball sampling was also used to collect data due to the small size of the African-

American population at CSUB. An appointment was scheduled for an interview at the participants' earliest convenience. Interviews took approximately 30-70 minutes at a quiet rented room in the Walter Stiern Library at CSU, Bakersfield. All interviews were tape-recorded using a tape recorder and were later uploaded to the researcher's computer; concurrently the observer took notes concerning pertinent information that was said as well as facial expressions and body language that was displayed. Following the interview, each tape recording was partially transcribed and identified emergent themes and common occurrences within the data set.

Interview questions were aimed at expanding the responses gathered in the quantitative portion of the study. Specifically, the interview questions were created to investigate participant's sense of belonging, levels of social support, institutional support, their socioeconomic background and experiences with the stereotype threat. Interview questions can be referenced in Appendix 1.2.

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGY

In depth interviews were partially transcribed in a password-protected personal computer. Transcripts were read in entirety and then reread. The purpose of reviewing, reading and analyzing interview transcripts was to identify topical statements and patterns that emerged. Transcripts were read and reread, the data reminded the researcher of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Under that theory the transcripts were once again reread the data. Predetermined categories that framed the interview questions were established prior to data collection, however the researcher was open to new findings, themes and ideas. As such, the researcher adhered to the open coding technique. Marginal notes were created and concepts that fell into various categories were highlighted in different colors. Analytic notes were recorded in the margins of the transcripts. Common themes in people's descriptions and group statements were assigned

into “meaning units” (Leedy, 2013). Driven by the research question, the data was analyzed in light of the following theories: Integrated Threat Theory, Stereotype Threat, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and Symbolic Interaction Theory.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

For all of the scales in this analysis, the national norm is the 50th percentile. High scores indicate levels of the variable described in the title (CSI, 2015). The following data analysis is intended to frame the discussion that will take place surrounding the qualitative findings.

Dropout Proneness: The Hispanic population has the highest dropout proneness rates for both males and females according to the data from the CSI. From 2010-2015 the African-American population has the second highest predicted dropout proneness, while Whites and Asians have slightly lower predicted dropout rates. When compared to the first and second year retention rates for first time freshmen at CSUB, African-Americans over time had the lowest retention rates (CSUB, 2015). (See Table 1.3 and Appendices 2.1 and 2.2.)

Predicted Academic Difficulty: The Hispanic population based on this variable was predicted to have slightly higher levels of academic difficulty than African-American students, while Whites and Asians had substantially lower predicted academic difficulty percentiles. (See Appendix 1.4.)

Educational Stress: Asians and Hispanics according to the CSI have the highest percentiles of academic stress. African-Americans have slightly higher percentiles than whites in this variable. (See Appendix 1.5.)

Receptivity of Institutional Help: African-American and Hispanic females have nearly identical levels of receptivity to help, meanwhile Asian females have slightly lower percentiles than African-American and Hispanic females. White females have substantially lower levels of receptivity to institutional help than their demographic counterparts and compared to the national averages. Hispanic and Asian males have slightly higher levels of receptivity than African-

Americans. Similar to white females, white males also have substantially lower rates of receptivity to institutional help. (See Appendix 1.6.)

Sociability: African-American males and females have the highest levels of sociability. There is a slight gap and then all of the other demographic groups follow closely behind. (See Appendix 1.7.)

Dropout proneness, predicted academic difficulty, educational stress, receptivity to institutional help and sociability are factors, which are said to play a role in the persistence and possible graduation of CSUB students. As such, the qualitative analysis will include not only various theoretical underpinnings, but also it will be framed against the quantitative institutional data provided.

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGY

Eleven transcripts were analyzed using an open coding system. I did, however, have predetermined categories in which I was able to frame much of the analysis. African-American retention and graduation rates can be impacted by the following categories: Sense of Belonging, Social Support, Stereotype Threat, Institutional Support, Socioeconomic Background. A concept, which was added during data analysis, is circumstances beyond student's control. Each of these concepts has sub-concepts into which the interview questions fall. See Appendix 2.3 to view the concept map, a visual representation of the concepts and sub-concepts.

SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND

The concept socioeconomic background will include information regarding participant's economic resources, social capital, intellectual background and the security of their housing. The participants interviewed reported having high school GPAs ranging from 3.0-4.2. Four of the eleven participants indicated that they did not feel academically prepared for college. Seven of

the eleven felt that they were ill prepared for the life challenges and independence that accompanied college life. Respondents mentioned lacking skills in time management, financial responsibility and how to conduct one's self, independent of a parental figure. One participant stated the following, "But as far as dealing with the real world issues that we have to deal with on a college campus. Because of course everyone here is considered a young adult so everyone responsibility is taken into their own hands compared to in high school when you are there you have people that are responsible for you, you have less worries. So it has been an adjustment."

When asked, the participants indicated that an average of 11.6 hours a week is currently spent studying and doing homework. The hours spent studying range from 3 hours to 30 hours a week. Each participant expressed the desire to do well academically whether explicitly or implicitly. Four of the participants indicated that they feel positively about themselves and their academic progress. Seven of the eleven respondents indicated that they were disappointed, some even showed some signs of distress, in regard to their academic performance. This finding supports Tyson's (2002) finding, black students consistently thrive to do well, and experience emotional distress when they are unable to do so.

A majority of the participants' parents or guardians, 81 percent, had education beyond that of a high school diploma or G.E.D. Therefore, some level of social capital has been provided to the participants.

When asked about their performance in college, one student stated "Getting lower grades for me, was extremely hard to deal with... [What's the reason for the difference in GPA between high school and college?] ... I'm stressed about paying my rent, trying to find a job, budgeting and then personal health issues have gotten in the way of that... I'm a person who doesn't handle messing up to well. The way I feel has a huge impact on my health. I get panic attacks, anxiety

attacks, all of that, and I have eczema and when I have breakouts and its gets to the point physically I can't move and do things. That is something that takes a mental toll." Another student described how she struggled for several years in majors within the School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Engineering. After changing her major to an unrelated subject, the student's grades began to rise. She said the following as a response, "My family doesn't have to be disappointed. I'm glad that I can get better grades, graduate and not become a statistic."

Finances, or the lack thereof, played a significant role in a majority of the participants' university experience. All except one respondent received some form of financial aid, including loans, grants and scholarships. Despite receiving financial aid, seven of the students indicated that their lives are significantly impacted by their fiscal deficit. "One year my mom's job got... it's called getting furloughed, so she'd have to go to work but she wasn't getting paid. So I had to pay for her mortgage and my rent at the same time so that was stressful." This student athlete was working 20 hours a week and was an athlete competing in a Division I athletic event. Although she reported having a 3.6 GPA during the time she was financially assisting her mother, she said, "I didn't sleep as well and I zoned out in class.... that was the semester I got a C."

An additional student noted: "say financial aid didn't come through or was delayed so I couldn't get a book, so I had to drop a class or switch a class." However, the student said that due to lack of available courses in her major, switching classes or having to drop a course due to the inability to buy a textbook caused her stress. "So with my degree, say they only offer ... every spring and you don't get it in the spring you have to wait a whole'nother[sic] spring to do it. So like the pressure of that kind of put a lot of hindrance on things, like I was nervous and me thinking of the future was messing up the right now...." When asked how stress manifests, the

student responded, “I just think a lot and I withdrawal. I stay in my mind, I say in my mind and I withdrawal from a lot of things. And when I withdrawal, I can say my quality of work goes down.”

One student testified, “I work part time, so self-sustaining all of my outside finances including my educational experiences. It’s quite a rollercoaster sometimes. Sometimes you have it sometimes you don’t. Sometimes you sacrifice and risk just to get it done. When asked what type of sacrifices she had to make, she responded, “Shoot, not going grocery shopping for some months, just trying to figure out how you are going to eat. Not paying a credit card bill, not paying a car note, not paying an electricity bill because you had to buy this book.... I always have my rent paid though, just so I have somewhere to sleep and my books. I don’t put a price on my education.”

The participants that indicated financial deficits all have processes for strategically determining what they can go with or without during a time of need. Every participant interviewed expressed facing financial hardships, two lived in families that received with government assistance and four indicated unstable housing arrangements. Although each of the participants have persisted at CSUB, their statements align with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Maslow (1987). In which cases a person’s physiological or safety needs are not met, they have a reduced capacity to focus on self-actualization or enlightenment, which is pursued in a university setting.

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND SENSE OF BELONGING

Rowley and Bowman (2009: 308) indicated an association between achievement disparities among African-American high school students in relation to individual, familial, school and community level risk factors and strengths. Likewise, social support is associated

with positive collegiate outcomes (Rogaten, Moneta & Spada, 2013). In light of the previously stated research, social support will be analyzed.

The participants were asked if their parents, guardians or immediate family were supportive of their educational goals. Four subcategories of support were created to organize the responses, emotional, financial, supportive of specific goals and not supportive. Seven students received emotional and financial support from their immediate families. Nine of the students' families supported and affirmed their educational goals, while one student's family showed no support. Social support for some of the respondents, however, came over time or with conditions.

One of the participants was from a country in which her major, Psychology is not an acknowledged discipline. Many of the people in that specific country attribute symptoms that may be identified in the U.S. as a mental illness to demonic possessions. However, after the student received a 4.0 for her first quarter at CSUB, her family then supported her goals. A second participant who was a 3rd generation U.S. citizen, but whose family comes from the same country, likewise receives support so long as she is doing well.

While the support received by immediate family is a factor in student success outcomes (Rogaten, Moneta & Spada, 2013), familial factors are also associated with academic achievement. Each student was asked if their family requires their attention and support, as family role strain affects educational outcomes. Four students indicated that they act as a mediator between family agents as well as provide monetary support to varying degrees. Three of the eleven students hold a parental role within their family. One student actually stated that she is in the process of gaining conservatorship of her soon to be 18-year-old mentally disabled sister. Two students indicated their families received their support in non-traditional ways, such

as providing help with electronics or fixing household items. Only two students responded that their families did not require their attention or support.

One student said, “When it comes to our family issues, like, I’m kind of like the mediator of everyone. I won’t say I’m the only one who can keep a level head when something happens, but I can keep control of my emotions a little bit more.”

Another student responded, “Well, my family, they fight a lot so I try to be the person who is kind of the peacemaker or because my mom hasn’t been able to really be there for us because she has a mental illness, I’ve always tried to be like the “mom”. Even though I’m the youngest, I try to make sure everyone talks to each other or people don’t feel sad or alone or forgotten and stuff.”

Yet another student indicated familial obligations. “For me, I put family first, before relationships, school, anything. Family first. Being that my parents are separated, I play a big brother role obviously, but I play a father figure role to my little sisters and whatever they need me and my mom will do for them. I’ll drive cool across town to pick up my youngest sister. My immediate sister, if she asks for money, I’ll give her money. Any way I can help them out.”

Social support and a sense of belonging can be fostered through interactions with friends and involvement in extracurricular activities (Weber, Krylow and Zhang, 2013). Upon entry into CSUB five of the students interviewed did know anyone prior to arrival. All of the participants currently have individuals or groups of friends that they interact with in varying degrees. However, four of the respondents are not currently involved in a club, sport or other extracurricular activity on campus. Additionally, four students say that they have attempted to be involved with various organizations, however a majority of this population say that there are

persistent time conflicts with their schedules. About three of the students are currently involved in one or more extracurricular activities.

Although all of the participants currently have individuals or groups of friends that they interact with, four of the students indicated very limited interactions with others. One participant stated, "I tried a couple different things, but I haven't found anything where I just fit in I guess." This participant stated that she struggles with depression, which may be exasperated by the lack of a sense of belonging. Two other participants expressed that because of negative experiences, such as exclusion and racial profiling, they have limited their social interactions to a very select group of people. Another student indicated that she desires close friends but is not sought out for that purpose: "... well I have a few friends here and there but I don't know.... Most of the people I've met only talk to me when they need help with academic stuff.... I help them because it's not taking anything away from me, but it's also nice to have those friends that you can just talk to." A sense of belonging is a factor that may influence educational satisfaction for African-American students at CSUB.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Institutional support, as a concept in this analysis, is examining the extent of students' interaction with faculty, staff and administrators at California State University, Bakersfield. I also wanted to identify each participant's perception of their interactions with faculty, staff and administration, whether positive, negative, or indifferent. Seven of the students interviewed reported having positive or satisfactory experiences with CSUB employees. Two indicated having little to no interaction; two students reported having negative experiences with employees.

Of the eleven students, only 5 reported have a mentor or semi-close relationship with a member of the faculty, staff or administration. While seven students sought to develop relationships with a member of the faculty, staff or administration. However, five of the participants indicated that their professors or other staff members made an effort to establish a relationship with them.

All of the students who experienced one or more CSUB employees seeking to develop a relationship with them expressed a high level of appreciation. Their demeanor improved and all of the students were receptive to the potential or current relationship(s). One participant indicated that she would have dropped out, had it not been for a staff person's willingness to ask her questions, provide advice and encourage her. Another stated, "I feel as those (relationships) have been satisfactory, but I feel if I had people who related to me more, you know, then it would be a better experience." Once again a sense of belonging was expressed and a desire to relate. African-American students are faced with a daily conflict, in which "simply put, debate whether to celebrate and retain their 'likeness,' therefore an environment, or individuals which allow African-American students to retain their likeness is desired.

The two participants who indicated having salient negative experiences with CSUB employees were both male and identified their skin tone as "dark". The tone of skin is pertinent, as the interviewees have made clear distinctions between the treatment of a person of a lighter skin tone versus the treatment of a person of a darker complexion. Their testimonies fall under institutional support, or the lack thereof, as well as under racialized experience.

The following is a description of the student's experience:

"I was harassed by campus P.D. I was going to Carl's Junior and it was a little late and it was cold. So that requires me to put sweatshirts on, hoodies, hats, skullies [sic], whatever and I was stopped and asked where I was go. I presented my I.D. I still wasn't let go. I was questioned. I spent about a little over an hour and 30 min with the officer, while he

made provoking... he asked provoking questions that were subtle. (How do you mean?) Well, he had no problem expressing the fact that he was once with the Sheriff's department out here in town and that he had to put a Hispanic guy down who ran at him with a bat. And then he tried to put me in a position to agree to do the same thing..... It was then he goes into 'oh I used to run track in high school' once he found out that I played sports at my last college. Then he said 'I used to have my black girl friends braid my hair in cornrows' and it's kind of like I don't know why I would want to know that. I don't think he would have stopped me if I wasn't a little darker than usual. (Did he stop you for a particular reason?) He stopped me because I was profiled, I'm a 100%. The funny thing is I get it, that's fine, because we have had instances that we have had people who didn't go to college in the dorms. We've had problems with that, so I get it, I get his job. I just figured once my I.D. was shown I would have been let go...."

This student also stated, when he went to a specific department on campus for assistance regarding his finances, "the lady at the front desk laughed at me." The student expressed a level of hurt, anger and frustration at both circumstances described. What's more there was no doubt in this student's mind that these events were racially motivated.

The second student described his experience with a faculty member:

"I will never forget this day; it was probably the worst experience I have had in college.... There was a time when I was a Bio-Chemistry major and I was taking a Calculus class. I was the only black male in the class, I should say the only black person in the class and I would ask for help and would not get any help from the professor. I went to tutoring and would not get any help from the tutor and it got to the point where I'm failing the class... Coming from high school I had a 3.5 GPA it was rare to see an F. I've never really seen an F like that so one day in class I raised my hand and he (the professor) completely ignored me all lecture. So I've dealt with race. I've dealt with that before, but not to the point with the teacher blatantly ignores you... Dealing with at experience it made me kind of cold hearted for a while. It gets to the point when I get to class I'll look around and say to myself 'I am the only black guy.' Maybe I'll find somebody else to sit with and talk to, help me out, trying to get through the situation...I didn't there are so many people in the world that could discriminate based on race, color, and gender in a class room until I was in that Calculus class and it kind of opened my eyes to another world."

This participant went on to say that he has had many very pleasant experiences with faculty and staff members at CSUB, however the aforementioned experience did make a significant impact on his worldview regarding racial dynamics.

RACIALIZED EXPERIENCE

A significant portion of the literature related to African-American retention and graduation is in the light of students' racialized experiences. In fact, they explicitly cited stereotypes and stereotype threat as the biggest barriers to their academic success at the University of California Los Angeles (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). Unfortunately, based on the data, it is likely California State University Bakersfield students are impacted by the same phenomenon.

Only one respondent stated that he did not experience any type of racial micro-aggression, racial prejudice or racial discrimination. The participant stated that he spent his high school years in Mississippi. A definition of micro-aggression was then provided to the interviewee by the researcher. His response was, "Yea, well I've never heard of it that way. But like in a group you are probably joking and race or political affiliations come up. I don't see those as micro-aggressions when you've been around the overt aggression as there was in Mississippi. There was a lot of, as you say, non- subtle gestures in high school, so I'm probably immune to the things here. Or I don't see them as offensive probably."

However, ten of the participants interviewed cited they have experienced varying levels of stereotyping, micro-aggressions, prejudice and discrimination based on race. Due to the extent of information subcategories were created to note the students' experiences. After reading the transcripts several times the subcategories were created and then upon rereading of the interviews tallies were made in the appropriate category based on the student's description of their lived experience.

Figure 1.2 displays the subcategories and the number of participants who experienced or witnessed the described event at CSUB.

Experience	n	Experience	n
Described as angry or aggressive	9	Dirty looks directed at	4
Overt comments were made in the presence of or directed at	8	Expected to speak for the black race as a whole	3
Experienced micro-aggressions, prejudice or discrimination from non-black faculty	5	Shade of skin mentioned	3
Received racial comments from other black students	5	Comments regarding language and diction	3
Hair and Skin (comments or unwanted touching of hair and skin)	5	Unsolicited inappropriate questions	2
Fear of fulfilling stereotypes	5	Perceived mistreatment from a University Police Officer	2
Other racialized experience	5	Black faculty perceived as being more tough on black students	2
Subtle comment directed towards	5	Perceived to be stuck up and entitled	2

Figure 1.2 Frequency of racially motivated actions or comments experienced by interview participants.

The data summary featured in Figure 1.2 was ranked by frequency. A majority, 9, of the participants indicated that others perceive them to be angry or aggressive, not by personality or history, but simply due to their race. Students' responses included:

“... I'm not always smiling... most people may assume I'm angry or something like that...”

“I feel like whenever I talk back to my coach, when she is wrong, when she says something ignorant, then I feel like they are going to perceive me as the aggressive black woman. I'm like ‘no, she's wrong, she's saying something stupid or she's accusing me of something she's wrong about and I'm going to let her know.’ The coach responds ‘why are you trying to attack me?’ ‘Attack you? I'm telling you, you are wrong. I didn't call you out of your

name, I didn't come at you with flying fists, I'm verbally telling you that you are wrong and this is what it is.”

“At times, people have tried to act aggressively with machines or weights and it's been in a crowd. I can't help but to believe that it was racially motivated because there was nothing but Hispanics there.”

Each of the previously mentioned quotes are just a few examples of the stereotypes held by individuals and demonstrate the impositions that are placed on Black or African-American Students. A few of the participants along with being described as angry or aggressive frequently receive dirty looks and are avoided in public spheres on campus.

Overtly racist statements that were said in the presence of or directed at the respondent had the second highest frequency rate, with a 73% rate of occurrence among those interviewed. Comments included the use of racial slurs and inappropriate comments received concerning participants' physique, skin, hair and ancestry.

One participant described walking on campus with a “white friend”, and someone shouted “gorilla lover!”

One of the male participant's classmates, while in class said, “He's so quick because he used to run away from cheetahs and lions and gazelles in Africa.” Another one of the male participants interviewed stated that he and a Hispanic woman almost bumped into one another. The woman's response was immediately, “Watch out nigga, damn!”

The sentiment that was received from those who had experienced overt racism was hurt, shock, offense, and for some a level of helplessness. Nearly half of those interview expressed that they had experienced micro-aggressions, prejudice or discrimination from a non-black faculty member at CSUB. One participant revealed, “.... I kind of feel like a teacher might not like me because of my skin color and

you add on the fact that my hair crazy like this. [The participant had uneven natural dreadlocks] They might not view me the same [as non-blacks].”

A different participant shared the following story to exemplify on the experiences she had regarding race and faculty.

“I had one experience with my last name. My parents are from Central America so they have a Latin/Hispanic background, so I have more of a Latin last name.... being in a Hispanic class one time, um, well it was a primarily Hispanic class. It was CSUB 101; the teacher didn’t believe it was me! When she called my name, she asked to see my ID. I was like ‘yea, that’s me’ and she was like ‘oh do you have your CSUB ID?’ I said ‘no I don’t, neither did you ask anyone else in here.’ She was like ‘oh, okay just next time if you could bring it.’ I didn’t bring my damn student ID and you are going to accept me for who I am whether that’s my name or not I’m about to show up for 10 weeks not being somebody, getting credit for someone else.”

This student expressed frustration around the fact that the professor would inequitably ask her for identification in the midst of class but did not ask any other students to show ID. Stereotypes and racially profiling comments have not been limited to in-group. Three students indicated they experienced inequitable treatment from “black professors.” Five of the interviewees reported that CSUB students of their own race have made stereotypical, rude, or hurtful comments. The majority of this group is female; comments made to interviewees included: “black women are loud,” “black girls aren’t as pretty,” “I didn’t expect you to be a lady.” To sum up the sentiments, “not only do I have to deal with the stuff that white people place on me, but I also have to deal with the stuff my own people place on me.”

Many African-American college students are aware of inequalities in treatment based on race. They are also “acutely aware of their alienation, isolation and inadequate preparation” upon entering the classroom (Saufley et al., 1983). The unmonitored and unchecked use of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination by students, staff and faculty regardless of race, negatively affects students.

SUMMARY

The predetermined themes designed to categorize participant interviews were found to be accurate descriptors of the processes that take place in relation to African-American students at CSUB. A sense of belonging, socioeconomic background, adequate social support, institutional support and stereotype threats were associated with the students' perceived satisfaction with their education, self-esteem and willingness to continue pursuing a bachelor's degree at California State University Bakersfield. Stereotype threats elicited the greatest emotional response from the students interviewed. However, rather than seeing the various aspects of students' lives and experiences as mutually exclusive, this research would like to frame the African-American student experience and other processes in such a way that clear distinctions can be made concerning factors that lead students toward degree attainment and those that deter them from degree attainment.

Although the students interviewed faced varying levels of hardships each interviewee expressed a sense of determination and overwhelming resolve to continue their education. For some students, the expectations of their family kept them focused. For others, there was no question or doubt that they would not obtain a bachelor's degree. The consensus for the interviewees was that they would finish their degree despite the processes both personal and institutional that may affect them.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

RESEARCH QUESTION

Researchers have studied a myriad of cognitive, economic, institutional and social factors that may contribute to the achievement gap between white and black college students (Young, Adena, Gail Johnson, Melissa Hawthorne, and Jeremy Pugh. 2011; Rowser, Jacqueline F. 1994; Gay, Geneva. 1975; Rowley, Larry L. and Bowman, Phillip, J. 2009). However, isolated factors have been unable to appropriately address this issue. The research question was as follows: What factors are associated with and possibly impact African-American retention and graduation rates at California State University Bakersfield? This topic was studied using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

CONCLUSION

Graduation rates for African-American students at California State University Bakersfield longitudinally have lower than the national average ranging from 16.3 percent to 38.1 percent between 1995 and 2007. African-American Graduation rates during that time period were also at least 10 percent lower than students who identified as Asian, Caucasian or Hispanic (CSUB Institutional Research and Planning, 2015). As an institution that strives for excellence in academia as well as diversity, it is imperative that the disparities in educational attainment be addressed.

Based on the interviews conducted for this study, many of the participants expressed that they face racial tension on a regular basis and that they lack the type of institutional support wanted and needed to help with their educational pursuits. A majority of the student if not a part of an informal social support system, desired to belong to a group in which they “fit in.” Approximately 50 percent of the interviewees felt that they did not have adequate preparation to deal with the responsibilities of being independent in a university setting.

Although a few of the processes mentioned are not the sole responsibility of CSUB, it is necessary to address those events, processes and actions or lack thereof that the university can positively impact. The purpose of this study was to highlight the disparities in higher education and to provide rudimentary explanations as to why they exist.

Further research should include a regression analysis of the 22 retention factors listed in the CSI. This would allow researchers to determine direction of association and possibly causation. Future research may also include a more extensive set of interview questions that further explore variables that impact educational attainment. A larger and more representative sample group should be recruited for subsequent research. A study comparing the testimonies of current African-American CSUB students with those who are no longer enrolled may allow researchers to begin to identify specific processes that directly impact retention.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY, RESEARCH, AND PRACTICE

The US Department of Education has noted the educational benefits of diversity, which includes cross-racial understanding and dialogue, the reduction of racial isolation and the breaking down of racial stereotypes (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The persistence of the attainment gap in African-Americans may require this institution to take an active role in addressing the existing inequities in degree completion.

Programs are needed to address this issue. U.S. Department of Education (2013) suggested that symposiums, workshops, seminars and retreats for faculty, staff and administrators should be conducted to educate those facilitating the learning process about the effects of expectations and stereotypes on student outcomes.

Aligning with the specific needs of the African-American student population, I would suggest the following:

- Diversity/ Prejudice and Discrimination training or seminars for Faculty, Staff and Administration
- Diversity/ Prejudice and Discrimination training or seminars for all student clubs, organizations
- Encourage Faculty and Staff to make a concerted effort to build relationships with students
- Targeted academic advising, guidance and support for African-American students
 - Greater representation of the minority within campus employees. (Note: There are currently no African-American staff represented in the following areas of advising University Outreach, Educational Opportunity Program and within any of the Schools Advising Centers. All of the previously stated departments are fundamental to the educational process of students at CSUB)
- Possibly incorporate vital skills needed into CSUB 101 or equivalent (Ex. How to handle financial aid, time management, practical decision making)
- Targeted support for African-American clubs and organizations as well as their events

SUMMARY

In short, the experiences shared by the students in this study can be summed up with this quote:

“A professor in a class asked ‘how many people think there isn’t racism in this country?’ almost all of the class raised their hands saying yes. Then she said ‘would you love to be treated like a black person in this country?’ she said, ‘if you really believed that there isn’t any bias or racism or things like that so why wouldn’t you wanted to be treated like that.’” –Participant #3

Bias within this educational setting per the interviews conducted with CSUB students, has not just come in the form of blatant forms of racism, but through a lack of concerted effort to change the outcomes that affect black lives. Educating students is a primary function of a university. However, universities do so much more than just educate, it provides opportunities for individuals to build social capital and it provides opportunities for individuals to be an agents of change for entire communities. Pursuing further research concerning the educational attainment of African-American students at California State University, Bakersfield and implementation of policies that specifically address this issue should be a priority for this institution.

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TABLE 1.1
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 (CSUB Institutional Research and Planning, 2015)

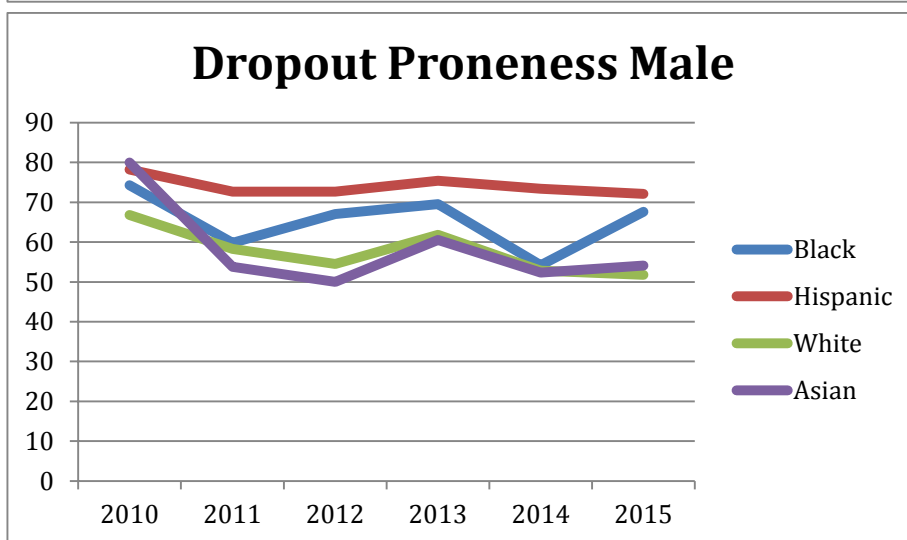
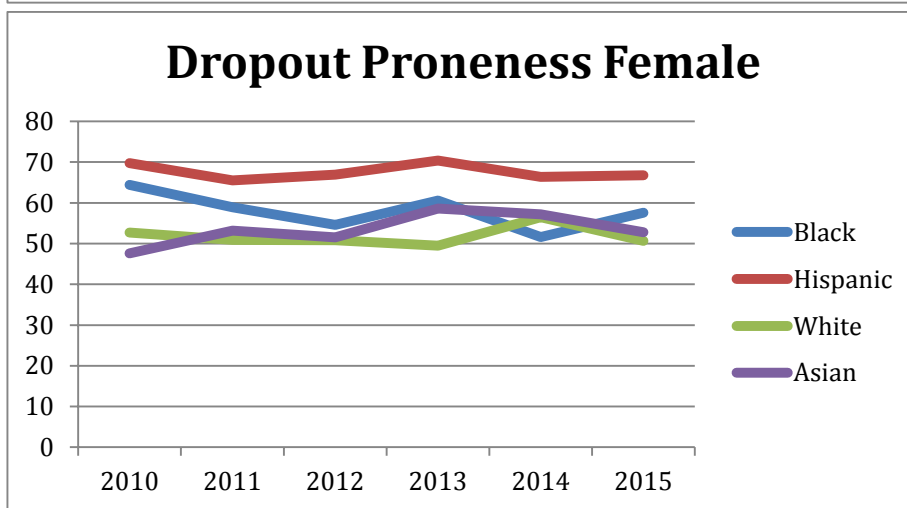
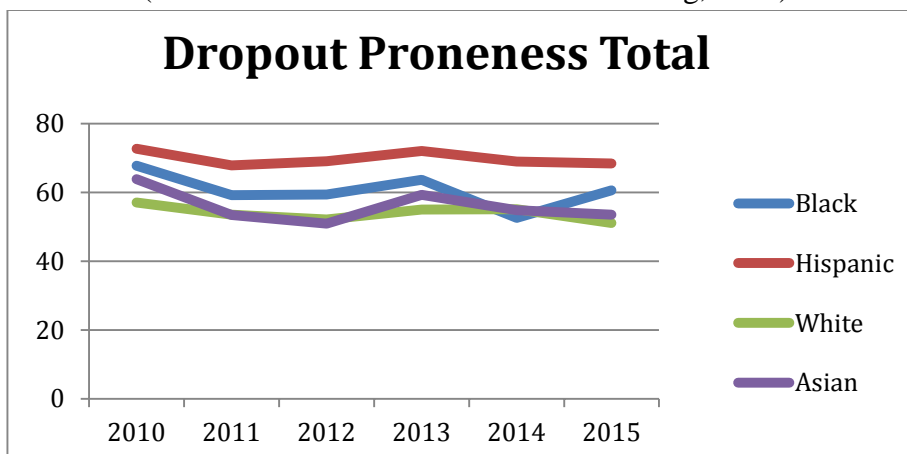


TABLE 1.2
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(CSUB Institutional Research and Planning, 2015)

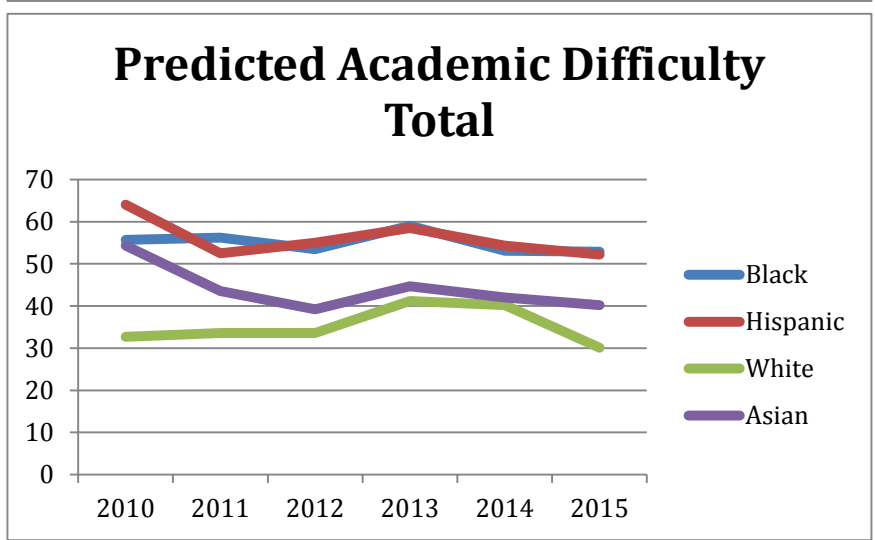
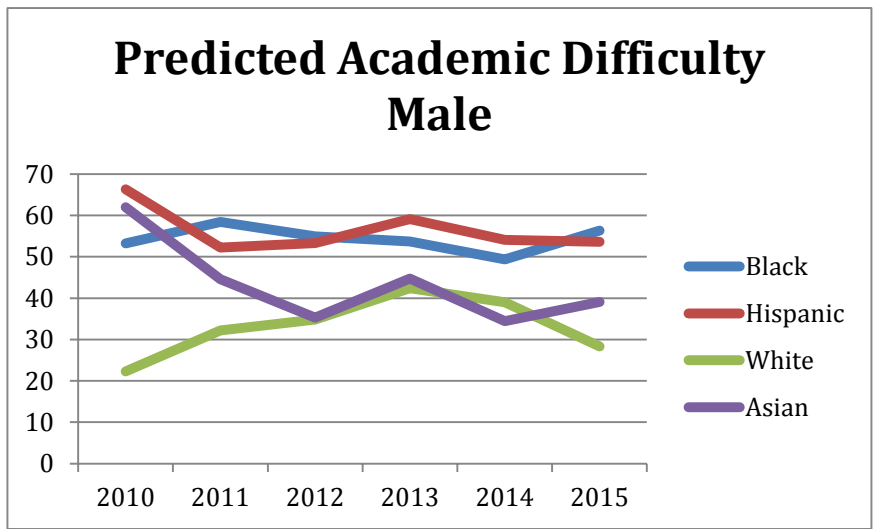
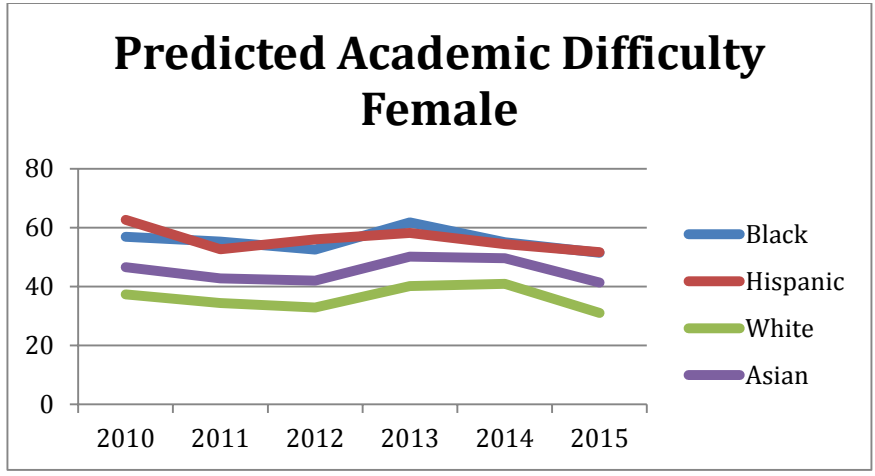


TABLE 1.3
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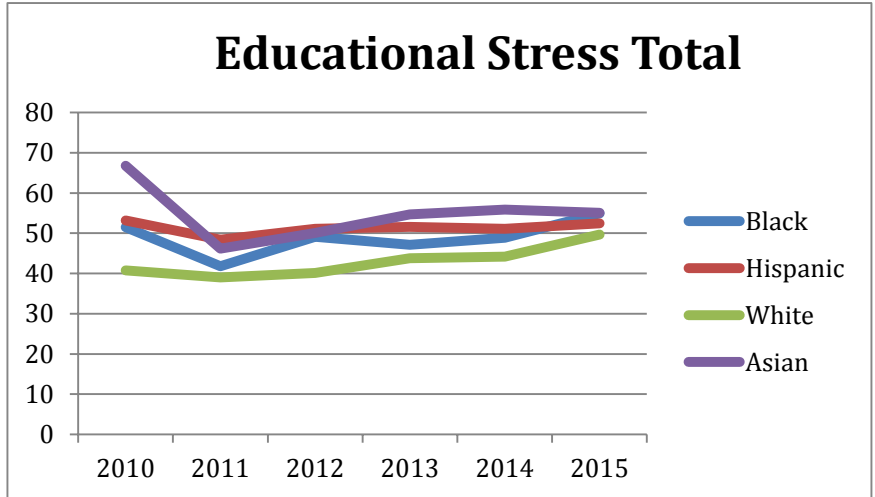
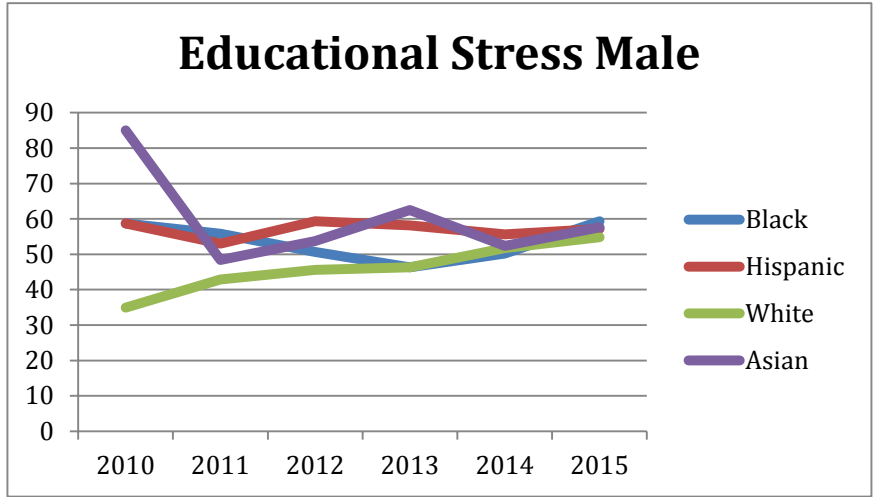
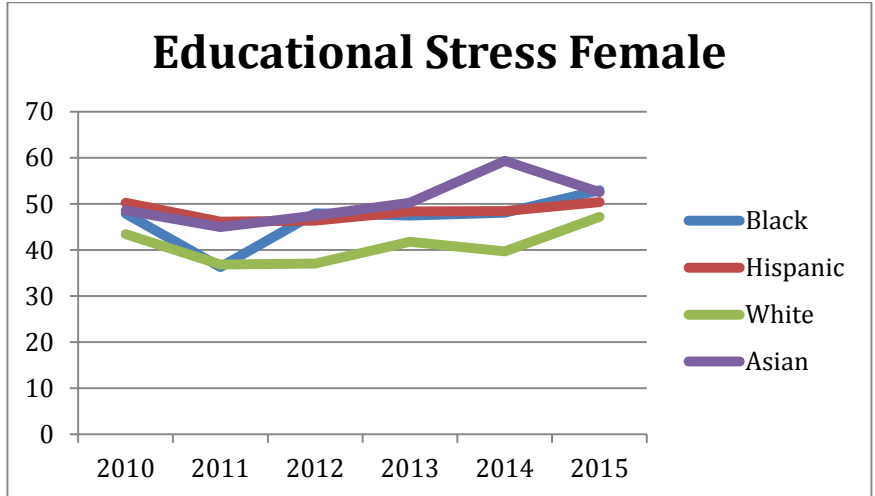


TABLE 1.4
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(CSUB Institutional Research and Planning, 2015)

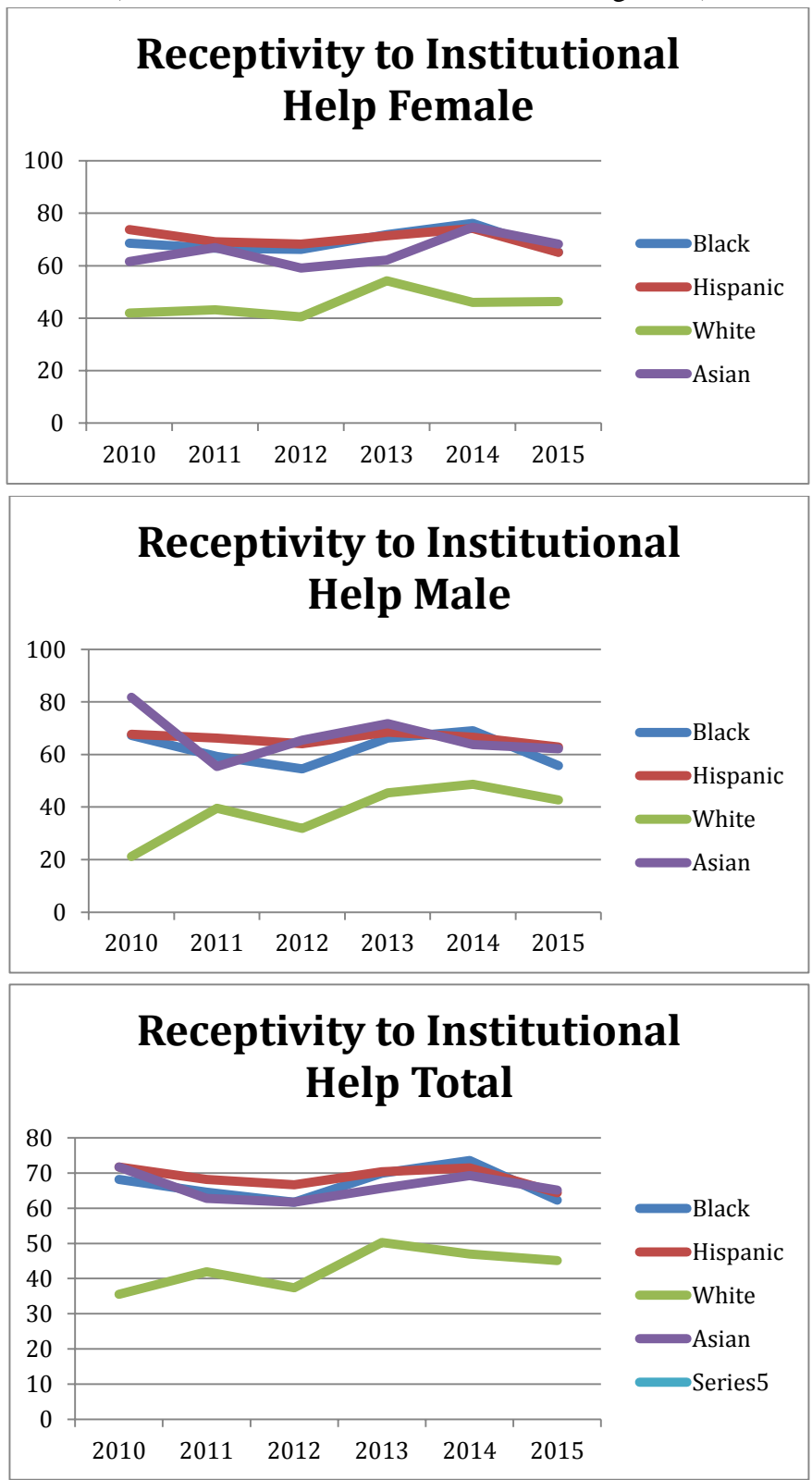
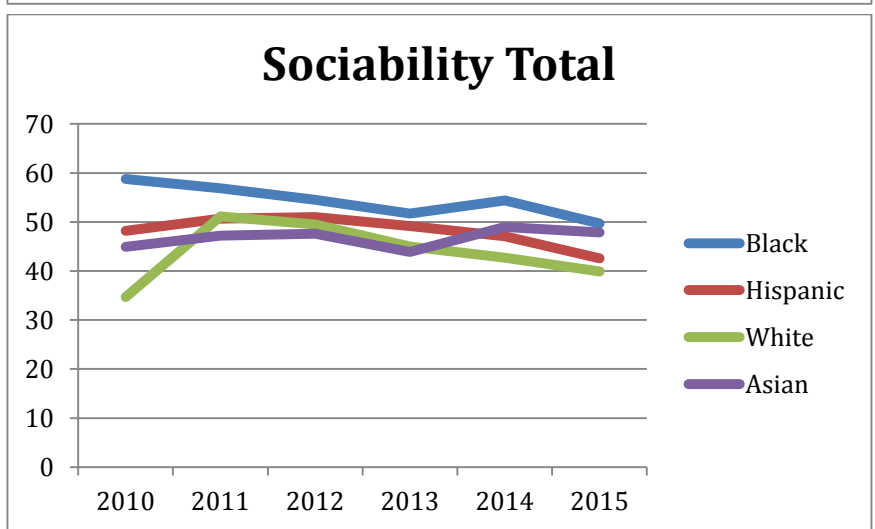
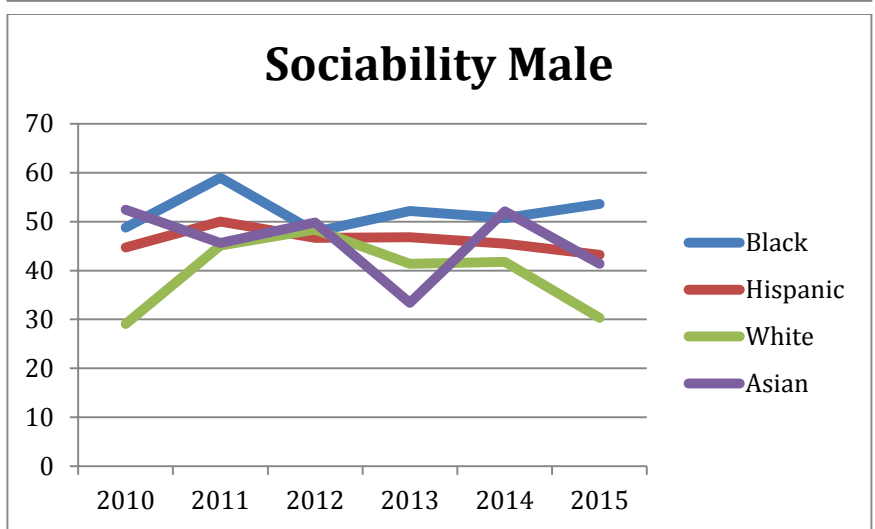
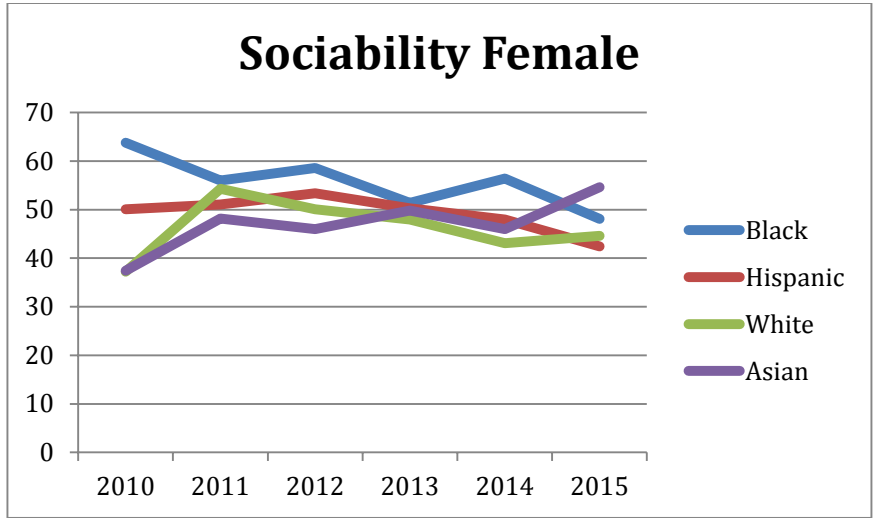


TABLE 1.5
CSI 2010-2015
(CSUB Institutional Research and Planning, 2015)



APPENDIX 1.1**Consent to Participate in:**

“African-American Student Persistence in Higher Education”

Purpose: I understand that the purpose of this interview is to answer questions related the process of persisting in higher education.

The data will be used purely for research. The data, but not my name, may be included in presentations at scientific meetings and in publications in scientific journals. I may request a copy of the research report after the project has been completed. Individual data summaries will not be provided to participants.

Confidentiality: The data obtained will be held in the strictest of confidence. My name will not be associated with my data or my interview in any way. I understand that my answers are neither correct nor incorrect and that my honest responses are highly valued.

Voluntary Participation: My participation in this study is completely voluntary. I can begin the study and then decide to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty, or I can skip any questions that I am uncomfortable with.

Form of Participation: I will complete the interview in person at California State University Bakersfield.

Time Commitment: The data collection session should last no longer than 30 minutes. Data collection will be in person.

Benefits: I am not offered, and do not expect, any direct benefits for my participation in this research.

Risks: There is minimal risk involved with participation in this study. My anonymity will be protected and my name will not be associated with my interview.

Contact Information: For questions about the research itself, or about the results of the study, I may contact Dr. Alem Kebede, Dept. of Sociology, California State University, Bakersfield, (661)654-2306, akebede@csub.edu.

For questions about my rights as a research participant, I may contact Dr. Isabel Sumaya, University Research Ethics Review Coordinator, Dept. of Psychology, California State University, Bakersfield, (661) 654-2381.

By signing this document I indicate that I have read completely the statements on the preceding page. I have been provided with a copy of the consent form. I have also had all my questions answered satisfactorily and I now consent to participate.

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX 1.2

Interview Questions

Demographic Information

Race _____ Age _____
 Sex/gender _____ Year in school _____
 Major _____ Number of units in
 progress _____

Intellectual Background

How were your grades/GPA during high school?
 Did you feel adequately prepared for college?
 In college about how many hours a week do you spend studying per week?
 How are you doing academically in college?
 Versus high school?
 What is the Reason?
 Do you plan on completing your degree?
 If not, why?
 Have there been any setbacks or hindrances you have faced during the time you have
 been enrolled at CSUB?
 How do you feel about yourself and your current academic progress?

Financial

Do you have adequate finances to fund your education, room and board?
 Do you live on campus?
 If not, elaborate on your housing.
 Do you work?
 If so, how many hours a week?
 Did/have you faced financial hardships or struggles before entering or while in college?
 If so, to what extent?

Social Support

Are your parents, guardians, or immediate family socially supportive of your educational
 aspirations?
 How so? In what areas of your life?
 Are there areas in which your parents, guardians, or family require your attention or
 support?
 What is the highest level of education each parent or guardian has achieved?
 Are you from Bakersfield?
 If not, where are you from?

Current Student Experience at CSUB**Institutional support**

Do you have a mentor/mentee relationship with anyone on campus?

What type of relationship/experience do you/have you had with faculty, staff and administrators on campus?

Have you sought to develop a relationship with faculty, staff and administrators on campus?

Have they sought to develop a relationship with you?

If you have any questions or issues related to your education, whom do you go to?

Clubs

Are you involved in any clubs, sports or social activities on campus?

If so, which ones?

Friends

Did you know anyone before starting at CSIB?

Do you currently have a group or groups of people that you spend leisure time with at CSUB?

To what extent are you involved in academic group discussions?

Race

Does or has your racial identity played a role in your university experience?

Have you experienced micro-aggressions, prejudices or discrimination while at CSUB?

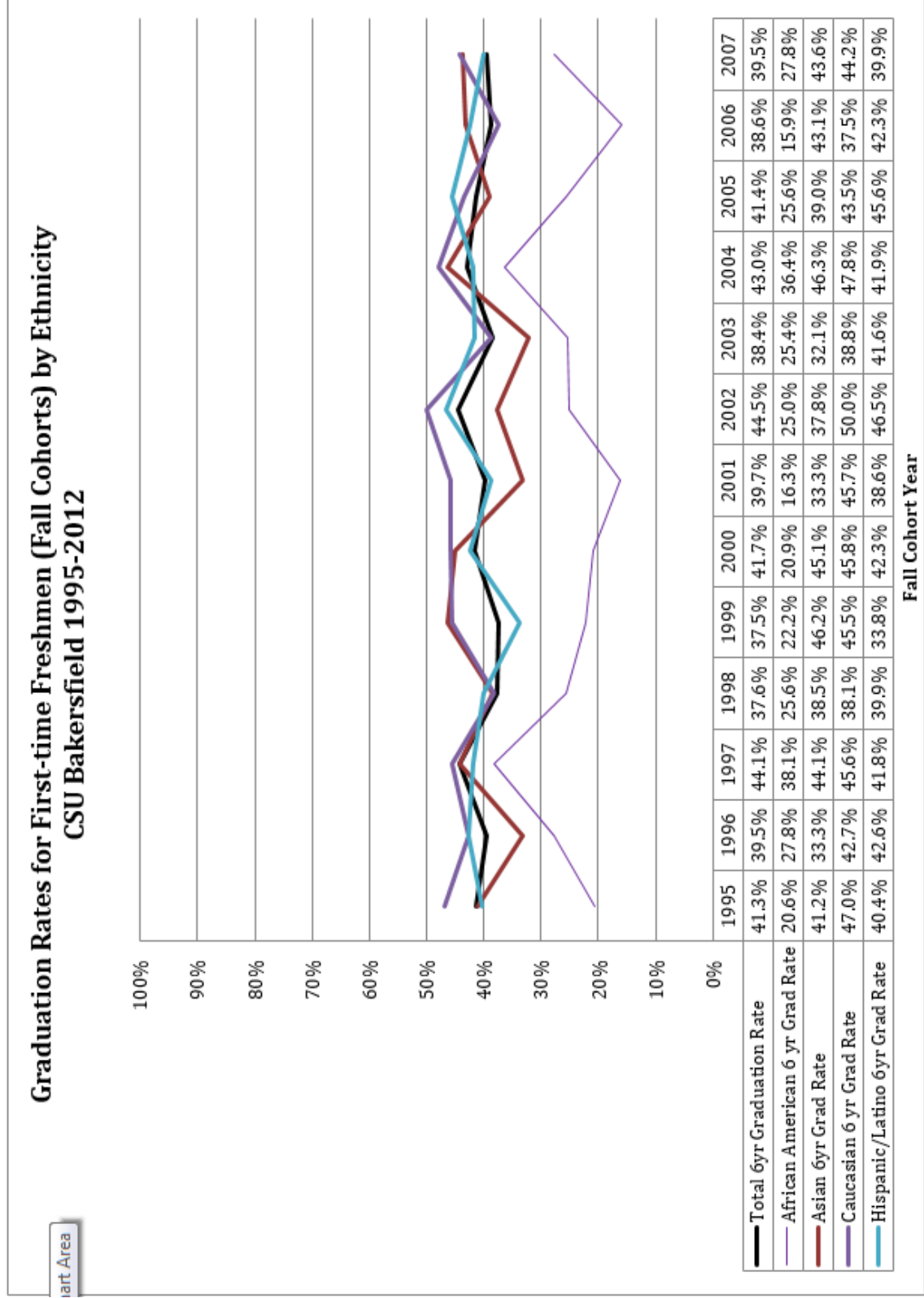
Can you describe your experiences?

Have you been affected by those processes?

If so, how did they affect you?

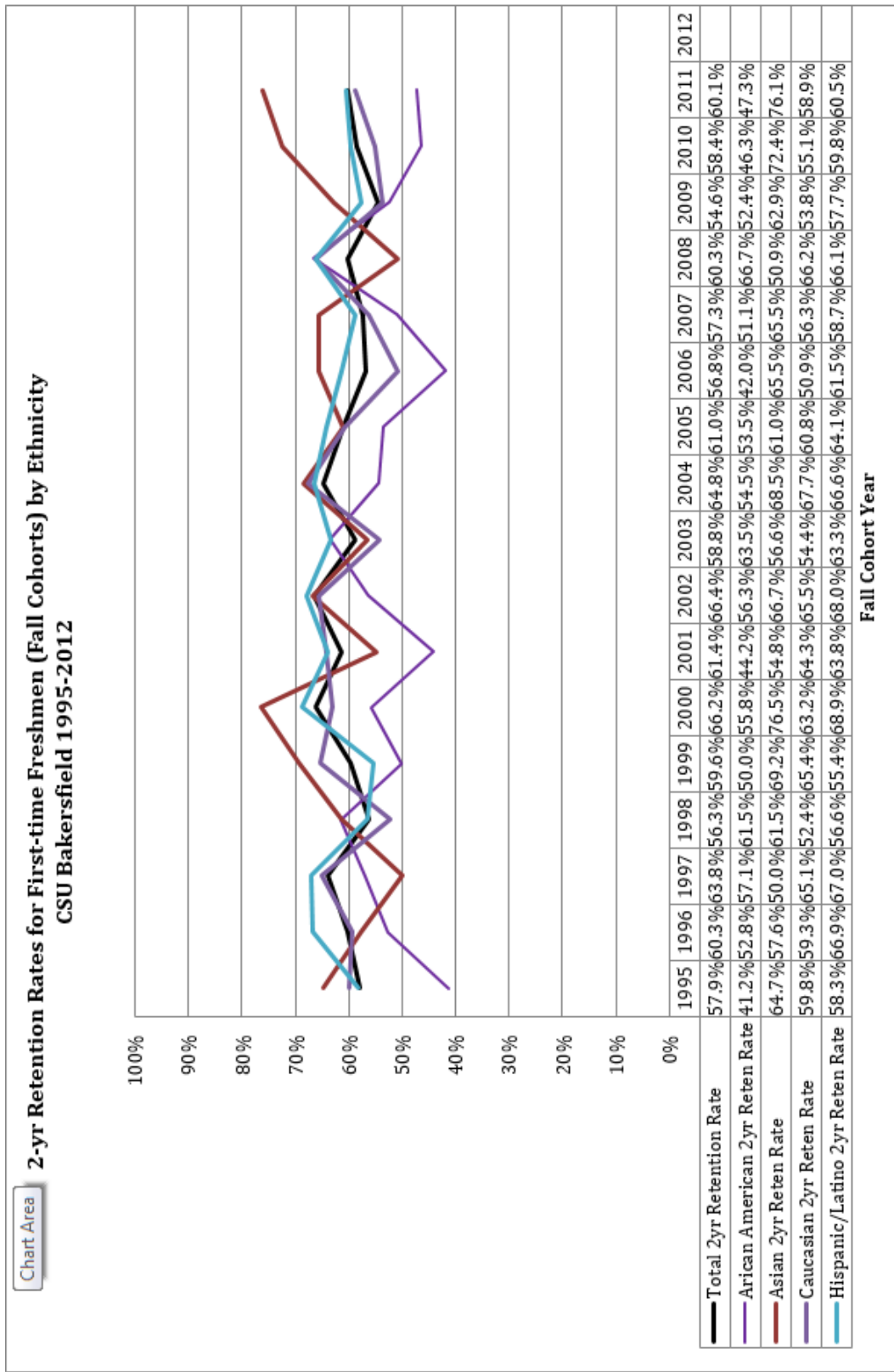
What was the depth of your experience?

Appendix 2.1



Part Area

Appendix 2.2



Appendix 2.3

