BRIDGING THE GAP:

PURSUING INSTITUTIONAL ONUS ON THE PATH

TOWARD EQUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by
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Abstract

Across the United States, the graduation and retention rates of Black males are significantly lower when compared to the total population of students in the country. Systemically perpetuated through years of oppression, the equity gap persists into higher education as a result of current institutional policies and practices. The Black-White equity gap for college graduation rates contributes to adverse outcomes in social mobility within the Black community.

An exploration of literature topics provided background information around the factors that affect Black men's college education: access to equitable education, the impact of structural racism on academic achievement, implicit biases, stress and microaggressions, and the benefits of relational supports for Black male students. Although the literature addresses the benefits of supportive relationships in higher education, research suggests that these relational support opportunities are not as readily available for Black men. Also, the reviewed literature did not directly address the barriers that Black men face in forging these beneficial connections nor did it offer guidance for how universities can help students when essential relational support systems are lacking on campus.

The mixed methods study was implemented with a social justice lens toward institutional onus for the purpose of understanding the cause of the low graduation rates

for the Black male population within a California university campus, Cal State East Bay. The study centered on institutional practices which address the equity gap, specifically within two support programs on the university campus: the Educational Opportunity Program and the Sankofa Scholars Program. The research used the voice of Black male students through qualitative interviews to explain the results of the quantitative survey which was administered to program membership as a means of obtaining background information. Analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data sets provided a more holistic understanding of the issue.

Three themes emerged from the findings: institutional support, sense of belonging, and life strategy. Although students benefitted from institutional support and sense of belonging, life strategy was unaddressed through campus practices and the data suggested that grades were not positively impacted by the existing efforts. Suggestions to mitigate the effects of the oversights were offered through the student voice.

California State University, Easy Bay
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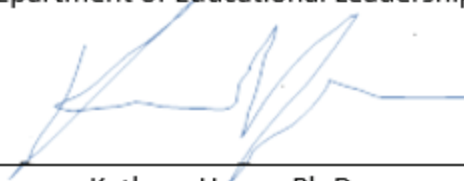
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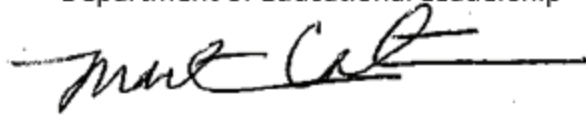May 27, 2020
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To those I've lost along the way: Uncle T, Kwasi, Ma-Ma, Aunt Gayle, you were proud of me and my dissertation before it was written. I love you. I miss you.

Of course, a big THANK YOU to God who carried me through when I could not carry myself. Philippians 4:13.

Most importantly…

To the Black boys and Black men who continue to be harmed by systemic racism as a part of your daily lives: This is for you.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017), full-time employees with a college degree earn an average of $24,492 more annually than high school graduates in the United States. Jez (2008) explained the cyclical relationship between education and wealth: Education affects accumulation of wealth and, in turn, parental wealth impacts the ability for future generations to obtain a higher education degree. Additionally, Orfield, Marin, and Horn (2005) noted that low degree attainment serves as a disadvantage to social mobility. Degree attainment can impact social mobility (Crawford & van der Erve, 2015) and no social group is more impacted in the country than Black (i.e., African American) families, particularly Black males.

Across the United States, the graduation and retention rates for Black males in college remain below the national average for all college students (Anumba, 2015). When exploring the data at a local level, the numbers seem staggering. For instance, at California State University, East Bay (2019), the rates reflected those of the nation with an equity gap[1] of 8.8% for 4-year graduation rates, and 19.2% for 6-year graduation rates for incoming freshman. Further, Yaffe (2015) details that while 44% of college-aged students are enrolled in postsecondary education, Black males in the United States enroll

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[1] For the purposes of this study, the *equity gap* is defined as "disparities in opportunity, treatment, and access to educational advantages" within the educational institution which result in disparate levels of academic achievement and attainment (EdGlossary, 2013; Spayde, 2011).

at a rate of seven percentage points less. This research study uses a social justice lens to address the disparity and some of the issues surrounding it.

In focusing on the background of this disparity, this chapter first discusses some of the relevant risk factors that Black males face in their pursuit of a higher education degree. Next, the chapter specifically states the problem and purpose before moving into the significance of the study. The chapter concludes with the research questions and definitions of terms used.

Background of the Problem

Historical Legacy

To understand the graduation rates of Black college students, an overview of the history of education for Black students and a presentation of barriers which they continue to experience is provided in an effort to bring clarity to the issue. This section discusses the historical legacy of Black education as well as non-school risk factors and in-school barriers that stymie the educational experience, particularly for Black male students.

Although the history of public education in the United States began as early as 1647, Black families did not have access to formal education until nearly 200 years later. In the 1830s, relatively few opportunities for Black people to attend school began to emerge despite laws in some states that forbade the education of Black students (RaceForward, 2018). Perkins (2010) stated that educational options were not present for Black families in the South due to slavery and opportunities for education were also scarce in the northern parts of the United States. The author noted that it was not until 1835 that the first college (i.e., Oberlin College) adjusted its policy to begin admitting students regardless of race, thereby allowing Black students to attend. Two years later,

the Institute for Colored Youth was founded as the first Black school which later became the first Historically Black College/University (HBCU), renamed as Cheyney University. Degree attainment for Black men became available in 1854 with the founding of Ashmun Institute and, in 1856, the first Black-owned college for Black students was established (Infoplease, 2018).

Freemark (2015) noted that after the Civil War ended in 1865, more Black schools were started in churches, people's homes, and in old school buildings by White philanthropists and Black ministers in an effort to educate the newly freed slaves. Most of these schools, the author stated, did not originally consist of a college education but they later evolved to include higher education.

This progress, however, was not free from opposition. Black students continued to be challenged in their pursuit of literacy as they were met with threats, violence, and the destruction of their schools. Butchart (2010) reported that many Black schools were burned down in the late 1860s and into the 1870s. Specifically, twelve schools in Maryland were burned in 1866 and approximately 40 Black schools were destroyed by arson in 1869. Despite the criminal acts against Black school buildings, the author showed that the portion of the Black school-aged population who were educated in 1870 increased to about 10%. That figure is substantial considering that it was less than 2% before the Civil War, but it was not nearly as significant when compared to Whites (55% in 1870).

Freemark (2015) details that in 1890, the second Morrill Land-Grant Act birthed public Black colleges by requiring "that states using federal higher education funds must provide an education to Black students, either by opening the doors of their public universities to African Americans, or by establishing schools specifically to serve them" (para. 12). The author explained that instead of choosing to integrate, states in the South

opted to create separate colleges for the Black students -- many of which remain open today as HBCUs and have produced many successful Black graduates.

Although Black people had some access to education, Black schools were not equal and remained separate from White schools. By the end of the 1800s, discrimination in the United States continued to favor White students. Black schools were intentionally and systematically underfunded, generally receiving 75% less funding when compared to White schools (Ramsey, 2019). Challenges, such as acts of terrorism (e.g., intimidation of Black students, harassment of Black teachers and vandalism or burning of their homes, and the burning of Black schools; Butchart, 2010), made it inherently difficult for Black students to reach the same academic level as their White counterparts.

The Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896) Supreme Court case ruled that segregation based on race was not unconstitutional. Beginning with public transportation and expanding into all public facilities, this case set the foundation for separate but equal education by ruling that the 14th amendment[2] applied only to political and civil rights (e.g., jury service and voting) but not to social rights (e.g., the freedom to choose any seat on a bus). In 1954, the Black population challenged the separate and unequal schooling they received since the end of slavery. The Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision in 1954 allowed Black students to attend elementary schools that were previously designated as Whites only (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 1954). This decision desegregated the schools and allowed Black students to attend classes with their White counterparts as a means of receiving equal quality education before entering college. However, Jones (2015) noted that socioeconomic status continued to keep schools segregated through separate neighborhoods and, according to Butchart (2010), not much

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[2] The 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified in 1868 and granted citizenship to anyone born in the United States. This change, thereby, granted citizenship, rights, and legal protections to former slaves.

was changed in the 21ˢᵗ century. Martin and Varner (2017) showed that Black and White people continue to be segregated in a way that instigates racial profiling, equity gaps, and unequal financial opportunities.

Today's Black and White educational equity gap is a symptom of an opportunity gap rooted in slavery and segregation. Generationally, Black students have had more systemic obstacles to obtaining academic opportunities than any other ethnic group (Ramsey, 2019). Butchart's (2010) words are no less true a decade later:

> The fact that African American children are disproportionately at risk of educational failure has long been acknowledged. The source of their at-risk status has been attributed to the long legacy of segregation, White racism and White indifference, disproportionately high rates of Black poverty relative to White poverty, culturally inappropriate pedagogy and curriculum, and a street culture antithetical to the values of schools. (p. 34)

This disparity continues into recent years, as shown by data across the country which illustrate that Black students, particularly males, have the lowest performance and completion rates in college (Rowley & Bowman, 2009). During the last decade, although college attendance for this group has improved, Black male students were found to have higher dropout rates, lower enrollment (Tabari, 2013), and lower graduation rates when compared to White students or Black females (Bethell, 2013).

There are many elements which may influence the difference in educational attainment rates. The first component is non-school risk factors which is discussed in the next section.

Non-School Risk Factors

Multiple non-school risk factors contribute to the low graduation rates of Black undergraduate students. Research identified and addressed risk factors such as

low socioeconomic status and parental support, and barriers such as experiences with discrimination, which if present, increase the equity gap of Black male students in higher education (e.g., Attwell, 2006; Hill et al., 2008; Hucks, 2011; Matthews, 2010; Matthews-Whetsone & Scott, 2015; Moon & Singh, 2015; Rowley & Bowman, 2009). As an example, many students noted that their parents were unable to attend college, moving instead into the workforce, which they recognize impacts the level of support and involvement a parent can provide to their college-going offspring (Moon & Singh, 2015). Moreover, the authors discussed the students' view of racism as a part of their everyday experience which required them to exert more effort and be more resilient than their non-Black peers in order to reach a similar level of academic success. In addition to Moon and Singh (2015), studies conducted by Fantuzzo, LeBouf and Rouse (2012) and Hucks (2011) also showed that Black male students were more likely to experience these risks and barriers when compared to their White counterparts.

Additionally, studies discussed many other non-school factors such as low socioeconomic status, social skills, home literacy, interpersonal skills (Matthews et al., 2010), household structure, employment (Hill et al., 2008), whether the student was a father himself (Matthews-Whetstone, 2015), and various in-home challenges (Moon & Singh, 2015) which can affect educational and employment outcomes, leading to challenges with upward social mobility (Assari, 2018; Cundiffe et al., 2017; Pfeffer & Killewald, 2018; Welburn, 2016). Specifically, Matthews et al. (2010) discussed the impact of socioeconomic status on literacy. While children with literacy-rich home environments show stronger oral, vocabulary, writing, and reading comprehension skills than those without, Black and low-income families or single-parent households tend to earn lower scores on home literacy assessments. The researchers connected the home literacy environment to emergent literacy skills in early schooling and discussed how,

especially when established before kindergarten, this racial literacy gap widens each year and continues through high school.

Further, Matthews et al. (2010) explored learning related skills (i.e., managing one's own behavior specifically toward educational achievement and development) in relation to interpersonal skills (i.e., "externalizing behaviors," p. 758). Their longitudinal study of 12,385 children showed that Black "boys were rated by teachers as higher on externalizing [problem] behaviors" (p. 765) and lower with regard to interpersonal and learning related skills. Although the study revealed that higher ratings of learning related skills had positive effects on scholastic development, other researchers (e.g., Ferguson, 2000; Lee 1994; Steele, 1999; Strayhorn, 2019) suggested that teacher biases may influence their views of student behaviors and those biases may be reflected in the ratings for externalizing behaviors and impact educational outcomes for students. Strayhorn (2019) highlighted the way in which faculty perceptions can be internalized by students thus hindering their academic progress. As he stated, student behaviors are affected by teacher expectations and those expectations are formed through perception. When teacher perceptions are skewed with biases, students may exhibit a lower level of learning related and interpersonal skills.

Other factors shown to impact academics were mentioned as daily burdens which hindered the students' ability to focus solely on education. Interviews conducted by Moon and Singh (2015) showed that while some students worked their way through school, others held jobs in order to alleviate some financial burden on their families. While some students split their attention between work and school, others had children of their own. In a study of 10 bachelor's degree holding Black male adults, Matthews-Whetsone & Scott (2015) highlighted the lack of attention given to degree completion times of greater than six years. Nine of the ten interviewed participants earned their college degree in seven or more years. The time to earn a degree ranged from 5 to 27 years. Family life and

caring for children was one of the factors that emerged to explain the original departure from college which was followed by a subsequent return, ultimately ending in successful degree completion.

While many students experience risk factors, Fantuzzo et al. (2012) showed that Black male students often experience multiple risk factors. In a study of 8,889 third grade students in Philadelphia, the researchers' findings showed that 40% of the Black boys experienced two or more risks. According to Attewell (2006), early educational experiences logically provide the foundation of learning for higher education. However, Fantuzzo et al. (2012) noted that as risk exposure increased, Black male students in the study showed greater levels of underachievement in the subjects of math and reading. The researcher suggested that subjects who had exposure to three or more risk factors suffered the greatest detriment to their scores in reading and mathematics. This finding suggests that non-school risk factors may impact academic achievement and, according to Hucks (2011) and Troyer & Borovsky (2017), when those non-school risk factors occur within the daily lives of Black male students, they play a role in education as they are a part of its holistic makeup. Additionally, in-school barriers were shown to compound the problem through creating additional risk experiences (Aronson et al., 2009; Fantuzzo et al., 2012; Hucks, 2011; Whaley, 2018) and providing an environment of stress and microaggressions (De Coster & Thompson, 2017; Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011).

In-school Barriers

Hucks (2011), Matthews et al. (2010), and Moon and Singh (2015) identified poor quality schools with a lack of resources as an issue that strongly correlates with low achievement levels. From interviews with Black males, Moon and Singh (2015) identified resources and financial status as salient topics. According to the researchers, students were aware of their school's low resources and noticed differences when comparing

their education to that of White students from better resourced schools. Further, Hucks (2011) also noted that students observed the way in which a lack of resources negatively impacted the curriculum and pedagogy. Students cited outdated or damaged books, a lack of science materials, and too few computers as being reasons for disengagement in their schooling. In agreement with the findings of Hucks (2011), Moon and Singh (2015) also noted that interviewed participants mentioned overcrowded classrooms, a lack of computers and technology, obsolete textbooks, and "teachers they did not believe were invested in their academic futures" (pp. 13-14). While Matthews et al. (2010) discussed the negative impact that low-resourced schools have on literacy development and other learning-related skills, Fantuzzo et al. (2012), Hucks (2011), and Moon and Singh (2015) also showed that students recognized that financial disparities in school resources impacted the quality of the school, teachers, and education they received.

Additionally, negative high school experiences carry into college and have an adverse effect on educational scores at the university level (Attewell, 2006). In studying Black male students and their families, Hucks (2011), found that most of the participants mentioned negative teacher interactions that "left indelible impressions on their minds" (p. 346). Further, negative interactions in college include experiences of racism and microaggressions which can yield negative psychological, physiological, and emotional effects that undermine academic achievement (Smith et al., 2011) and could be considered as institutional bullying whereby the microaggressions and racist experiences stem from school personnel.

Hucks (2011) illustrated examples of institutional bullying through racism and microaggressions which include accusations and assumptions, racist or culturally offensive comments, and encouraging students to lower their own expectations of themselves, among other things. Peart (2015) noted that institutional bullying can be

seen in organizational processes, practices, and policies which systemically cause certain groups to lose their power and voice through the failure to provide the necessary services.

Smith et al. (2011) examined the issues of racism and microaggressions through a social justice lens[3] by defining racism as "a system of control" which is found to be linked to what Pierce (1995) deemed as race-related stress. Smith et al. (2011) referred to the corresponding microaggressions as psycho-pollutants. Further, the researchers highlighted the scholarly perspective which acknowledged the institutionalization of racism and recognized its pervasiveness through the policies, perceptions, and rationalizations toward Black people as a marginalized group. Notably, Aronson et al. (2009) argued that classroom occurrences (e.g., negative teacher-to-student interactions, even minor ones) can have a negative impact on student performance.

Other in-school risks were internal reactions to external stimuli; as Aronson et al. (2009) noted, students may ascribe to negative stereotypes based on how they are treated in the classroom. Typically derogatory in nature, stereotypes are defined as biased racial stigmas formed through exaggerated beliefs which stem from inaccurate inferences and false conclusions about a group of people (Allport, 1954; Aronson et al., 2009; Derman-Sparks, 1989; Lynch, 1987). These generalizations function to explain and condone our behaviors toward certain groups (Allport, 1954) and, when focused negatively, are destructive (Durodoye, 2003). Thus, Black students suffer from stereotype threat, the extra stress of not wanting to affirm their negative stereotypes and the unfavorable perceptions of other students or their teachers (Cohen & McColskey, 2009;

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[3] Researchers such as Harris, Bensimon, and Bishop (2010) and Wood and Palmer (2015) suggest using a social justice lens that centers discourse about Black male achievement around the practices within the institution's locus of control and the ways in which institutions support those students. Viewing student outcomes through this lens encourages college administrators to review "the inherent organizational structures that limit student success" (Wood & Palmer, p. 54) in a way that produces appropriate institutional supports.

Whaley, 2018). Simultaneously, they begin to believe the stereotypical generalizations of intellectual inferiority.

Fantuzzo et al. (2012) showed that Black males face more in-school barriers and encounter more risk factors in their pursuit of higher education than their White counterparts. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2018) showed that, in the United States, the general student population entering a four-year university as first-time freshmen had an annual retention rate of 81% in the year 2018. Additionally, data from Complete College America (CCA, 2018) presented 19% as the national figure for four-year graduation rates for first-time freshmen. The graduation rate for students who enter a four-year university as freshmen is 60% in six years, in the country. Although this statistic is low, the graduation rate for Black males is considerably lower. In other words, 81% of incoming freshmen return immediately for their sophomore year, and 19% continue on to graduate within four years. 60% of incoming freshmen graduate within six years.

Indeed, according to Palmer and Maramba (2011), the graduation rates, in the United States for this population showed an equity gap that placed them lower than any other ethnicity in college. According to Bridges (2018), with 40% completion, Black males have the highest dropout rate from four-year universities within the United States when compared to students from other ethnic backgrounds. Yaffe (2015) presented national data showing that Black men pursuing higher education beginning in 2003 had a 17% degree attainment rate for earning a four-year degree within six years compared to 35% of White men from the same cohort. More recent data continue the disparate trend: In 2015, Anumba (2015) noted that 39% of Black students graduate with a baccalaureate degree after six years compared to 62% of White students, 50% for Hispanic students, and 69% for Asian and Pacific Islander students. Additionally, the author wrote "when

data [are] disaggregated by gender, only 34% of African American males graduate with a degree after six years" (p. 36).

       Contending with such issues of racism and misandry in the classroom creates an environment of persistent stress and microaggressions, also known as "mundane extreme environmental stress (MEES)" (Smith et al., 2011, p. 67), which compounds with increased exposure. De Coster and Thompson (2017) showed that mundane extreme environmental stress negatively impacts school attendance and, in a 2011 study, Smith et al. (2011) showed that as education level increased for Black men, "the influence of racial microaggressions on MEES grew stronger" (p. 74). This dilemma creates a need for Black males to be more resilient when responding to stressors than others as they progress in higher education. The need for Black men to maintain higher levels of resiliency contributes to the barriers experienced in higher education and negatively impacts social mobility.

Problem Statement

       Although education is often seen as a pathway toward social mobility (Crawford, 2015), it can have a winnowing effect on groups who are already disadvantaged. According to Haydon (2018) and Carey (2004), the lower degree attainment rates experienced by minority students act as barriers to economic security and social mobility. Pfeffer and Killewald (2018) found that "more than half of the two-generational[4] transmission of wealth is explained by educational attainment" (p. 1433) and Chetty et al. (2018) showed, in their study, that Black males were least likely to experience upward social mobility when compared to females and other ethnicities. Further, the study

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[4] The term, "two-generational," indicates parent to child.

showed a tendency toward downward social mobility. In addition, Assari (2018), Rapa et al. (2018), and Collins et al. (2015) showed that social reproduction[5] and stressful life events may cause diminishing returns on education attainment for Black men.

When compared to other racial groups, Black men are least likely to persist in school and graduate (Moyo, 2013) due to elements of "mundane, extreme, environmental stress (MEES)" (Smith et al. 2011), which compound when institutionalized on college campuses and serve as a "public health threat" as well as a "repellent" (p. 75) for Black men pursuing higher education. While increasing the need for culturally responsive pedagogy to mitigate the effects of MEES, regular exposure to an environment of microaggressions also creates barriers to relationship building for Black males on university campuses.

At California State University, East Bay (CSUEB), Black students have the lowest six-year graduation rate at the university when compared to other ethnic groups. Anumba's (2015) findings showed that, when disaggregated by gender, Black males graduated at a lower rate than their female counterparts. Similarly, data from the California State University (2020) show that Cal State East Bay retains and graduates males from all ethnic groups at lower rates than female students (CalState.edu, 2020). The university's data are consistent with the national graduation rates (NCES, 2018) and the findings of several other researchers who noted that Black male students have the highest dropout rates and the lowest college completion rates when compared to females or other ethnicities (e.g., Anumba, 2015; Bridges, 2018; Palmer & Maramba 2011; Yaffe, 2015).

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[5] The idea of Social Reproduction suggests that schooling serves to replicate social and economic disparities while enforcing power and privilege within the current social structures. This leads to the "reproduction of the social order and the maintenance of class systems, rather than their transformation" (Collins et al., p. 215).

Data from CSUEB illustrated the gap that separates Black male students from the national average. For most of 2010 through 2015, there was a retention equity gap of 12% or more between Black males and the males in the non-underrepresented minority (non-URM)[6] group who entered the university as Freshmen (See Appendices A-D).

In addition to differing retention rates, CSUEB's graduation rates also demonstrate the disparity: Data on four-year graduation rates for first-year student cohorts beginning college between 2011 and 2015 showed an equity gap of 6.4% to 9.0% that placed Black men below the overall university rates which includes all students. The six-year graduation rates for the cohorts entering CSUEB between 2009 and 2013 also illustrate an equity gap of between 19.2% and 32.4% when comparing Black male students to the general campus population (CSUEB, 2020).

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[6] The *non-URM* category at Cal State East Bay refers to students who are of Caucasian and Asian descent. The university labels Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx students as "underrepresented minorities" (URM).

4 Year Graduation Rates at CSUEB
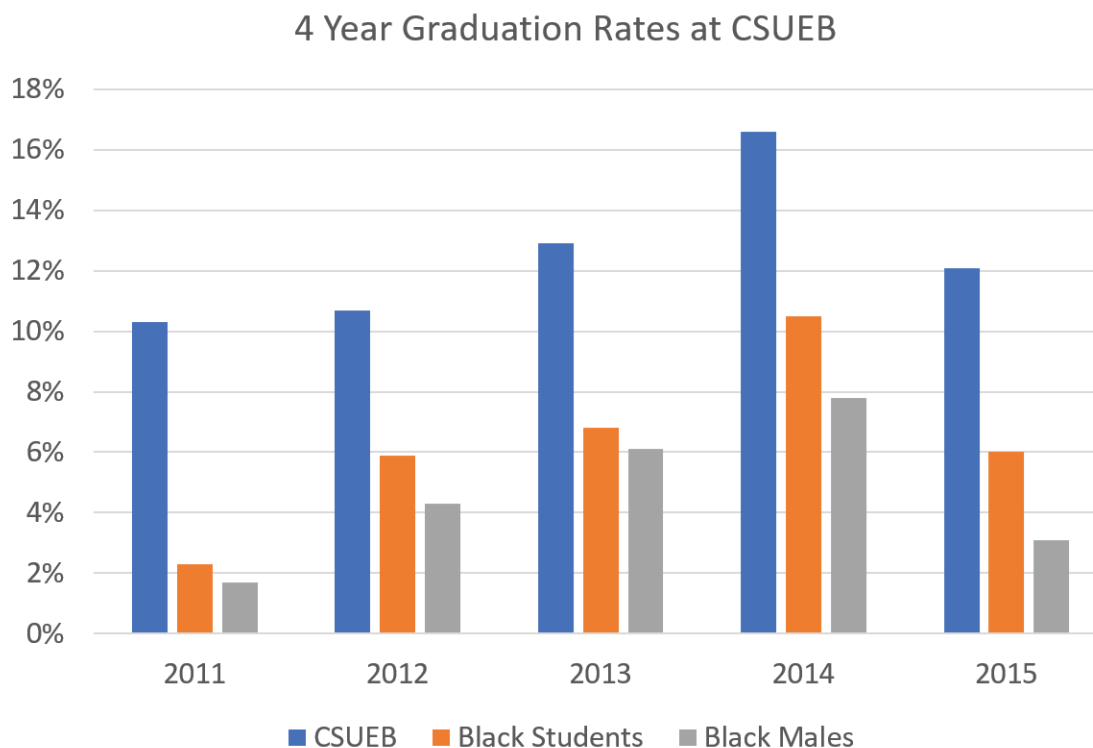
Figure 1: Freshman Cohort 4-Year Graduation Rates

Source: http://asd.calstate.edu/dashboard/graduation-success.html

In reviewing the data for CSUEB (2020), anomalous rises in graduation rates were noted for the graduation year ending in 2018 for both the 4-year and 6-year graduation rates. These spikes are explained by the university's careful conversion from a quarter-based academic year to a semester system. As the first semester approached, faculty and staff at Cal State East Bay partnered to graduate as many students as possible before the process culminated in the fall of 2018. The team at Cal State East Bay encouraged students to see advisors in order to ensure the proper course schedule and pass their classes. As a result, the four-year graduation rate increased by 3.7% for both the Black student population and the university's general student population when looking at the cohort entering in 2014. However, as shown in Figure 3, the equity gap for Black males increased by 2% for that same cohort (i.e., While the average university

graduation rate increased, the graduation rate for Black male students increased at a lesser rate causing the equity gap to widen.).

6 Year Graduation Rates at CSUEB
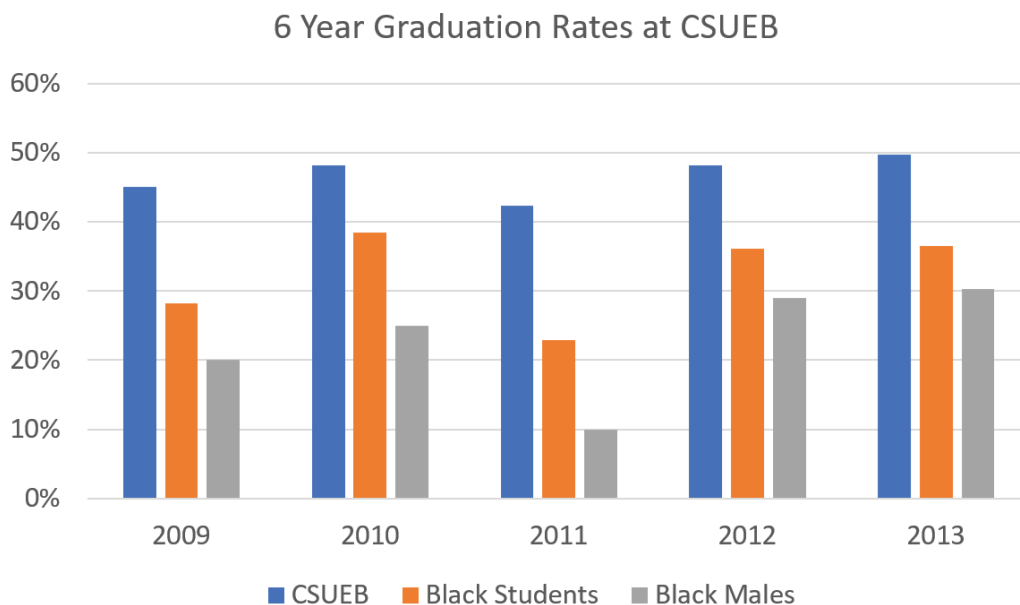
Figure 2: Freshman Cohort 6-Year Graduation Rates

Source: http://asd.calstate.edu/dashboard/graduation-success.html

Researchers such as Lee (2018), Beattie and Thiele (2016), Hamilton (2005), Inkelas and Weisman (2003), and Pascarella and Terenzini (1978) argued that student relationships with faculty are essential for academic achievement and persistence. Rogers (2012), Strayhorn (2008b), and Plunkett et al. (2016) showed how those relationships help to guide students through the college experience by supplying them with information and access to resources. However, studies showed that Black men face barriers to connecting with their teachers. For example, Ferguson (2000) discussed how some educators hold Black males more responsible for their behavior than their White counterparts. Similarly, Steele (1999) showed that teacher expectations are often shaped by destructive stereotypes and Lee (1994) showed that the learning potential of Black

men was limited by the negative perspectives of their teachers. Strayhorn (2019, p. 109) argued that "perceptions shape expectations, which, in turn, affects behaviors." Further, the author stated that students often internalize the negative perceptions of their faculty and are hindered by that influence.
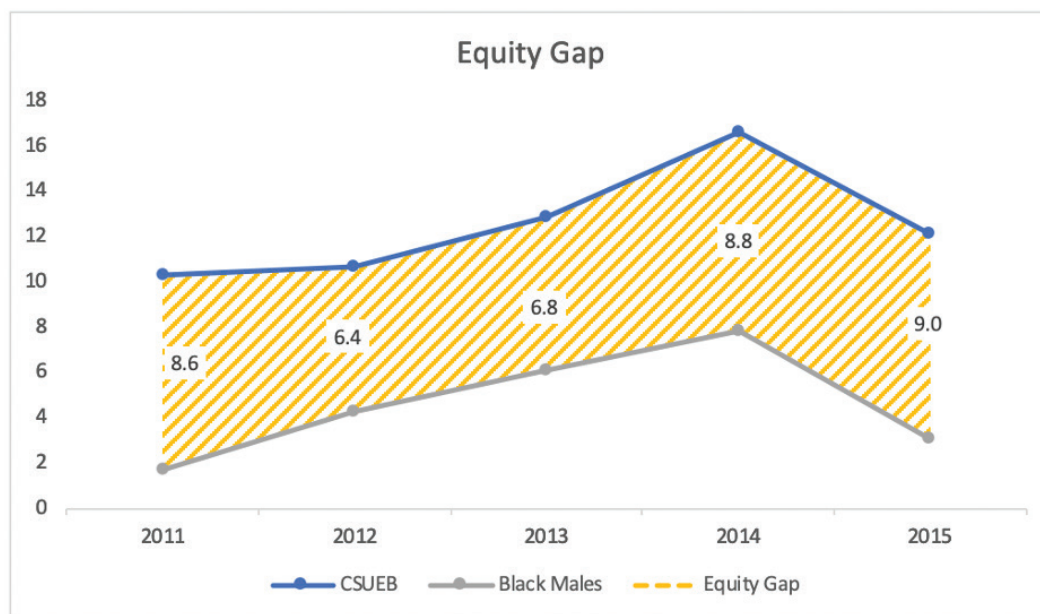
Figure 3: Freshman Cohort 4-Year Equity Gap
Source: http://asd.calstate.edu/dashboard/graduation-success.html

In a different vein, Harper (2003) discussed the benefits of peer relationships as providing the sense of belonging that Hurtado & Carter (1997) suggested is necessary to bolster social adjustment while in college. Yet, again, researchers (Flemings, 1984; Strayhorn, 2019; Turner, 1994) suggested that Black men have more difficulty forging relationships with peers due to the underrepresentation of Black men on many college campuses. Strayhorn (2019, p. 110) suggested that the "lack of a critical mass [on college campuses] can lead to feelings of isolation, marginalization, and alienation both inside and outside the classroom."

Feeling a sense of belonging helps to mitigate the feelings of exclusion and incompetence that may result from the daily onslaught of microaggressions and racial misandry; "Without support, these institutionalized challenges tend to compromise the academic achievement of Black men and often lead to dissatisfaction with college" (Strayhorn, 2008, p. 28). Strayhorn (2008b) also linked a lack of supportive relationships to dissatisfaction with the college experience which ultimately decreases the likelihood of college completion for Black males. As Bean (1982) and Tinto (1993) pointed out, dissatisfaction with college is often an antecedent to departure.

Research Purpose Statement

My study sought to better understand Black male graduation rates through an asset-based perspective which explored institutional onus in higher education. Using an asset-based approach helps researchers and school administration to recognize the capabilities of Black male students while understanding that perceived deficiencies are likely viewed through a lens skewed toward valuing White cultural norms over the cultures and values of people of color. In addition, an emphasis on institutional onus in higher education requires college administration to assume the responsibility for student outcomes by providing proper supports which include all students. According to Wood and Palmer (2015), "when institutions produce poor student outcomes, it is illogical to suggest that the student outcomes are the sole responsibility of the student themselves" (p. 53). Researchers such as Harris, Bensimon, and Bishop (2010) and Wood and Palmer (2015) suggested using a social justice lens that centers discourse about Black male achievement around the practices within the institution's locus of control and the ways in which institutions support those students. Viewing student outcomes through this lens encourages college administrators to review "the inherent organizational structures

that limit student success" (Wood & Palmer, p. 54) in a way that produces appropriate institutional supports.

While research details that supportive relationships are essential to collegiate success, the literature seems not to address the in-school barriers that Black men face in forging these beneficial connections (Strayhorn, 2008). Also lacking in research is an exploration of the effects of peer relationships among Black male students. Moreover, the literature does not offer clear guidelines for how universities can help students when essential relational support systems are lacking on campus. Although there are existing programs on some college campuses that foster this type of community and relationship development, the literature I reviewed does not clearly show why these programs are not more widely used or why, despite the availability of these beneficial programs, Black males remain uninformed about their presence (Muse, 2018). Additionally, the research reviewed does not discuss why the equity gap persists given the availability of information and beneficial support programs.

The goal of my research was to better understand the equity gap in graduation rates for Black males, specifically those who received support services at the time of the study. The research examined the experiences of students serviced by two support programs on the Cal State East Bay campus (i.e., The Sankofa Scholars Program and the Educational Opportunity Program). Thus, the study provided an in-depth examination of relational supports and their connections to student grades. Through this process, I uncovered disparities that Black males struggle with during their collegial experiences and, more importantly, highlight possible intervention strategies.

Although some changes have been made on the CSUEB campus with the purpose of addressing the disparities, the six-year graduation rate equity gap still remains at 19.4% (9% for four-year graduation rates) with underrepresented minorities behind the general student population (CSUEB, 2020). This study could potentially help illuminate

any unseen and/or unmet needs for Black males who consistently rank below other groups on college campuses (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). If appropriately applied, my research could help the CSUEB administration team to better understand relational supports and their effects on academic achievement. My hope in conducting the study was that the findings would be used to inform and influence future decision-making in a way that benefits Black males and, in the longer term, as Jez (2008) reminds, the Black community as a whole through providing access to increased economic opportunity.

Significance of the Research

Although the equity gap persists on some campuses, other universities have managed to address it (Watanabe, 2017). Through my research, I explored the institutional implementations toward equity by examining The Sankofa Scholars Programs and the Educational Opportunity Program. The study investigated the two support programs and their effects on grades, retention, and graduation rates as they related to Black male students in college. Focusing on these support programs progresses toward a social justice lens that acknowledges institutional onus in higher education. Using this asset-based perspective, my research runs contrary to the typical presentation of deficit views regarding Black male students. Fries-Britt (1998, p. 556) warned that "the disproportionate focus on African American underachievement in the literature not only distorts the image of the community of Black collegians, but it also creates, perhaps unintentionally, a lower set of expectations for Black student achievement." Beale, Charleston & Hilton suggests that social justice advocates in education write in a way which will "counteract misconceptions" (2019, p. 2). Thus, maintaining the asset view of Black males in my research helps to steer possible solutions toward institutional implementations that consider the student body as a whole while recognizing each

student as a holistic being with individualized backgrounds. In striving for equity, it is important to guide solutions away from an exclusive student onus perspective and against a view that requires a need for resilience, toward a focus on institutional onus. Looking toward institutional onus reminds researchers that students come with a variety of backgrounds and all of them need to be served and educated. This position acknowledges that the institution is the key producer of graduates and, in doing so, highlights that failure to produce graduates cannot be the absolute fault of the student.

Research Questions

In an effort to gain more insight into the experiences of the Cal State East Bay students, the study was grounded by the following research questions:

1. In what ways has CSUEB addressed the existing equity gap?
2. What strategies does CSUEB use to create relational supports for Black male students?
   a. How do these strategies affect academic performance (e.g., grade point average)?

Answers to these questions yielded a useful list of strategies that could potentially be implemented on the CSUEB campus as well as provided some cautionary tales that the university should use as an example to avoid when seeking to achieve equity. The data, in either case, are expected to be useful for higher education institutions which are struggling to even out the graduation and retention rates for Black male students.

Definitions of Terms

It is important that readers and the researcher share the same understanding of the study. In order to ensure clarity, pertinent terms are defined according to the purpose of this research.

Academic Achievement, also known as **Academic Performance.** For the purpose of this study, academic achievement is measured by a student's grade point average on a four-point scale. Although grades are viewed as being earned by the students, a social justice lens acknowledges that achievement and performance are products of the environment (Rendón, 2002).

Belonging, also referred to as a **Sense of Belonging.** A sense of belonging results from peer relationships (Harper, 2003) and is necessary to bolster social adjustment while in college (Harper, 2003). Maslow (1962) and Strayhorn (2019) described belonging as a basic human need and Tovar & Simon (2010, p. 200) defined belonging as "an individual's sense of identification or positioning in relation to a group or to the college community, which may yield an affective response." Further, Strayhorn (2019) framed a sense of belonging as being "part of a larger motivational framework" (p. 5) which is "sufficient to influence behavior" (p. 4).

Black, in quoted text, used interchangeably with **African American.** *Black* and *African American* are terms used to refer to ethnicity and racial makeup. With regard to this study, *Black* indicates people, born in the United States, who are of predominant African ancestry but does not exclude other Black cultures.

Critical Mass. The concept of critical mass is based on "the numerical representation of demographic composition of the student body at an institution" which "can be operationalized as the proportion of students of color present on campus" (Strayhorn 2014, p. 388). As used in this dissertation, critical mass is achieved when

Black male students are easily able to encounter other students from their own or similar backgrounds.

      Equity Gap. "Disparities in opportunity, treatment, and access to educational advantages" within the educational institution result in disparate levels of academic achievement and attainment (Spayde, 2011, para. 6; see also EdGlossary, 2013), otherwise known as an equity gap. This concept is also often referred to in research as *opportunity gap* or *achievement gap*.

      First-Generation College Student. As defined by the California state University System (2020), a first-generation college student is the first in their family to attend college. As a result of their parents' backgrounds, the often have no one from their home lives to inform their college journey (Ricks, 2016).

      First-Year Student. A first-year student refers to "a student in the first year of… college" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). A first-year student is traditionally known as a *Freshman*, and is sometimes referred to as a *Native Student*. As used in this study, the term implicates students who began their first year of college within a four-year, degree-granting university and continued their studies at the same college, regardless of how many years they continue attendance.

      Graduation Rate. Graduations rates signify the percentage of students who complete all course requirements for a baccalaureate degree and file for graduation at a university. While the undergraduate degree can be completed in four years, for the purposes of this dissertation, the statistic focuses on first year students who completed the undergraduate degree requirements and filed for graduation in six years or less.

      Hand-held. This term was used by EOP student participants to indicate that counselors were completing tasks on the students' behalf rather than supporting students in a way that helped them to accomplish the task on their own. The result of being "hand-

held" is an inability to learn and understand university mechanisms through the process of doing; a lack of agency.

Hegemony. Hegemony is a method of creating a leader-subordinate relationship through indoctrination. Specifically, cultural hegemony, is enforced through institutions (i.e., schools) in a way that allows the more dominant culture to influence the ideas, norms, behaviors, values, and expectations of other members of society. Further, "cultural hegemony functions by framing the worldview of the ruling class and the social and economic structures that embody it, as just, legitimate, and designed for the benefit of all, even though these structures may only benefit the ruling class" (Cole, 2020, para. 2).

Hidden Curriculum. The hidden curriculum emerges through informal teaching practices which undermine a particular group's own self-perception by teaching them to hold a lesser perspective of themselves while emphasizing the value of other cultural behaviors and norms. Such hegemonic practices are a "part of the bureaucratic and managerial press of the school— the combined forces by which students are induced to comply with dominant ideologies and social practices related to authority, behavior, and morality" (McLaren, 1989, p. 184).

Institutional Onus, used synonymously with **Institutional Responsibility**. Institutional onus in higher education requires college administration to assume the responsibility for student outcomes. Researchers such as Harris et al. (2010) and Wood and Palmer (2015) suggest using a social justice lens that centers discourse about Black male achievement around the practices within the institution's locus of control and the ways in which institutions support those students. Viewing student outcomes through this lens encourages college administrators to review "the inherent organizational structures that limit student success" (Wood & Palmer, p. 54) in a way that leads to the establishment of appropriate institutional supports.

Learning-Related Skills (LRS). LRS refer to a cluster of social skills (e.g., task persistence, learning independence, flexible thinking, organization, and attention control) that facilitate active and efficient learning (Howse, Lange, Farran, & Boyles, 2003).

Marginalized, or termed by the California State University system as **Underrepresented Minority**. These terms are used to describe "students, who for various reasons, have not been afforded the same educational opportunities as some of their peers, putting them at a significant disadvantage" (CSUEB, 2018, p. 1). These include students of first-generation status, those with economic and financial challenges, and students who represent minoritized ethnic communities (typically students other than the White and Asian ethnicities). This concept is more popularly referred to as *historically underserved populations*, although it is more accurate to use the terms *colonially marginalized* or *institutionally underserved* which implicates the history of disenfranchisement and resilience.

Microaggression. A microaggression is "a subtle but offensive comment or action directed at a minority or other nondominant group that is often unintentional or unconsciously reinforces a stereotype" (Dictionary.com, 2020).

Misandry. The antonym of misogyny, misandry is the "dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against men" (Dictionary.com, 2020). This dissertation considers misandry in combination with racism against Black men.

Mundane Extreme Environmental Stress (MEES). MEES results from an environment of persistent race-related stress and microaggressions which compounds with increased exposure (Smith et al., 2011). This type of stress is classified as mundane because it is "ubiquitous and oftentimes taken for granted" (p. 67). MEES "has an excessive influence on the physiological, psychological, emotional, and cognitive reactions" and is also a "part of the historical and institutionalized ideology that influences the policy practices, behaviors, and the culture, and custom of the dominant

environment" (p. 67). Such elements of MEES are indeed distressing and combine in a way that consume the time and energy of students who should be free to focus on their education, creativity, and goals.

Persistence. Persistence, not to be confused with *retention*, is the measurement of students within the university who progress into the following semester at the same institution, not necessarily consecutively.

Racial Battle Fatigue. Smith et al. (2011) define racial battle fatigue as "emotional, psychological, and physiological distress" (p. 64) that arises as a result of dealing regularly with racism and microaggressions. These experiences "build up over time and are detrimental to [Black men's] health and overall quality of life" (p. 77).

Racism. Racism is a system of control by which one ethnicity expresses perceived superiority over another based upon race, ethnicity, or complexion and demonstrated through prejudice, discrimination, and antagonistic behaviors or comments toward someone.

Relational Support. This term indicates the presence of supportive relationships that contribute to the student's sense of belonging and academic achievement, which may be exemplified through programs or connections with staff and faculty.

Retention Rates. Unlike **persistence**, retention rates indicate the institutional measurement of students who remain within the same educational institution year after year consecutively until graduation.

Social Mobility. Assari (2018, p. 2) defined social mobility as one's ability to produce "change in social status based on education, wealth, and occupation."

Stereotype. An "exaggerated belief" (Allport, 1954, p. 191) resulting from "an oversimplified generalization about a particular group," (Derman-Sparks, 1989, p.3) stereotypes "usually [carry] derogatory implication[s]" (Derman-Sparks, 1989, p.3). Stereotyping is "the classification of individuals and the attribution of characteristics

to those individuals or to groups on the basis of prejudiced, irrational, and non-factual conceptions and information" (Lynch, 1987, p. 24). Stereotypes function "to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category" (Allport, 1954, p. 191). For the purposes of this study, stereotypes are specifically in reference to racial stigmas (Aronson et al., 2009).

Stereotype Threat. This concept is characterized by "the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype" (Steele, 1999, p. 50).

Strategies. Strategies are implementation techniques used to secure a particular long-term objective. In this study, the objective is identified as improved graduation rates, specifically for Black male students.

Transfer Student. Transfer students typically "pursue […] two years of academic or applied study at a community college […] and transfer their credits to a recognized degree granting institution toward the completion of a baccalaureate degree" (Heslop, 2001, p. 31). While some students transfer between four-year universities, the transfer students in this study are those students who transferred from two-year, community colleges (also known as junior colleges) to four-year universities, specifically Cal State East Bay.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review presents an overview of the lack of access to equitable education for Black male students by exploring the research around the disparate impact of structural racism in the form of implicit biases and an environment of stress and low expectations. Also shown in the literature review, the challenges of relational support and academic performance can be explained through varying risk factors and a lack of institutional onus (Wood & Palmer, 2015). With this in mind, I can view the Black male equity gap through a lens that considers institutional onus in placing the responsibility for student success, including Black male students, with the university. After reviewing the disparity in these essential supports, I will review the effects of relational supports on academic performance.

Equitable Education and Academic Performance

According to Jones (2015), education in the United States is typically provided from a culturally White middle-class perspective and is not culturally responsive to students of color. The author suggested "teachers who are socioculturally conscious do not rely on their own personal experiences to make sense of students' lives, but rather attempt to understand inequities in society and to be aware of the role these issues may have in their students' lives" (p. 28). As an example, a problem of equity occurs when Black male students arrive to college with literacy skills that were not cultivated

through their previous schooling. West explains, "many urban Black male students aren't performing at the academic levels they should and could" (West, 2011, p. 44) and some of this is due, simply, to the type of literature options available and presented to them through their classes prior to entering into college (Davis, 2016). According to Davis (2016), when Black males rarely see themselves depicted in literature, especially in a positive light, they are less likely to take an interest in reading or in the connected curriculum. Davis also stated that cultural representation in literature and in curriculum is essential to development and growth in literacy skills, and the consistent lack thereof stifles and frustrates literacy development. In high school, Black men are, on average, at a math and reading level equivalent to that of a White middle-school student (Jones, 2015). This affects preparation for college and academic achievement within college (Gruenbaum, 2012) as inefficient literacy skills lead to the inability to comprehend text and effectively write as needed in college courses (Thiede, Griffin, Wiley, & Anderson, 2010; Wood, Motz, & Willoughby, 1998; Yang, 2010). This issue is common for people of color in the public school systems across the United States (Davis, 2016) and is magnified when added to the many other barriers that Black males face (Fantuzzo et al., 2012).

In addition to the lack of cultural sensitivity through literature and in formal education, many other factors impact the educational achievement of Black male students, both within and outside of the formal classroom structure. Limited school resources, quality of teachers and professors, and perceptions of others are some of the many issues of inequity that Black students face in school. According to various data, approximately 20% fewer Black students complete high school when compared to White students (NCES, 2010; NEA, 2011; Varlas, 2014), with young Black men graduating at a lower rate than their female counterparts (CSUEB, 2017). Low high school graduation rates create a barrier to college entry thus limiting social mobility.

There are many components that coalesce into academic results including educational environment, professor expectations and perceptions, and historical and future attitudes (Brown, 2011). In order to lessen the negative impact of these components, Jones (2015) insists that "there must be a holistic approach to address the many and difficult issues affecting the academic achievement and educational outcomes of African American males" (p. 15) including a culturally responsive curriculum that recognizes how racial issues affect the Black students learning experience.

Further, Yaffe (2015) discussed the many obstacles, such as high tuition fees and an unwelcoming environment, which Black men face from the college application process through their studies. The cost of tuition, as a barrier to college attendance and persistence, adds to the issue of limited access to the pursuit of a university degree. This barrier of limited access is one that disproportionately plagues the Black male population. Often as a part of the first-generation college population, Black males may have no one from their home lives to inform their college application process (Ricks, 2016). This could lead to financial hindrances as they seek to navigate the financial aid applications, grant and scholarship processes, and other college nuances such as the application process without help or support (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1992; Rendon, 1992; Terenzini et al., 1994). Such obstacles and barriers make Black males feel alienated, thereby making it more difficult for them to succeed in college (Yaffe, 2015), especially without supportive in-school relationships to help mitigate the negative impact. Data showed that, consequently, as much as 50% of these students were unable to finish their first year of college (Saenz et al., 2007).

Black men continue to be among the lowest achieving academically (Moyo, 2013) and this research examined the ineffective strategies employed by university administration which often do not effectively address the issues that cause this disparity. Simultaneously, the study sought to uncover solutions to help close the equity gap. While

some four-year universities, such as UC Riverside, have successfully managed to close the opportunity gap through due diligence (Watanabe, 2017), other schools like Cal State East Bay continue to show a disparity (CSUEB, 2018).

Implicit Biases: Faculty Perception and the Culture of Low Expectations

In addition to culturally insensitive pedagogy and low socioeconomic status with limited access to financial aid through hindering processes, negative perception is another risk factor that affects academic achievement in higher education. It affects achievement in two ways: how the student sees himself (i.e., self-perception) and how others perceive the student. Self-perception is essential to fostering greater academic achievement (Aronson et al., 2009) and is commonly related to experiences within the communities that the students engage in (Douglas & Peck, 2013). As an example, Aronson et al. (2009) found that test anxiety can be attributed to one's own perception that he lacks intelligence. They suggested that students will do better with improved teacher support, but that the problem of self-perception can be exacerbated by "subtle events in the classroom [which] can undermine a student's confidence, trust, and performance" (Aronson et al., 2009, p. 19), such as discrimination in school from staff and teachers (Matthews, 2010). This can be alleviated through in-school supports which help students to understand what Aronson et al. (2009) refers to as "stereotype threat" (i.e., beginning to demonstrate or feeling the risk of conforming to the generalizations of others based on race; p. 1). When students unpack negative self-perceptions, such as stereotype threat, they see intelligence as malleable which has been shown to improve their academic performance (Aronson et al., 2009).

Helping Black male students to see intelligence as malleable allows them to take ownership of their education despite the risk factors that undermine their learning experiences. The need for this intervention in self-perception is illustrated in the study,

conducted by Aronson et al., of 91 low-achieving seventh grade students. 79% of the study group were low-income and 52% were Black. Students in a control group were compared to students who received an intervention that taught them "to see intelligence as incrementally developed rather than fixed" (Aronson et al., 2009, p.5). The results showed that the students in the control group, who received no intervention, continued to show a downward trajectory in their academic test scores. Conversely, students in the intervention group showed improvement in their scores. Implementing school support systems to help students gain a better understanding of their own intelligence is far more beneficial than separating students by skill level, which Kavadias et al. (2017) highlighted as a detriment that amplified differences and shortcomings.

In addition to amplifying differences, separating students based on their skills impacts their attitudes, not only toward each other but also within themselves, leading to harmful stereotypes. As Kavadias et al. (2017) argued, "stereotyping arises directly out of the social categorization process" (p. 35). With harmful separation experiences in school, the attitudes of students of color are negatively affected by academic segregation. The researcher used the International Civic and Citizenship Study of 14-year old students in 38 countries to demonstrate how the perception of others toward the Black male students contributed to prejudice (Kavadias et al., 2017). Separation, coupled with "discrimination by school personnel" (Matthews, 2010, p. 759), have been found to perpetuate negative perspectives and Kavadias et al. (2017) demonstrated a strong correlation between acceptance and in-school segregation. In-school segregation separates the students of color into groups that are deemed less desirable in the academic setting and impacts their social identity development (Tajfel, 1969; Tajfel & Forgas, 2000).

Black students also learn, from more informal teaching through the classroom experience, ideologies which undermine their own self-perception by teaching them to hold a lesser perspective of themselves while emphasizing the value of other cultural

behaviors and norms. This practice, more formally known as the "hidden curriculum" (Palmer & Maramba, 2011 p. 433), can be described as a "part of the bureaucratic and managerial press of the school— the combined forces by which students are induced to comply with dominant ideologies and social practices related to authority, behavior, and morality" (McLaren,1989, p. 184). These practices further enforce the hegemony of one class over another (Palmer & Maramba, 2011), generally setting Black males in the subservient category. Reinforced by media, this societal pedagogy contributes to the attitudes and low academic achievement of Black men (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). Being marginalized and oppressed academically is a direct contributor to the low graduation rates of Black males and the effects follow them into college (Attewell, 2006).

Moreover, Strayhorn (2008a) presented several challenges that Black men face prior to college such as a lack of opportunity and little exposure to college preparatory curricula. These issues breed "significant implications" such as hindered social mobility when looking at prospects for future employment (Carter & Wilson, 1993) and affect families and communities. Taking an asset-based perspective, Strayhorn's study explored the need for connection and supportive relationships and related in-college support to college satisfaction which leads to greater levels of retention (Strayhorn, 2008b).

Although Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey (2007) expressed the need for teachers and facilitators to have a positive outlook toward students and "envision them as they could be, academically sound" (p. 93), research shows that, once in college, Black men continue to face issues of negative perceptions (Bailey & Moore, 2004; Davis, 2003; Moore, 2000) and deficit thinking (Gibbs, 1988; Majors & Billson, 1992; Mincy, 1994; Parham & McDavis, 1987) by their college professors. Strayhorn (2006) suggested that these negative perceptions perpetuate negative stereotypes and inhibit the ability for Black male students to connect with faculty and staff in order to get the necessary support they need to succeed in the higher education environment. Negative perceptions

and an inability to connect with staff and their college professors create more in-school risk factors that carry through the college experience: These risk factors limit access to teacher support as professors are less likely to encourage students whom they see through a negative lens (Hucks, 2011).

If teacher support is necessary for students to improve academically, then it is necessary that teachers and college professors receive proper pre-training education in order to practice culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally competent teachers and staff are better equipped to provide an equitable education for students. However, some White teachers demonstrate resistance to multicultural education. Even without their resistance, "the one multicultural course required for… teacher preparation programs does not leave [teachers] equipped to teach about culture" (Hill-Jackson, 2007, p. 180). White teachers' resistance to multiculturalism and lack of preparation to teach about culture may explain why Black male students often report several negative experiences with teachers, with perhaps only a single supportive teacher experience to reference (Hucks, 2011).

Redden (2002) showed that this lack of in-school support leads Black male students to cope through their own resiliency and to seek help and support from outside of their school environments. Further, she described the negative academic impact that feelings of social alienation could have on Black male students. Redden (2002) also discussed that "victims of social alienation were less effective socially, had fewer friends, felt lonelier, and participated less in extra-curricular activities" (p. 4). The author detailed that the lack of diversity in campus faculty and staff is a stressor for minority groups which inhibits their ability to learn and succeed in college. Particularly, a lack of diversity creates an unwelcoming environment for students of varied ethnic backgrounds. Such environments create an air of intolerance which hinders development of a sense of belonging and instead causes feelings of depression and social alienation similar to the concept of mundane extreme environmental stress as described by Smith et al. (2011).

Environment of Stress & Microaggressions that Leads to Mundane Extreme

Environmental Stress

There are various forms of societal stresses, racial microaggressions, and environmental stressors due to racism (Smith et al., 2011). Such systemic and pervasive racism is linked to racial battle fatigue which, as Smith et al. (2011) discussed, can be defined as "emotional, psychological, and physiological distress" (p. 64). Their research on racial battle fatigue and racial microaggressions used quantitative methods to explore the results of a previous national study and focused only on the responses from Black males for the clearly stated purpose of exploring how mundane, extreme, environmental stress is affected by societal problems, racial microaggressions, and educational attainment (Smith et al. 2011). The research results demonstrated that there was indeed a connection to "mundane, extreme, environmental stress (MEES)" (p. 63) by showing that, as education level increased for Black men, "the influence of racial microaggressions on MEES grew stronger" (Smith et al., 2011, p. 74). The researchers discussed the damaging effects of these interactions and suggested that such relational experiences may act as a "repellent for Black males entering, living, or working in historically or predominantly White spaces" (Smith et al., 2011, p. 75).

Smith et al. (2011) defined racial battle fatigue as the psychological, physiological, and emotional distress that arises as a result of dealing regularly with gendered racism. For Black men, gendered racism is a normal experience when living in a society that is seen through a White-centered view (Smith et al., 2011). Living in this "White frame" and being depicted through this White lens is what Black men go through when they are in predominantly White spaces. The racism and misandry faced when entering historically or predominately White institutions (e.g., some work places, schools, etc.) creates blocked opportunities and mundane, extreme, environmental stress for Black men (Smith et al., 2011). This type of existence begins to shape the identity

and aspirations of people of color (Garibaldi, 1992; Pierce, 1970). The research further brought urgency to the matter by citing that living under such constant stress can cause health problems and refers to this set of circumstances as societal contributors to poor health (Becker, 1993). Smith et al. (2011) discussed this issue as being "the emotional, physiological, and psychological 'costs' associated with [Black men's] participation in historically White environments" (p. 65).

The researchers discussed the issue through a social justice perspective because "racism as a system of control" (Smith et al. 2011) was linked to race-related stress (Pierce, 1995) and they referred to the corresponding microaggressions as psycho-pollutants (Smith et al. 2011). Additionally, "scholars situate today's racism as institutionalized in that it permeates the everyday perceptions, rationalizations, and policy decisions made toward African Americans and marginalized racial/ethnic groups" (Smith et al. 2011, pp. 67).

Benefits of Relational Support Experiences

Among the several possible contributing factors to the low rates of graduation for Black male students, one cause may be feelings of isolation and a lack of support (Yaffe, 2015). Several studies (Douglas & Peck, 2013; Hucks, 2011; Rowley & Bowman, 2009) show that community affects college achievement. The community aspect outside of the school (Douglas & Peck, 2013; Hucks, 2011; Rowley & Bowman, 2009) "can be both beneficial and detrimental, depending on who enters and leads these non-school-based learning communities" (Douglas & Peck, 2013, p. 85). These "community-based pedagogical spaces" (Douglas & Peck, 2013. p. 68) include the role of the community (Hucks, 2011), as well as church, family, the barbershop, music, social groups, sports clubs, travel, jobs, and even prison (Douglas & Peck, 2013). These non-school learning

spaces are typically available in the lives of Black males (Douglas & Peck, 2013). This aligns with Hucks' (2011) discussion on the model of collective achievement where he stated

> The participants' schooling experiences call for establishing a model of collective achievement that captures and delineates the engagement and investment of the multiple stakeholders involved in their education. Such a model will bring about a higher level of multiple stakeholder accountability that would likely improve students' schooling experiences and increase the academic and life outcomes for African American males. (p. 339)

Overall, the combination of the in-school and out-of-school communities work together to shape Black male students. The collective achievement model (Hucks, 2011) highlighted the assertion that education needs to be viewed in a holistic way which encompasses a community aspect outside of the school environment. These communities are useful in guiding these students through the building of resiliency in a manner that is positive and beneficial to the pursuit of education.

This perspective also ties into Ogbu's (1992) Cultural Ecological Perspective linking academic achievement to the students' communities and the home life experiences. The success of a student is an interplay between systemic and communal factors and the contribution that "community forces" (p. 287) play in academic failure often goes overlooked. According to Douglas and Peck (2013), a great deal of education, which plays a key role in the identities of Black men, takes place within these non-school learning communities and thus these spaces need to be considered as valuable.

More difficult to come by are in-school opportunities for the Black male student to develop a sense of community in his academic life. For instance, Hucks (2011) stated that the participants in his study could not readily identify role models within the context

of their school environments. This is concerning given that Black men tend to fare better when they connect to communities within school (Hucks, 2011; Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2007; Moon, 2015; Rowley & Bowman, 2009). They desire connection (Moon, 2015) and when placed in groups that focus on their strengths, they are able to recapture their potential (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2007) and attain higher achievement levels (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2007; Hucks, 2011). Group work and group counseling would be beneficial to these students (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2007) but other school programs can be designed to help Black men in college (Moon, 2015). To bolster academic and personal success, Moon (2015) suggested that counselors within the schools lead the implementation of internships and mentoring programs that are designed to address the academic equity gap through culturally responsive experiences.

The literature suggests that Black students can build resilience despite being subjected to various risks (Matthews, 2010). Martin, Martin, Gibson & Wilkins (2007), in their research on 33 Black teenagers in Ohio who had a record of expulsion or suspension from school, found that students showed improvement after participating in a two-year, after school program for 15 hours per week where they were given access to counseling, tutoring, training in social skills, and various other activities. The researchers noted the following:

> Results showed that the adolescents had increased their daily attendance, decreased discipline referrals, and had no suspensions or expulsions. These results also indicated that although the students entered the program at different skill levels, they were assessed to have the ability to function at their appropriate grade level. Their average improvement in basic skills was at least two grade levels. (Martin et al., 2007, p. 659)

With the proper supports, Black males can develop resilience, improve academically, and build beneficial and appropriate coping strategies which they can build upon as they move forward into college. While we know that supportive relationships are essential to achieving degree completion and collegiate success, Strayhorn (2008a) showed that Black men are often required to cope with barriers and develop resilience without the benefit of in-school relational supports. However, the literature does not thoroughly address the barriers that Black men face in forging these beneficial connections (Strayhorn, 2008b).

Coping strategies are important to the survival of Black men in college. Illustrating this, Moon (2015) conducted a qualitative study around the narratives of a dozen Black males, all of whom "recognized that being an African American male came with a unique set of societal challenges" (p. 20). The research showed that the participants deal with racism on a daily basis; some of which is blatant and some more inconspicuous. While the participants did not express feelings of demoralization, they accepted these racial injustices as a regular part of everyday life. In order to cope with such challenges, Black men are capable of developing "sociocultural protective factors" (p. 306) and "protective strengths" (Rowley & Bowman, 2009, p. 308) which can be either harmful or advantageous to their pursuit of higher education. For example, socially undesirable behaviors are a defensive technique for Black men and also a part of their resiliency (Hucks, 2011). These mechanisms help them to navigate the environmental obstacles that work against their academic achievement. Although the negative behaviors are used defensively, Aronson et al. (2009) notes that Black students suffer from an extra stress in not wanting to affirm the stereotypes against them concerning intelligence. Thus, it is important to steer these defenses and coping mechanisms into a more positive direction that will better facilitate academic achievement.

According to Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey (2007), through their observations of Black students in his group work program, Black students can apply their success strategies from other areas of life to achieve success in their educational pursuits. For example, university counselors can highlight areas of strength for Black males and assist them to apply similar strategies toward enhancing their social and academic skills. Counselors, as well as teachers, must be sensitive to the dynamics of being a Black, adolescent male. Again, a holistic perspective that includes the home lives and culture is necessary in developing strategic supports to minority students, specifically Black males who have at least three different identities to contend with: "the dominant culture of the United States, the African American culture, and the African American male culture" (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2007, p. 89) which presents another challenge. Acknowledging the intersectionality of Black male students is an important part in providing holistic support and encouraging the use of various success strategies.

To thrive in college, while contending with their various identities, Black males need to be more resilient than their counterparts. In the face of challenges, more positive skills and success strategies can be developed through the non-school learning spaces (Douglas & Peck, 2013) in order to build resiliency. Douglas and Peck (2103) mentioned "street smarts" (p. 69) as the skills Black men need to learn beyond the formal school education in order to survive. Through building these other types of knowledge and skills to prepare for life, Black male students are also able to learn "internal academic regulation" (p. 766) and self-management skills (Matthews et al., 2010) which, along with "individual motivation and effort, […] resiliency and persistence in the face of racism," (Moon, 2015, p. 13), can contribute to improved learning outcomes.

This resilience can be supported in schools through instilling a sense of agency into the Black male student regarding his own intelligence. Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey (2007) suggested acknowledging weaknesses without focusing on them and, instead,

focusing on their strengths and "for some schools, districts, communities, and families, this means creating a climate of success" (p. 93) around working to bridge the equity gap. This connects schools and communities in an effort to support the student and to help build their resilience strategies in a positive direction.

Given what is known about multiple risk factors and the need for community experiences to holistically address them, it is important that Black male students are provided with guidance and appropriate support in order to properly navigate the interplay between risk and resilience. Providing guidance and support helps Black male students build a sense of agency (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2007). Several researchers, including Moon (2015), Hucks (2011), Bailey and Bradbury-Bailey (2007), and Rowley and Bowman (2009), have examined this connection. Hucks (2011) argued that it is important for school personnel to look at these students holistically to better inform the provision of the sense of community that Black male students thrive in (Hucks, 2011; Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2007; Moon, 2015; Rowley & Bowman, 2009). Furthermore, Moon (2015) pointed out that Black males desire connection while in college.

Prior research shows many examples (Douglas & Peck, 2013; Hucks, 2011; Rowley & Bowman, 2009) of ways that Black male students use communities and opportunities for connection as a coping strategy or resiliency technique. Unfortunately, these spaces are not readily found within schools (Hucks, 2011). Therefore, it is important that educational environments provide communities in which the Black male student can be guided into positive resiliency behaviors that will bolster his academic achievement. There are many successful programs (e.g., "the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program," Mayer, 2008, p. 210; and "Gentlemen on the Move," Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2007, p. 90) that improve the academic achievement rates for the students they serve through providing a sense of community. However, the research fails to address the reasons these beneficial programs may remain undiscovered by Black males on college

campuses. The literature also does not delve into the persistence of the equity gap despite the presence of helpful programming and the availability of information.

Peer Relationships

As a part of a larger research program, Strayhorn (2008b) conducted a study to explore the effect that supportive relationships have on the academic achievement of Black males in college. Through utilization of the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), Strayhorn explored college achievement (grades), school satisfaction, and relationships (2008). Results showed that supportive relationships showed a statistically significant positive relationship with college satisfaction rather than academic achievement and Strayhorn argued that the research can be used to improve retention and graduation rates for Black males in college.

Strayhorn explained that social and academic growth and development are a function of environmental challenges combined with support (through in-school relationships). There is a dearth of literature regarding "the role that academic and nonacademic factors play in facilitating the success of Black men in college" as well as exploring the effects of peer relationships in college (Strayhorn, 2008, p. 28). Nevertheless, Hamilton's (2005) qualitative study showed how nonacademic factors (such as support) fostered academic success through college satisfaction for twelve Black male students. Other studies such as those done by Harper (2003) and Strayhorn, McCall, and Jennings (2006), supported the benefit of nonacademic factors but few (e.g., Harper, 2003) point more specifically toward peer-to-peer interactions. Thus, future research could be used to add to the discussion around peer relationships as a use of in-school-support.

Racially Representative Faculty

While it is clear that the existing equity gap between Black males and the males in the non-underrepresented minority (URM) group shows that many of these access issues have been left unaddressed, there is evidence that some universities are able to decrease the equity gap through minimizing the impact of such challenges. To illustrate this, UC Riverside touts "one of the smallest racial [equity] gaps in the nation" (Watanabe, 2017). The campus statistics show that Black students had a six-year graduation rate of 73% which was ahead of White (71%) and Latino (69%) students and only slightly below Asian (77%) students (Riverside, 2016). In fact, out of 676 campuses, UC Riverside was the top-ranking school in California and placed in sixth place nationally for Black graduation rates (Nichols & Evans-Bell, 2017). The Chancellor at the Riverside campus cited the university's strong financial aid, diversity, leadership opportunities, and the use of early interventions as the reason for such balanced graduation rates (Watanabe, 2017). Additionally, Watanabe (2017) noted an increase in Black faculty at the school along with faculty-student mentor-mentee relationships which Hylton (2013) found to be strongly correlated to the academic achievement of Black male students in college.

Theoretical Framework

In conducting research around in-school supports and, more specifically, the Black-White equity gap in higher education, it is essential that researchers address historic and systemic factors. Also important to educational research is the use of a social justice lens which views such disparities as being institutionally perpetuated through policies and practice. According to Anyon (2009),

The danger is that much educational research garnering support and legitimacy from policy-makers today works to reproduce inequality and obscure injustices. At the very most, such research might address student needs, for example by identifying a particularly useful learning strategy; but it does not address *the conditions* under which the strategy is needed or implemented, the historical processes that created those conditions, or the differential outcomes of implementation along race, class, or gender lines. (p. 31)

Thus, I will use Critical Race Theory and Self-Determination Theory to form a framework that addresses the historical background behind current practices and gives credence to the inequitable results of implementation with regard to student motivation and ethnic background.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is used in "this study to better understand various topics with racial undertones, including campus microaggressions and the exploration of dynamics within educational systems between students, peers, faculty, and administrators" (Wilson, 2018, p. 19). CRT was born of Critical Legal Studies and radical feminism. Building on how legal cases can have varying outcomes depending on who has the weightiest perspective, CRT applies the same principles to civil rights themes (Delgado & Stefanicic, 2017). CRT looks at how racism is normalized and challenges perspectives that eliminate racism as a reality for minority groups. To offset such perspectives, CRT offers counter-stories in an effort to amplify the voices of those who are marginalized. The interview portion of my study addressed this aspect of CRT through examining the lived experiences of Black male students.

Similarly, in a qualitative research study of the academic equity gap, researchers used CRT to describe the lived experiences and tell the stories of a dozen Black males

(Moon & Singh, 2015). In the interviews, the students provided a perspective outside of the dominant narrative that detailed their experiences with racism and a need for resilience and persistence that is unlike the norm. They listed difficulties such as a lack of resources, inefficient parental support, as well as the color of their skin (Moon & Singh, 2015). The researchers noted the interview results and used the student voices to counter the dominant perspective of education for all students.

The ability to counter White dominance is useful in exploring the on-campus relationship experiences of Black male students in higher education. Because Black males in education are often viewed through a deficit lens, CRT can be used to present a different perspective regarding their academic achievement (Masko, 2008). Because CRT "explicitly names White dominance and its related consequences, while simultaneously identifying possibilities for liberation and social change," (Moon & Singh, 2015, p. 6) the theoretical framework can be applied when examining school processes, practices, policies, and structures that reinforce and perpetuate inequities among minority students (Love, 2004). Critical Race Theory is most appropriate for the topic as it tackles societal racism and can be used to discuss academic achievement (Moon & Singh, 2015).

Delving deeper, CRT boasts five tenets that "can be used to uncover the ingrained societal disparities that support a system of privilege and oppression" (Hiraldo, 2010, p. 54):

1. Interest convergence
2. Pervasiveness of racism
3. White privilege
4. Colorblindness
5. Counter-storytelling

The first tenet, interest convergence, suggests that progress toward ending oppression is only supported by the free if they see a direct benefit to themselves (i.e., White people only support racial progress if they see a beneficial opportunity for the White interest (Hartlep, 2009)). Considering interest convergence, CRT postulates that "White individuals benefit from a structure that was initially implemented to offer equal opportunity to people of color" (Hiraldo, 2010, p. 56) and become the primary beneficiaries of diversity and equity initiatives (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; McCoy, 2006).

The pervasiveness of racism, the third tenet, suggests that racism is recognized as a normative experience (Wilson, 2018). Hiraldo (2010) discusses how racism infiltrates all aspects of life socially, politically, and economically. Specifically, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and DeCuir and Dixson (2004) discussed racism as inherent in educational systems as well. The pervasiveness of racism promotes whiteness as property. The third tenet, White privilege, or using one's whiteness as property, gives added rights and privileges to White people and creates a disadvantage for people of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998). This creates a system of White supremacy due to the "embedded racism in American society" (Hiraldo, 2010, p. 55).

The fourth tenet of CRT recognizes colorblindness as a feigned neutrality (Hartlep, 2009) which allows inequitable policies to persist through ignoring discrimination and systemic racism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). This tenet requires society to recognize that White privilege continues to persist and that people of color continue to be placed in a position of "other" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 29). As Wilson (2018) discussed, through this tenet, CRT challenges the dominant ideology through understanding that the neutrality which colorblindness claims to yield is a false notion.

Utilizing counter-storytelling magnifies disempowered voices and offers credence to perspectives outside of the White normative view. This fifth and final tenet gives

"students of color a voice to tell their narratives involving marginalized experiences" (Hiraldo, 2010, p. 54). Particularly, my dissertation will draw on the lived experiences of the Black male students on campus through careful analysis of the interviews. Building my study around Critical Race Theory, particularly with the use of counter-storytelling, helped give insight to the challenges and risks that Black male students face and the effects that those risks had on academic performance. With CRT included in the theoretical framework, the study will maintain a social justice perspective and use counter-storytelling to give power to those who, historically, are often marginalized.

Self-Determination Theory

In addition to CRT, Self-Determination Theory addresses the lack of motivation that can result from irrelevant pedagogical practices. Theorists, Ryan & Deci (2017), developed Self-Determination Theory around three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Etheridge (2013) described Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory as a determining factor for whether Black men enroll in college and for their achievement level therein. "Self-Determination Theory is a theory of motivation, specifically concerned with the intrinsic inclinations that individuals use to make healthy life decisions" (Etheridge, 2013, p. 22). Motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, can have either a negative or positive impact on one's life decisions. This theory suggests people have a psychological need for goal achievement and growth which are impacted in three dimensions by feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017).

Autonomy

Autonomy is an intrinsic motivator that relates to control and an individual's ability to see the relationship between their efforts or actions and expected outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Etheridge, 2013). Autonomy also addresses volition as students find

congruence between activities and their own interests and values. In college, through many factors beyond their control, Black men may lose the motivation to continue pursuit of an undergraduate degree or to excel in individual courses. This happens when autonomy is not addressed and students react through external pressures rather than through their own volition in alignment with their interest and values. Specifically, for Black men, this misalignment is highlighted through the issue of irrelevant curriculum and corresponds to this dimension in that refers to "a specific interest and its value in terms of applying effort toward completion" (Etheridge, 2013, p. 24). Perceived value affects a student's interest level and, thus, motivation.

Competence

Competence is foundational to motivation and is described by Ryan & Deci (2017) as "our basic need to feel effectance and mastery" (p. 11). Developing this dimension leads the Black male to believe he has the capabilities to achieve his goals. Competency is built through prior successes and leads to feelings of efficacy (Etheridge 2013, Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2017). A Black male student who is successful in high school is more likely to enroll in and do well in college. Conversely, feelings of competence can be easily thwarted in the face of pervasive negative feedback or interpersonal interactions such as social comparison or personal criticism (Aronson et al., 2009; Douglas & Peck, 2013; Kavadias et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Moreover, specifically related to educational pursuits, if he is hindered by problems of perception, a lack of support, or irrelevant curriculum, the student's competency will be negatively impacted and therefore have an effect on his decision to pursue a college degree (Smith et al., 2011).

Relatedness

This dimension around relatedness looks at how a student relates to others and to the curriculum. Relatedness, as a sense of belonging, is extrinsic in nature and describes the desire to connect with others and be perceived as acceptable (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). Relatedness recognizes perceived impact and feelings of importance and connection (Ryan & Deci, 2017). "Certainly, social perceptions or the thoughts and interests of others have the ability to impact the decisions of Black males. […] Black males can be influenced to attend institutions of higher education because of the thoughts, feelings and actions of others" (Etheridge, 2013, p. 25).

Self-Determination Theory recognizes the dimensions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as basic human development needs which are essential to well-being. According to Ryan and Deci (2017, 2000), when these needs are deprived, well-being is diminished, motivation wanes, and student behavior is negatively impacted. Conversely, when autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported, each dimension supports positive learning behaviors and motivation for educational persistence.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted with a focus on understanding the graduation rates of Black males on the Cal State East Bay university campus. Specifically, the goal was to view Black males through an asset-based perspective which explores institutional onus in higher education and examines how students are supported on campus. Thus, my research was conducted within two support programs on campus: The Sankofa Scholars Program and the Educational Opportunity Program. This chapter first outlines the research design and then presents the research questions. Next, a description of the study participants and setting is followed by a discussion of the instrumentation, procedures, and data collection. I then discuss the limitations of the study and my positioning.

Research Design

According to Leavy (2017), the mixed methods study design incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a greater understanding of a single research problem. The author notes that such an approach involves the collection of quantitative and qualitative datasets which are integrated as a part of the research. Leavy's explanation of a mixed methods study describes my research study which built qualitative interviews out of a quantitative survey. The mixed methods design is "particularly useful for studying complex problems or issues" (Leavy, 2017, p. 164) and,

in this case, was used to explore the disparity in graduation rates with regard to Black males in higher education.

Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) discussed that a mixed methods design can be used when one approach is used to inform the second. Specifically, Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017) offered instrument development, the process of employing "the results from one method to help develop or inform the other method," (p. 110) as an acceptable reason for employing a mixed methods approach. As such, my research followed an "explanatory sequential" (Creswell & Clark, 2017, p. 71) strategy. According to Leavy (2017), the explanatory aspect refers to integration of data through the development of one tool from another, beginning with collecting and analyzing quantitative data. In my study, this concept is demonstrated in the way in which the qualitative student interviews (Phase IV) were designed specifically to address the results of the quantitative survey (Phase III) as a way of explaining and expounding on the data (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Similarly, the follow-up interview question set was developed from the first interview data and was used to delve deeper into the results. The sequential timing implies that "the researcher implement[ed] the [data] strands in two distinct phases, with the collection and analysis of one type of data occurring after the collection and analysis of the other type" (Creswell & Clark, 2017, p. 66). The sequence herein is comprised of a quantitative survey which was conducted within two support programs and then followed by qualitative interviews. The survey data, appropriately applied to the research questions around supportive relationships, informed the development of the subsequent interview questionnaire. Data from both the survey and primary interview sessions provided the basis for the final follow-up interview questions. Thus, the various phases of the study needed to be done in a specific order as each phase was developed with data from the prior phase.

Additionally, Greene et al. (1989) justified a mixed methods approach as a way "to enhance or build upon quantitative/qualitative findings" (p. 269) as done in this study. The utilization of combined data types forms a more holistic view. Further, according to Leavy (2017) the research design was one in which the interaction between datasets was determined prior to collecting the data. Specifically, my study was designed with a predetermined relationship where one phase was built out of an earlier phase. In my research study, after all the data were collected, I merged the data from the survey and interviews to synthesize the results for a deeper understanding of the data. The merging of data also allowed me to "triangulate the methods by directly comparing and contrasting quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings for corroboration and validation purposes" (Creswell & Clark, 2017, p. 77). In this way, different "sets of findings are brought together and compared to develop a more holistic view of the research problem" (Leavy, 2017, p. 175).

Research Questions

An exploration of the following research questions illuminated the experiences of Black male students on the Cal State East Bay campus:

1. In what ways has the existing equity gap been addressed at Cal State East Bay?

2. What strategies are employed at CSUEB to create relational supports for Black male students?

   a. How do these strategies impact academic performance (e.g., grade point average)?

Answers to these questions provided a review of support strategies and their effects on the academic performance of Black male students at Cal State East Bay. This examination of support strategies has the potential to be beneficial to the two researched support programs and the focal university as well as to other colleges.

Setting

The California State University (CSU) system consists of 23 university campuses, all within the United States in the state of California. Educating almost 500,000 students each year, the student body within the CSU system is one of the most diverse. Of these students, less than 5% are Black (CSU, 2017).
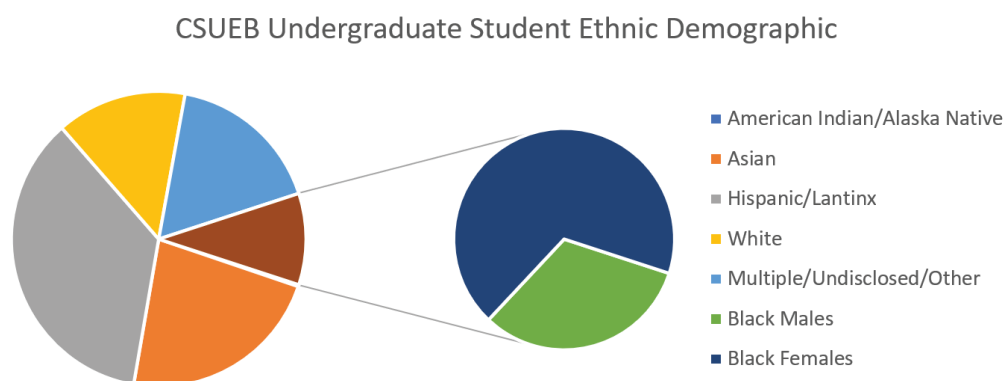
Figure 4: Undergraduate Ethnicity at California State University, East Bay
Source: https://www.csueastbay.edu/about/files/docs/2018-2019factsbrochure.pdf

Of the 23 CSU campuses, California State University, East Bay, (CSUEB) founded in 1957, is located in northern California's Bay Area. With 14,525 total students enrolled in graduate and undergraduate classes during the Fall 2018 Semester, Cal State East Bay is the most diverse university within the CSU. The undergraduate student body

is comprised of 35.8% Hispanic or Latino, 22.5% Asian, 14.3% White, 10.1% Black, 5.2% claiming multiple ethnicities, 5% of undisclosed ethnicities, and 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native students (CSUEB, 2018; see Figure 4). In fact, when comparing universities, CSUEB is "the most diverse in the state, and the fifth most diverse in the nation" (Lloyd, 2015, p. 6). However, of the 23 CSUs, Cal State East Bay also has the largest equity gap for underrepresented minority students (CSU, 2017). Therefore, this university was a perfect backdrop for my study as it provided the most extreme inverse correlation between diversity and equity gap.

CSUEB has two campuses and one professional development center in the Bay Area, all of which host classes. The university is made up of four colleges which house the following: business and economics; education and allied studies; science; and letters, arts, and social sciences. There are various degree programs consisting of 24 credentials and certificates, 1 doctoral degree, 49 baccalaureate degrees, 51 minors, and 34 masters' programs. The focal university conferred approximately 5,200 degrees in the 2017-2018 academic year.

While there are many programs on the CSUEB campus, many of the student support programs are housed within the Student Equity and Success Department. As an example, an initial search of the campus website shows seven programs within the department of Student Equity and Success. Each program targets a different type of student and need. After completing the program inventory, I narrowed down the selected support programs based on criteria specific to the study: 1) Programs must have been established for a minimum of four years to allow prior members to graduate, and 2) Programs were limited to the two that served the greatest number of Black male students and provided the most thorough view of how the campus supported this particular group, and 3) Selected programs had to be accessible to me; i.e., the research required access to program staff, students, and data. After interviewing the programs' directors, introducing

my study, and determining the research needs, I finalized the program selection. Therefore, my study took place within two specific programs at CSUEB: The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and the Sankofa Scholars Program. Although both student support programs have a strong presence of Black male students, the two differ greatly in their intent and overall student membership as detailed in the following program profiles:

Sankofa Scholars Program Profile

The website for California State University, East Bay (2020) described the Sankofa Scholars Program as an "access and retention program" (para. 1) that supports degree attainment by helping students as they transition from a community college into a four-year university. The website also detailed that the Sankofa Scholars Program is an affiliate of the Umoja Community Program which serves community college students and is "committed to the academic success, personal growth and self-actualization of African American […] students" (para. 2). Staff interview participant, "Stephen," shared that Sankofa creates a "sense of belonging and community on campus" for students who are "Black identified and students who are interested in being in a Black community on campus." While the Sankofa Scholars Program is open to all students, there is a strong cultural focus on African Diaspora Studies and Black students. For that reason, the program membership is nearly homogenous with regard to ethnicity.

In his interview, staff participant "Carl" listed Sankofa program services as primarily including academic advising and support through their umbrella department that provides a "loaner library, computer lab, community room, [and] tutors." The website also noted that the program acknowledges intersectionality by supporting the integration of the student identity with the home identity for a more holistic approach. At the time of the study, Sankofa featured a cohort model that promoted a sense of community among its membership but staff interviewee, "Katrina" shared that the program is "not doing cohorts anymore" to allow staff to "focus more on the academic support." Katrina, Carl,

and Stephen, also shared that the program was undergoing an expansion to go from serving only upper division students to begin serving both lower and upper division.

According to Katrina, there are minimal requirements for a student to participate in the Sankofa Scholars Program. There is a brief application to be completed by students using Google Forms (https://www.google.com/forms/about/) which asks them to enter basic demographic information to allow the Sankofa staff to keep membership records. One limiting factor is that the program is specifically geared to serve students who are not receiving support services through any other program.

According to Carl, there are two counselors, working under one Program Director, to serve the approximately 200 students who were active in the program at the time the research took place. The three-person team serves the needs of a predominately Black group of students (see Appendix E) through providing support that addresses "the whole student: body, mind and spirit" (CSUEB, 2020, para. 2).

In the fall of 2019, the Sankofa Scholars Program had 295 students in membership with varying majors and ranging in age from 17 to 72 years old. 75.25% of the membership identified themselves as female while 24.75% identified as male. 58.98% of the membership began the Sankofa program at CSUEB in their first year of college as a result of the program's expansion and the remaining 41.02% enlisted in Sankofa as a Junior level transfer student. For the purposes of this study, it is important to note that there were 67 Black males in the Sankofa program accounting for 22.71% of the program membership and 16.96% of the Black males on the university campus.

Educational Opportunity Program Profile

According to the California State University, East Bay website (2020), the Educational Opportunity Program at Cal State East Bay "is designed to improve access and retention of historically low-income, first generation, and educationally

disadvantaged students" (para. 1). According to staff interview participant "Jennifer," students qualify based on financial status and identity markers as being an "underrepresented and historically disadvantaged, or first-generation student." The program website (CSUEB, 2020) states that the program is designed to support students "who have not achieved their educational goals because of economic and/or educational background" (para. 1). The website also mentions the provision of support resources which Jennifer says are to help students navigate challenges and make successfully progress toward a four-year degree. "Kyan," another staff interviewee, explained that the program resources include advisement, workshops, and grants to bolster the EOP student experience, as well as tools which help first-year college students acclimate to college life. Students must indicate their interest in becoming a member of EOP at the time of application to the university. Through the online university application process, students are able to check a box that notes their interest in the EOP.

According to Kyan, two counselors, working under one Program Director, help to serve the approximately 1,100 students registered in the program. Together, they strive to meet the needs of a diverse student group by providing proactive, personalized, and culturally responsive supports. As of Fall Semester 2019, the Educational Opportunity Program had 1,060 student members across varying majors who ranged in age from 17 to 66 years old; 73.21% of whom identified as female and 26.79% of whom identified as male. 67.17% of the membership began the EOP program at CSUEB in their first year of college and the remaining 32.83% transferred to CSUEB in their Junior Year and joined EOP at that time. There are 44 Black males in the EOP program accounting for 4.15% of the program membership and 11.14% of the Black males on the university campus. Figure 5 illustrates the general ethnic demographics which show a majority of Latinx students (56.13%) and 18.68% Black membership (see Appendix F for the detailed breakdown).

Educational Opportunity Program Survey Ethnicities

■ Asian   ■ Latinx   ■ White   ■ Other   ■ Black males   ■ Black Females
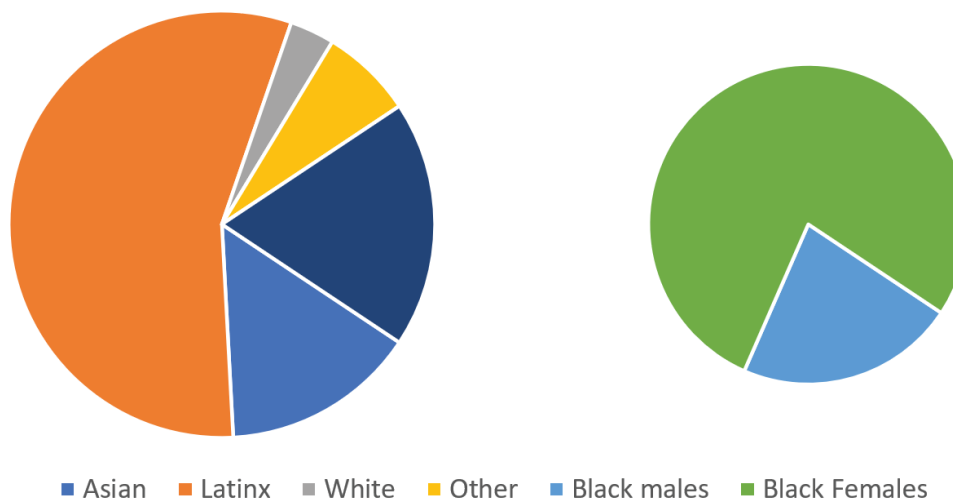
Figure 5: Educational Opportunity Program Survey Participant Demographics
Source: Survey Results in combination with EOP Data

Time Period

When discussing the research setting, it is important that the reader understand

the time period in which this study took place. Although the staff interview data were

collected in the latter part of 2019, the student data were collected in the spring of 2020.

In January of 2020, the United States began to see cases of the Coronavirus Disease 2019

which had already impacted other countries. According to the Center for Disease Control

(2020), the Coronavirus Disease, also known as SARS COVID-19, is a respiratory illness

"that can spread from person to person" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,

"Know about COVID-19" section) through "respiratory droplets [produced] when an

infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks" ("Know how COVID-19 is spread" section).

Symptoms include cough, shortness of breath, and a high fever.

Although the virus was not known to be present on any of the three CSUEB

university campuses, the President of the university declared in March that the campus

would suspend face-to-face sessions and move classes online as a preventative measure in conformity with the actions of other schools and colleges in the local area. With that announcement, most of the CSUEB students left campus to return to their homes. Due to the exponential rate at which the virus was infecting people around the world, the lack of hospital beds and equipment available, and the death rate due to the illness, many areas worldwide declared shelter-in-place status for the citizens. Less than a week after the President made his decision to transition classes to an online format, the Alameda County where Cal State East Bay is located and other surrounding counties issued a stay-at-home order to have citizens shelter in place. Soon after, all but essential businesses were ordered to close and people were required to wear protective face masks and maintain a six-foot distance from others while carrying out essential duties. During this time, the CSUEB campus remained functional though nearly no students remained on campus and most personnel worked from home.

It was in these months that my research was carried out. The data collection was planned for the month of March and therefore, some student interviews were conducted in a face-to-face manner as intended. However, some later interviews were carried out via Zoom (https://zoom.us/) in an online video format after the mandates for social distancing and stay-at-home orders went into effect. While this did not negatively impact the research process, I did make some adjustments to maintain progress.

Participants

Black students at CSUEB tend to favor courses in Psychology, Sociology and Health Sciences with over 100 Black students enrolled in courses within each department. From the 2012 freshman cohort, the six-year graduation equity gap could have been closed by graduating 118 additional students from this group; of the 118 students who

did not graduate within six years, 76 entered the university with majors declared in Biological Sciences, Pre-Nursing, Kinesiology, and Health Sciences with 30 students not declaring a major. Of the total students on campus, 1,012 undergraduate students were Black with 395 being male (CSUEB, 2018). This study focused on the Black male students at Cal State East Bay who participated in the two selected intervention programs: The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and the Sankofa Scholars Program. In addition to Black males, the researched included the general program population as well as program staff. In this section, I first explain the interviewee selection criteria, then profile the participants for each phase of the study.

Staff Interview Participants

The research study began with staff interviews. The criteria for selecting the staff participants was that each person must have been employed by CSUEB payroll, worked a minimum of 30 hours per week within the support program, and had some familiarity with the students at the time of the study. Interviewees included the two program Directors and three program counselors, one from EOP and two from Sankofa. There were two females and three male staff interviewees, all of whom self-identified as Black. These employee participants were chosen to provide the perspective of five individuals who possessed professional knowledge of the program's goals and purposes.

Student Survey Participants

While the study sought to explore the experiences of Black male students on the CSUEB campus, the online survey link was emailed to all of the students enrolled in both study programs: the Sankofa Scholars Program and the Educational Opportunity Program. Selection criteria for survey participation was simply enrollment in one of the two selected support programs. Of the 295 students registered in the Sankofa program, 54 responded to the survey. Of the 1,060 students registered in EOP, 336 students responded

to the survey. Identified[7] survey respondents covered 2.5% of the university's Black male population. Survey participants totaled 390, and while not all participants chose to identify themselves, those who did have the following demographic breakdown:

- Sankofa Scholars Program - Since the Sankofa program is designed to serve the specific needs of Black students, the program membership is predominately Black with 93.56% of the membership listed as Black or African American. As a result, the survey respondents were also predominately Black students with 24 of the 27 identified survey respondents listing their ethnicity as Black or African American, five (18.52%) of whom were male. Of those who chose to identify themselves, 13 started at CSUEB as freshman and the rest transferred in their junior year after completing their lower division requirements at a community college. Identified participants ranged in age from 17 to 63 years old with the largest group being in the category for 19 years old or younger. The mean age was 27 years old with a median age of 26 and a mode of 18 years old. The mean grade point average for the identified portion of the sample was 2.930, close to the Sankofa program population mean of 2.809.

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[7] Students who participated in the online survey who chose to include their student identifier numbers at the end of the survey are referred to as *identified* participants. Student identifier numbers are unique alpha-numeric sequences which are assigned to each student when they are accepted to the university. Those unique identifiers were paired with the demographic data received from the support group lead.

**Sankofa Survey
Genders**

**Sankofa Survey
Entry Status**

■ Male ■ Female   ■ First Time Freshman ■ Transfer
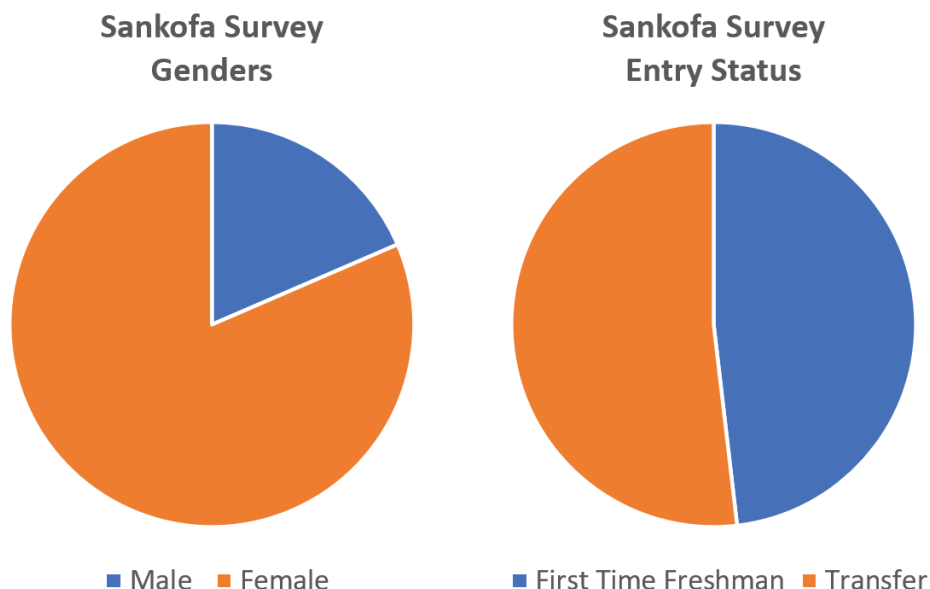
Figure 6: Sankofa Scholars Program Survey Participant Demographics
Source: Sankofa Program participant data

- Educational Opportunity Program – Respondents to the survey sent to EOP members totaled 336 and 221 identified themselves. The ethnic makeup of the identified EOP survey participants included 130 Latinx, 32 Asian, six White, two Hawaiian, one Ohlone, one Spanish, and 36 Black Students. Of the 13 remaining students, eight were listed as two or more ethnicities while five chose not to identify their ethnic background. As this study focuses specifically on the Black male students, it is necessary to note that five (2.26%) of the survey participants were identified as Black males. Overall, however, 14.48% of identified survey participants were male and 85.52% were female. Of those who chose to identify themselves, 147 students started at CSUEB as freshman and the remaining 74 transferred in their junior year after completing their lower division requirements at a community college. Identified participants ranged in age from 18 to 38 years old with the largest

group being in the category for 19 years old or younger. The mean age was 22.416 years old with a median age of 20 and a mode of 18 years old. The averages were very close to those of the EOP population (mean age = 22.339, median age = 21, mode = 18). The mean GPA for the identified portion of the sample was 2.288.

Educational Opportunity Program Survey Ethnicities
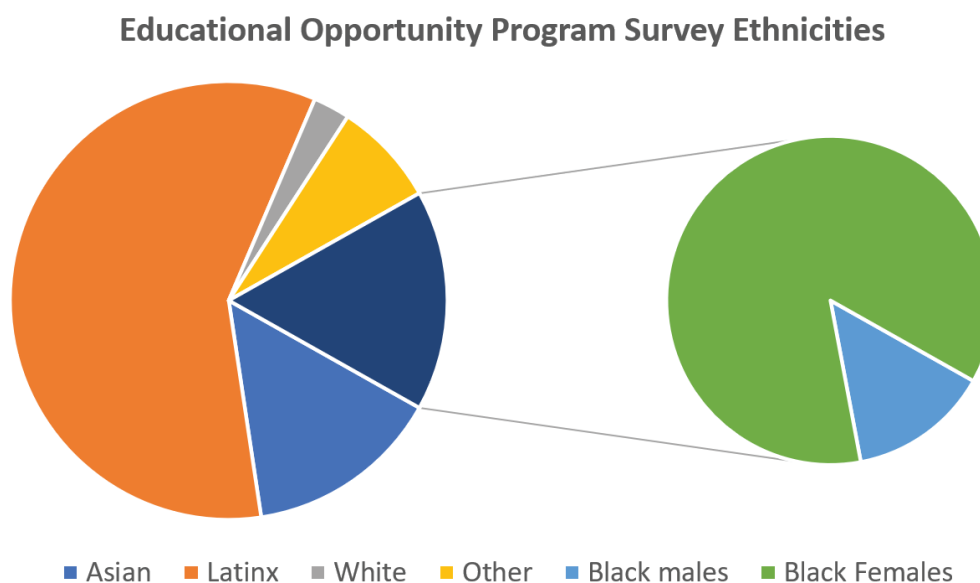
Figure 7: Educational Opportunity Program Survey Participant Demographics
Source: EOP student data combined with survey results

Student Interview Participants

In addition to university employees, students were also interviewed as a part of the study. While the survey was open to all student participants in the selected programs, the student interviews were comprised of only the Black males within the Sankofa Scholars Program and EOP. From the entirety of the program membership, I filtered the interview participants by selecting only the Black males who, at some point, actively participated in the support programs and who were available to do interviews. Thus, of those utilizing these support services, the research employed purposive sampling to select

two interviewees from each of the two programs. While detailing participant selection, Saldaña & Omasta (2018) wrote that qualitative research often uses purposive sampling "in which participants are deliberately selected because they are most likely to provide insight […] due to their position, experience, and/or identity markers" (p. 96). For my research, the interview participants were deliberately selected based on their experience as support program participants and based on their identity markers of ethnicity and gender.

Pseudonym	Program	Classification	First-Generation	Age	Major	GPA
"Kenny"	Sankofa	Senior	Not specified	24	Sociology	2.980
"Michael"	EOP	Senior	Yes	24	Chemistry	2.879
"David"	Sankofa	Junior	Yes	38	Sociology	2.158
"Lavon"	EOP	Senior	Yes	24	Psychology	3.009

Figure 8: Student Interview Participants' Demographic Data
Source: Student data and interview results

The student interview participants were, at the time of the study, current students of Cal State East Bay. These four participants made up a mere 1.01% of the total Black male population on campus but a larger percentage of 3.6% when focusing only on Black male students who used the two campus support services. The interview participants ranged in ages from 24 to 38 years old. One entered CSUEB as freshman and the other three transferred as juniors from other universities. All had mid-range GPAs between 2.16 and 3.01. Follow-up interviews were conducted within the same participants.

Instrumentation

In congruence with the research design, I conducted interviews with program staff, followed by a survey administered to program participants, and then interviewed

four Black male student program members. While some interviews were conducted in-person, much of the data collection was completed on the internet through online applications. The interviews and surveys explored five research constructs defined as follows:

1. Academics: This construct addresses student grades, retention, and graduation rates.

2. On-campus activities: This area includes participation in any activity that occurs on the CSUEB campus which may or may not be hosted through one of the support programs.

3. Peer interactions: The exploration of this construct examines peer relationships among students.

4. Faculty/staff interactions: This construct highlights bonds between the campus employees and the students. It incorporates discussions, advice, greetings, time spent, and other connections that demonstrate the relationship between the student and a faculty or staff person.

5. Connectivity to campus: Feeling a sense of belonging, support, attachment and satisfaction with the university is addressed through this construct.

Staff Interview Protocol

Questions to program staff provided an overview of the program and its intended functions. A predetermined interview protocol and question set was developed to address the research questions. The interview sought staff perspective of the program and its impact on the students by exploring four of the five constructs which appeared throughout the study: 1) academics, 2) on-campus activities, 3) peer interactions, and 4) faculty/staff interactions. This interview questionnaire (Appendix G) itemized these four constructs in the following way:

1. Academics was one construct made up of eight questions, including three sub-questions. Sample questions around academics included, "How does the program support the students academically?" and "Specifically, how does the program help a student navigate college life?"

2. On-campus activities included questions regarding three aspects such as student involvement, leadership roles, and required participation. An example prompt for this construct was, "In what ways does the program get students involved in on-campus activities?"

3. Peer interactions addressed four items which were program activities for students, connection among peers, group assignments, and group counseling sessions. An item that applied to the student interactions construct asked, "How does the program promote connection among student peers?"

4. The faculty/staff interactions construct was comprised of six questions that reviewed roles, interactions, discussions and advice, intentionality in connection building, and referrals to other departments. For instance, the staff were asked, "In what ways do you interact directly with students?" and "How does the program promote connection between the students and staff/faculty?"

Survey Protocol

I created one student survey which was administered digitally through Qualtrics (https://www.qualtrics.com/), an online survey service, and sent separately to each program group. Consisting of 66 original questions with 12 sub-questions, the survey explored student perceptions all five constructs as follows:

1. Academics: Made up of seven Likert scale questions, the construct around academics asked questions such as "How much has the program helped you

to improve your grades in college?" and "To what extent is the program *directly* responsible for a change in your grades?"

2. On-campus activities: The construct regarding on-campus activities included five questions plus six sub-questions. One such question of the yes/no variety was "Have you ever volunteered to do work for the program?" This particular question implemented the question logic function in Qualtrics that would ask a follow-up question of "What did you volunteer to do?" only if the response was in the affirmative.

3. Peer interactions: Ten questions, including two sub-questions made up this construct. Questions posed included "Do you have any friends who are also in the program?" and a Likert style question to ask "How much does the program provide opportunities for you to talk to other students?"

4. Faculty/staff interactions: Comprised of a variety of question types, the faculty/staff interaction construct was a composite of 18 questions. A sample of questions asked include: "How much do your meetings with your Sankofa/ EOP counselor help you in choosing your classes?" on the Likert Scale and "How many times per semester do you meet with your Sankofa/EOP counselor?" as a multiple-choice option.

5. Connectivity to campus: Similar to the academic construct, connectivity to campus utilized only Likert scale questions. The 13 questions addressing this area included question such as "How much does EOP/Sankofa help you with non-academic parts of your life (not school related)?" and "How much do you like CSUEB?"

The question set was self-created and informed by the staff interviews before being reviewed and approved by the Dissertation Committee. The online survey questionnaire

(Appendix H) utilized a variety of question types such as yes or no option, drop down menu option, multiple choice, and open-ended questions which allowed students to freely type a response with no word or character limit. However, the survey was predominately made up of Likert Scale questions set on a consistent, 1 – 4 scale where 1 = not at all, 2 = not much, 3 = somewhat, and 4 = very much. Survey responses within each construct yielded results that could be averaged into a single measurement (Appendix I). This was facilitated by the decision to rate all Likert questions on the same scale within the survey for ease of comparison.

Moreover, in order to specifically address number 2a of the research questions, "How do these [relational support] strategies impact academic performance (e.g., grade point average)?," survey questions were asked to address students' feelings before and after joining their support program. As an example, one question set asks "How easy was it for you to connect with and talk to a CSUEB staff person before you joined the program?" and "How easy was it for you to connect with and talk to a CSUEB staff person after you joined the program?" Data from these question types were analyzed to see if there was any difference between the two answers and whether that difference shares a significant relationship with student grade point average.

Student Interview Protocol

The interview questions (Appendix J) were designed to seek the student perspective on the support programs in which they were involved. Unlike the survey, the interviews were only conducted with Black male students. Similar to the staff interviews and survey, the student interviews examined the following five constructs:

1. Academics: The construct around academics was planned with five questions plus two follow-up questions. One question set posed was, "What motivates you to do well in school? Does the program play a part in that?"

2. On-campus activities: A total of six questions, two of which were asked as follow-up questions, comprised the construct about on-campus activities. One such question was, "Other than attend class, what else do you do on campus?"

3. Peer interactions: Questions such as "In what ways do you interact with other students in the program?" and "Do you feel your relationship with the other students has any effect on how you do in school?" made up this four-question construct around student peer interactions.

4. Faculty/staff interactions: This construct contained eight questions posed to the students. A sample question which addressed faculty/staff interactions asked, "Do you talk to your program counselor outside of the regularly scheduled sessions? If so, what do you talk about? If not, why not?"

5. Connectivity to campus: Six questions, including two follow-up questions, addressed campus connectivity. Two of the questions in this construct set were "Overall, do you feel welcomed or unwelcomed on this campus?" and "Knowing what you know now, if you could start over, would you still choose CSUEB?"

The interviews were designed to consist of 36 questions, although that was adjusted as either a) follow-up questions needed to be added or b) questions needed to be removed for having been previously addressed in another answer. Students were encouraged to answer freely in an informal conversational setting. These student interviews expanded on the information presented in the survey results. After a review of the first round of interviews, follow-up sessions were scheduled to ask questions for clarity or to delve more deeply into the previously given answers.

Procedure

Following the sequential notion previously explained, this study consisted of four phases. The first phase was conducting an inventory of programs and connecting with the Director of each program. Staff interviews took place during the second phase followed by a student survey in Phase III. I then conducted in-depth student interviews to provide richer information for the fourth phase which also included follow-up interviews. This section discusses the four phases of research in depth.

I **Preparation**	II **Staff Interviews**	III **Student Survey**	IV **Student Interviews**

Figure 9: Research Design Phases

Phase I: Preparation

To begin, I conducted an inventory of the available programs on the focal campus. The criteria consisted of the following:

1. The program must support students on the CSUEB campus, either academically or emotionally.
2. The program must serve Black males.
3. The program must have been established for a minimum of 4 years on the CSUEB campus.
4. The program's data and members must be accessible to me for the purposes of this study.

In order to garner this information, I used the campus website to identify programs available to students. Information gathered included basic program activities,

ethnicity and gender of program participants, and contact information for the program

supervisor(s). Of the programs found, the research focused on the two which served the

highest number of Black male students. After confirming the number of Black males

within the programs and discussing the research study with the Directors, I determined

that EOP and Sankofa would be the best support programs within which to conduct my

study. To move forward with the selected programs, I sought permission from the Vice

President over the programs as well as from the two program Directors. After obtaining

permission from the Vice President and then the program Directors, I adjusted the

existing staff interview and survey protocols to customize them for the selected programs,

and then progressed into Phase II.

Phase II: Staff Interviews

After identifying the focal programs that would be used in my study, I contacted

the Director of each program to set up an interview. The interview allowed for them to

ask me questions about my research design and my requests of them. Further, I used

the session to ask questions of the Directors about the programs and the organizational

structure of the Student Equity and Success department. Interview questions explored

the areas of academics, activities, and interactions between student peers and between

students and staff. It was during this time that one of the program leads provided me with

student demographic data for both programs.

After meeting with the two directors, I scheduled interviews with counselors

within each program. I was able to meet with two counselors from the Sankofa program

and one counselor from the EOP program. I interviewed five staff personnel in total to

provide overview information and comparison data as a means of gaining a different

perspective of the programs. To accomplish this, I asked the director of each program to

introduce me to the counselors in the context of the study. Once introductions were made,

I worked to calendar interview times with the program staff. Recording was necessary in order to obtain an accurate transcription of the interviews. I used Google Calendar (https://www.google.com/calendar/) to schedule appointments as that is the platform endorsed by the campus. A couple days prior to the scheduled meeting, a confirmation email was sent to the interviewee to serve as a reminder. The hope was to conduct four interviews with staff from the programs and I exceeded that with five interviews.

Each staff interview was conducted in the office belonging to the staff person and took approximately one hour with the exception of one interview that lasted almost 90 minutes. Recording devices were set to record in advance of the official interview start in order to reduce the perception of intrusion and consent forms were signed just after greeting. The greeting was followed by brief informal chat in order to set the participant at ease. The interview commenced based on a predesigned interview protocol and question set but flexibility was necessary to allow for follow up questions as needed for clarity or more information. The question set was checked for validity through the approval of the research department and then approved by the program supervisor(s) prior to the interview phase.

Phase III: Student Survey

In order to prepare and validate the survey, the questionnaire was submitted to my Dissertation Committee and the research department for approval. The approved question set was then entered into Qualtrics. I tested the survey for errors and functionality through the preview function in Qualtrics. Once the survey passed an initial run-through, I sent the survey link to a colleague for a second review to check for errors, clarity in questions, and functionality. With my colleague's approval, I asked two student workers on the university campus to take the survey. Again, the purpose was to review the questionnaire for errors, for clarity in questions, and for functionality, this time from the

student perspective. After taking the survey, the student workers were asked for their feedback about the process including questions that were unclear, seemed out of place, or that they were not comfortable to answer. As a result, one question was deleted, three were reworded for clarity, and a few non-substantive corrections were made (i.e., spelling mistakes and grammatical errors). The question set was timed to take no more than 20 minutes to complete. After this test process, I did a soft-send of the survey to further the validity of the questionnaire by sending the survey first to a small subset of the intended sample. As their survey responses came in, I reviewed their submissions to ensure that the answers to the questions were as intended.

Once the survey instrument was piloted and all adjustments were reflected in the final version of the questions, the questionnaire was updated in its online format to the Qualtrics platform which is widely used on the university campus. Next, I administered the survey using a web-based technique (Rea & Parker, 2014) across the programs' general student population via an email link. This was done concomitantly with the staff interviews from Phase II. Students were selected, through the participant list I was provided, based on their status as program participants and asked to participate in the survey. They had the opportunity to participate in the online survey through any device in which they could access email as the survey was designed for use on smartphones, tablets, and computers.

Survey participants were expected to emerge as all genders and ethnicities. However, it was essential to include several Black males for the purposes of the study. With the goal of garnering responses from 100% of program participants, students were incentivized to complete the survey with entry for a gift card prize. The final participation rate, however, was 28.63%. After approximately one week, the survey request went out a second time as a follow up reminder to the initial request. Targeted email reminders were used in addition to requesting the staff to connect with any remaining students who did

not previously take the survey. Although the hope was to accomplish 100% participation, these additional efforts did not significantly increase the response rate.

The intention of the survey was to provide a generalized view of the programs (Rea & Parker, 2014). Survey questions explored the five research constructs noted as academics, on-campus activities, peer interactions, faculty/staff interactions, and feelings of connectedness to the campus. Using Likert scales, I compared data across genders and ethnicities in an effort to reveal any differences or disparities. I used an even number of options (i.e., four) on the Likert scales to eliminate center-skewing of the results. The survey consisted of open and closed-ended questions which aligned with the research questions in exploring the relationship experiences of students on the CSUEB campus.

After three weeks of collecting responses and with the help of the program directors and counselors, I contacted a random winner to distribute the prize and then proceeded with analyzing the data. I used the Qualtrics online platform and Microsoft Excel to review and generate spreadsheets, tables, charts, and graphs for analyzing the resultant data.

Phase IV: Student Interviews

Due to the sequential nature of the research, the interview questions were designed to address the survey results (Creswell & Clark, 2017) from the Black male perspective. Therefore, after analyzing the perceptions and feelings expressed in the surveys around relationship-building opportunities present on the focal campus and within the focal programs, I created a questionnaire based on the collected data for use with the interview participants. I developed the interview questions specifically as a means of delving deeper into the perceptions expressed during the survey. Centering the interview questions around the quantitative data is a way to bring credibility to the exploration of the research questions as the study acknowledged and incorporated the

lived experiences of the participants with the qualitative comparison data (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The interviews specifically looked at the Black male students in the programs to comprise the first qualitative strand of the study data.

I sought the help of program staff to get recommendations for potential interview participants. While the research was able to move forward with some of the recommendations, I also referred to the student membership lists to find participants via email contact. When responses came in to express an interest in participating in the student interviews, I asked the men for their phone numbers as a more convenient way to communicate. Once each man committed to meeting at a designated time for the interview, I confirmed the meeting with each participant. I used the cell phone numbers from the students in order to send a text message reminder to each participant a couple days before the scheduled session.

Interview participants met with me either on campus or online. For the face-to-face interviews, I reserved rooms on campus, near the program area when possible, as that location was convenient and comfortable for the students. Although the original intention was to schedule all interview sessions on campus and in-person, that was not always possible and, with the latter sessions, the interviews were forced into an online format due to the statewide social distancing requirement.

As with the staff, the student interviews were recorded to ensure accurate transcription. I used three recording devices (a cell phone, laptop, and tablet) to ensure usability of the recording. As done with the staff interviews, I started the recording devices in advance to reduce the perception of intrusion. Upon arrival, (either in-person or online) the student was greeted and the interview went forth based on the predesigned protocol and question set. The interview questionnaire made use of emergent codes which arose during analysis of the Phase III results. I included questions that also sought to explore the student perspective of the program and its impact on the students.

Interview sessions followed a predetermined protocol and question set. The recorded interviews began with a brief description of the study followed by an introduction of myself as the researcher. I invited each participant to introduce himself and then the conversation moved into a general, non-confrontational question about his expectations of college. Next, the informal interview moved into questions more specific to the study asking about the program, relationships, on-campus events, how often the student spoke to representatives within the program and how connected he felt to the campus (Appendix J). During the interviews, I asked questions that explored the lived experiences of the Black male students on campus and examined the programs from the student perspective. Follow-up questions were used as needed but, otherwise, the question set was prechecked for validity. Further, the follow-up interviews served to more deeply explore topics, comments, and perceptions conveyed during the initial interview sessions. Throughout each interview, I took notes in case there was anything said that needed to be revisited or clarified but, generally, the men were invited to speak freely, with me moving forward to the next question as their answer clearly ended. For Phase IV, I interviewed a total of 4 Black male students, two from each support group.

The following graphic (Figure 10) illustrates the student data collection phases which are a progressive process of delving into the data.
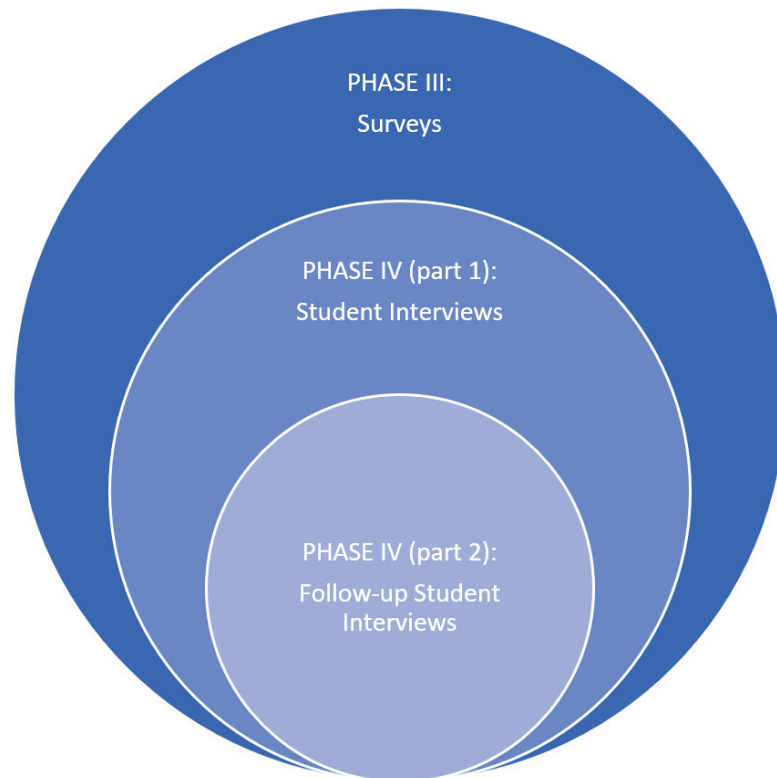
Figure 10: Funneling of Student Participants

Data Collection and Analysis

After obtaining the survey responses, I collected, coded, entered, and verified the self-reported data (Plunkett et al., 2016). Likert scale responses were separated into constructs representing academics, activities, peer interactions, faculty/staff interactions and connectivity to campus. For the survey strand of the data, descriptive statistics were applied and I created a table to illustrate the data (Figure 11). Pearson's Correlation was used to determine whether there was a relationship between any of the individual questions and student grade point averages (see Appendix K for partial correlation matrix relating question answers to GPA). Further, T-tests were used to determine whether

there were any significant differences between student groups based on their Likert scale ratings. The T-tests were performed as two-tailed with two samples and assumed unequal variances. The null hypotheses represented no significant difference between datasets with a significance level of 0.05.

Construct	Mean	Median	Mode	Range Min.	Range Max.	Variance	St. Dev.
Peer Interactions	2.72	3.00	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.15	1.07
Faculty/Staff Interactions	3.14	3.00	4.00	1.00	4.00	1.04	1.02
Academics	2.90	3.00	4.00	1.00	4.00	1.14	1.07
Connectivity to Campus	3.21	4.00	4.00	1.00	4.00	0.90	0.95

Figure 11: Table of Descriptive Statistics: Survey Constructs
Source: Student Survey Data

Additionally, because the study design employed two different data collection techniques (survey and interview) to address data triangulation, the two strands were compared to ensure reliability (Plunkett et al., 2016). I tabulated the qualitative data both by hand and with using the Dedoose (https://www.dedoose.com/) analysis software. The quantitative survey data were analyzed through Qualtrics and Microsoft Excel. Moreover, comparing the two data sets added to the face validity and construct validity of the study (Creswell & Clark, 2017) by establishing congruence and ensuring that the questions corresponded to the research. After both data strands were analyzed separately and compared for reliability across methods, I merged the data together to determine the results.

Once each interview session was completed, I electronically submitted the sound file to a third-party transcription service, Rev.com, that provided a text version of the conversation. The transcription was reviewed, compared against the original recording

for reliability and accuracy, then edited as necessary to include interviewee code names as a means of identifying the speakers on the transcript. After member-checking with participants, I coded the data, first with emergent codes and then with a priori codes from the theoretical frames. Next, I re-read the transcripts with protocols, and analyzed the results (Plunkett et al., 2016). Qualitative results were coded and the resulting themes pointed to some valuable information regarding student relationship experiences on campus.

After coding the data, the survey data set was compared with the interview data. Codes were adjusted as necessary and the qualitative data sets were reviewed together. According to Creswell & Clark (2017), due to the level of interaction between the quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interview) strands of the study, there were two points of interface: 1) during data collection "where the results of one strand build to the collection of the other type of data" (p. 67) and 2) during data analysis by merging the two information sets through comparison and integration. Thus, after analyzing the survey data separately, I also analyzed the survey results in conjunction with the data extracted from the interview phase of the study.

According to Bryman (2006), the integrity of the findings is enhanced through the utilization of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Therefore, the study used the combination of qualitative and quantitative data to discover whether there are connections to the research questions. For the purposes of this study, only the quantitative data significant to the research questions will be discussed.

Strengths and Limitations

According to Saldaña & Omasta (2018), interviews provide qualitative data by allowing participants to express a variety of opinions. The authors suggest

"considering data from at least three different sources to help ensure more dimension to the data" (p. 99, 2018) as a means of triangulating (i.e., "for purposes of comparison, corroboration, and/or synthesis"; p. 420). In keeping in accordance with their suggestion, I interviewed four different participants. However, because my goal was to understand the perspectives of a much larger group, the writers advise using additional participants. Due to the timeline for writing the dissertation, more interviews would have delayed project completion. Still, the number of interviews, in combination with follow-up interviews and a survey allowed me to counter the risk of unreliability. Further, I created mechanisms to double-check the veracity of interview responses by itemizing the questions in a way that allowed me to corroborate the answers given. This countered the critiques that participants may not readily emote and may rationalize their behavior as they reflect; that they may tell untruths either intentionally or due to false memory (Kreuger & Casey, 2009).

While the qualitative interviews do not lend themselves to generalizability (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018), the use of a survey allowed me to review a manageable sample group and make inferences that could be applied as generalizations to the greater population (Rea & Parker, 2014). In fact, Rea & Parker (2014) asserted that surveys are the best way to collect detailed, personal information about a large group of people. A disadvantage in survey use, as with any participant-given information, is the unreliability of self-reported data. Although surveys are widely accepted as reliable (Rea & Parker, 2014), self-reported data filters through moods and memory which has the potential to distort survey answers. Another limitation of my survey was its length. A count of 66 questions with up to 12 sub-questions, in hindsight, was too much to maintain the attention of the participants. While the survey was timed at a doable 15 -20 minutes, a review of the data shows that some students may have experienced survey fatigue and left the final questions unanswered. Additionally, when reviewing some aspects of the

data, it was necessary to analyze the data from Sankofa and EOP separately. Due to the presence of unanswered questions and the smaller size of the Sankofa population, at times, the sample size for the Sankofa data was too small to gain an accurate depiction of the population. However, for much of the data analysis, results from both the EOP and Sankofa groups were reviewed together and there were enough responses to move forward responsibly.

Positionality

As Saldaña & Omasta (2018) argued, "Researchers should […] always consciously reflect on how their standpoint and positionality influence and affect what is interpreted through their lenses, filters, and angles" (p. 35). Since subjectivity is nearly impossible to eliminate from qualitative research, I identify my own positionality in this section.

My position as a university employee broadened my view of education. As university staff and as a graduate student, I am able to see the student view from a variety of perspectives. Specifically, as an CSUEB employee in Academic Affairs, I gained exposure to Cal State East Bay's initiatives for student success and retention. With this information came the insight that the Black male population is among the lowest achieving group on campus with the lowest rate of graduation from the university. My status as university staff supported my research as it afforded me access to data and conversations that not everyone could so readily access.

Additionally, as a Black female, my heart goes out to the Black men I come in contact with. I regularly witness their struggles as greater than those of other ethnicities and I see how their plight often hinders their advancement in society in a cyclical manner. While the gender difference between myself and my focal participants might have posed

a hindrance, the racial parity likely helped to support my interactions with the participants if they considered the commonality as a foundation for understanding.

For these reasons, I have a strong interest in how CSUEB can close the academic equity gap for Black male students. According to Matthews-Whetston & Scott (2015), "Black students' dropout rates exceed those of students from other ethnicities" (p. 2) and they are least likely to graduate from college. These statistics persist in the Black community and I have a continued interest in finding ways to alleviate the low graduation rates.

I understand that my own epistemological framework could have biased my approach so, with this orientation in mind, I considered my positionality as I planned my research. Additionally, I recognized the power dynamics that could have been present during my interactions with the students. As a student, there was a commonality to build on. However, I was an older student in a graduate program. The age difference could have affected the power dynamic as I spoke with younger, undergraduate students on the same campus.

Moreover, I was an employee at the university. Students could have interpreted my position as an employee as a threat. As such, students might have perceived their participation in the survey as a requirement or could have felt uncomfortable to openly express negative opinions about the program or other staff members. To alleviate any angst or discomfort from the students, I was certain to reiterate my position as a research student who wanted to help the participants, the support programs, and the university as a whole.

Further, my position as staff might could have presented an obstacle to building trust when interviewing my colleagues. Because of my role, the office in which I worked, and the people with whom I worked closely, some staff might have perceived a power dynamic unfavorable to their positions. This could have caused my colleagues to exclude

details that could be seen as unfavorable to the programs and provide a biased view of EOP and Sankofa or the students therein. To mitigate the possibility of a perceived power dynamic with staff, as with the students, I highlighted my position as a doctoral research student who wants to help the students, the programs, and the university. Additionally, I explained confidentiality in regard to my study and the protections I have in place for anonymity of participants. As there are many ways one's positionality can influence the process and outcomes of research, I was careful to check my standpoint frequently and make adjustments as necessary while also making sure to monitor the power dynamics that might be perceived.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Crawford (2015) showed that a lack of college degree attainment can impact social mobility and, across the United States, Black males are most heavily impacted in that regard. University graduation and retention rates, at the national level, continue to show that Black male students graduate at a lower rate when compared to non-URM students (Anumba, 2015). As an example, California State University, East Bay's graduation data showed an equity gap that separated Black male students from the general university: For graduates who completed their degree requirements in 2019, Black male students graduate at a rate of 9% less within four years and 19.4% less within six years. Offering possible explanations, Chapter Two considered the impact of structural racism on academic achievement. Also discussed was the way in which faculty perception and a culture of low expectations can produce Mundane Extreme Environmental Stress (MEES) in Black male students.

While research details that supportive relationships are essential to mitigate the impact of MEES and facilitate collegiate success, CSUEB data continue to present an equity gap despite the presence of several support programs available on the university campus. Thus, the purpose of this study was to better understand Black male graduation rates through an asset-based perspective which explores institutional onus in Higher Education. The study centered around two support programs within the general context of the university: the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and the Sankofa Scholars Program. Evidence collected by this study illuminated the perspective of Black male

students who participated in the support programs on the California State University, East Bay campus. Three dominant themes emerged from the collection and analysis of the research data:

1. Institutional Supports
2. Sense of Belonging
3. Life Strategy

This chapter presents my research findings through highlighting the three themes as each of them adds to the current understanding of the Black male experience at Cal State East Bay and provides insight into the academic experience. First, I discuss the institutional support theme which addresses equitable access to resources and information which builds autonomy and competence. The first theme also encompasses relational support on campus and within student support programs. Discussion on the sense of belonging theme follows with an examination of acceptance, representation, and campus connection which includes on-campus employment, peer interactions, and activities. Both of these themes serve to answer my first research question regarding the ways CSUEB attempts to bridge the equity gap. The third theme mentioned, life strategy, emphasizes family and social mobility (e.g., financial management and career aspirations). After discussing the relevance of each theme and the subthemes contained therein, I present a summary of the chapter.

Institutional Supports

Through counting the appearance of various topics in the interview data, institutional supports emerged as the most salient theme (see Figure 12). Various forms of support from faculty and staff were mentioned 177 times during the student interviews.

Frequency of Themes

Theme	Frequency	
Theme I		
Institutional Supports	177	
Equitable Access to Resources		8
Equitable Access to Information		26
Autonomy and Competence		51
Relational Support		92
Theme II		
Sense of Belonging and Feelings of Relatedness	112	
Acceptance		14
Representation		19
Campus Connectedness		
On-campus Employment		24
Peer Interactions		44
Activities		11
Theme III		
Life Strategy	106	
Family		18
Social Mobility		
Financial Management		30
Career Aspirations		25
Future Investment		33

Figure 12: Frequency of Themes
Source: Student Interview Data

As described in Chapter One, institutional support evolves from a system of institutional onus by which discourse about Black male achievement centers around the practices within the institution's locus of control and the ways in which institutions support those students (Harris et al., 2010; Wood & Palmer, 2015). Through use of this social justice lens, college administrators are encouraged to review "the inherent organizational structures that limit student success" (Wood & Palmer, 2015, p. 54). One student interviewee, Kenny noted that through focusing on social justice, university leaders "could have did a better job of promoting stuff that people or students want to

pursue." Appropriately employing a social justice lens should lead to the establishment of institutional supports which improve student academic achievement. Through the interviews, institutional support appeared in two distinct veins: 1) equitable access and 2) relational support.

Equitable Access

Equitable access refers to the university's ability to provide Black male students with enough resources and information to close the academic equity gap and bridge the disparities in opportunity in a way that redresses the balance with other students. Resources can be defined as any learning tools necessary for educational success. As many resources are material goods, it should be noted that students coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds may have difficulty in procuring the necessary supplies needed to succeed academically. Information, while generally free of cost, comes with its own barriers. According to the Postsecondary National Policy Institute (2018), in the United States, 42% of Black students are the first in their families to attend college and therefore lack the support of receiving the shared first-hand experience, knowledge, information, and advice from their parents. As shown in the frequency table (Figure 12) previously, the theme of equitable access emerged from a total of 85 appearances of topics around information and resources.

Resources

Students discussed their use of resources both on the general campus and within their support programs. Interviews revealed that the general university campus housed many of Kenny's personal needs. He shared that the campus had "a lot of resources. Being that I live on campus, everything that I really need is on campus. I don't have to go, drive 20 minutes out or whatever just to go get something. Everything is here on East

Bay. That's what I like about it." Detailing the resources, Kenny listed the facilities that he frequents as

> I got the gym, the little market— little mini grocery store place that I don't have to pay cash for; I use my little Flex Dollars. I don't have to go travel 20, 30 minutes to go see a doctor, see a physician; They're right here. What else? I work on campus. I could literally walk five minutes to work.

Further, he mentioned "living in the dorms, eating food here. I just feel like, yo, in everything that you do in everyday life, you need school, the things that school offered here. Specifically, at East Bay, the gym […], you need the DC [Dining Commons]. I just feel like everything that college offers, you've got to take advantage of it to succeed."

David also mentioned the facilities on campus which he visited, though, unlike Kenny, David spent more time utilizing the resources provided specifically by the support program in which he was enrolled, Sankofa. Particularly, he favored Sanokfa's "community room where [he] stud[ied]." He went on to explain that he was "constantly in there" because the community room had

> resources to where I can always just have somewhere to study, or just provide a kind of safe haven for me regardless of what's going on outside of school. Just in general. When I came to school, I just felt at peace. And when I left school it was like I had all kind of different chaotic stuff going on. But when I was at Sankofa, it was just kind of a peaceful environment.

David spoke about a lending library that supplied "books we can rent." He also mentioned a "computer lab" as part of "all that support coming in just to help me get my degree."

Michael specified a different set of resources which were offered by the Educational Opportunity Program such as professional training and financial support. He referred to "workshops to improve our skills and stuff like that, including our professionalism and stuff. And also, they provide the EOP scholarship, as well, which is pretty helpful, getting around the school and things like that." Kenny also brought up the ability to procure "a letter of recommendation" from professors or advisors when looking for employment opportunities. Notably, the student participants utilized resources that addressed their holistic needs. Resources that addressed health, fitness, finances, safety, and food were highlighted as important supports. In addition to the physical resources provided to them, the participants discussed the importance of information as a resource.

Information

In the interview data, three out of four participants specifically mentioned having parents who did not graduate from college. Michael described himself as "a first-generation student. Because my parents didn't go to college so I am the first in my family to do it." As such, he shared that his "mom and dad have absolutely no idea what [he's] doing in college." Further, Michael explained "they don't know how I navigate my way around anything. So, if I have questions or anything, I can't ask them because they don't know." For this reason, Michael found his participation in the EOP to be particularly helpful.

> So, I feel like having EOP there and them knowing more and on how to help me excel in college, was one of the things that I enjoy being part of the program. Also, the support systems, as well, which include the counseling part. They have peer employees, they have advocates, and all of that. Or they used to but I don't think they do anymore. But there was other things that I felt like was a big help for me, and that's what made EOP stand out to me.

As a first-generation college student, Michael noted that his parents were unable to support his academic journey with first-hand information. Joining the support program on campus helped him to navigate the college experience thereby creating a more equitable experience. As Michael described, the support program bridged the gap in experiential knowledge that many non-Black peers could easily access through their own families.

Similarly, David mentioned that he "didn't have any expectations at all." As he also explained, "Just because I'm a first-generation college student. So, I was kind of coming into it all new. But I just know I wanted to get my degree." David also found the support program beneficial to his college journey. As he recalled, "I guess being in Sankofa was very helpful. Because even as far as before when I was applying— I didn't know how to do any of that stuff. I didn't know how to apply. So, I was just kind of going on my own doing stuff."

Kenny talked about the help and "guidance" he received in transitioning from a junior college ("JuCo") into a four-year university. Of the Sankofa Scholars program, Kenny commented that the program was useful for

> providing guidance, a good experience [...] and healthy relationships with incoming Black students that are transfers, that may not know how to navigate through the four-year universities. It is a big transition. It's a whole different transition. It's still school, but JuCo requirements and university requirements are totally different. It could be easy to get lost in the midst of all that. Like I said, for me Sankofa did a good job of making my transition smooth, classes-wise.

Kenny valued the support he received through the Sankofa Program and recognized the benefit of garnering as much information as possible, especially when transferring from one college system to another.

Student participant, Michael, recounted a time when he learned, through experience, the value of advising.

> I remember when I was doing history: I took this professor that was a lot of work, and I barely passed with a C-minus. I didn't talk to [my counselor] about it because I was [already] taking it. And then she told me never to take that one [professor], but for the next one I'm going to actually take another professor. I'm doing way better now, compared to there.

He discovered that his EOP Counselor could do more than help with course selection; she was also useful for bridging the delta in knowledge with suggestions about which faculty to select or avoid—providing equity rather than equality.

Interviewees spoke of other information gained through their supportive relationships in the programs. When discussing his counselor and how she prepared him for possibly transferring to a community college by sharing financial aid information, Lavon said the following:

> She would let me know before it happens. And I came across some things that she's told me, that I've experienced. Don't know what, but I'm pretty sure she told me something that I would later— Oh! Well, the financial aid. You only get 600%. And then I guess when it comes to junior college, since you do have financial aid, she was telling me about the BOG Waiver or the Governor's Fee Waiver. She told me about that, and so I benefited from it.

As Lavon described it, his counselor shared "news that you should know" which, although she had to discuss the possible depletion of his financial aid, was presented with helpful information.

As a student in one of the campus support programs, Michael began working as a Student Assistant in one of the nearby departments. As an employee, he had access to more information. "Yeah, so if I have a question, I just ask around. It depends too. If I have a question that is related to my graduation and things like that, I want to ask [my counselor] first because she knows more about me." While his office mates had their own expertise, Michael specifically sought out his counselor for particular purposes.

While Michael credits the EOP for much of his academic progress, Lavon chose not to use his EOP counselor for inquiries. Instead, he preferred to use an advisor from his major department which is necessary for students to do in order to graduate. However, students may choose to maintain the connection with their support programs as did David and Michael. However, as Lavon stated, "EOP is more general" which is not preferable to specifics within the various majors. As he explained, "I mean, I can go to one of my professors. I just took them last semester, so I just go, 'Oh hey, I have a question about this.' If not, then the major department."

Although Michael maintains the relationship with his EOP counselor, he spoke of a disconnect from the general university staff with whom he wished he connected earlier in his academic career. As a rule, the university has separate advisors for general education requirements and for those of the major. Students typically begin seeing their major advisor at the start of the junior year in order to obtain advising for the selection of major courses. However, this process was not explained to Michael ahead of time. He expressed his dismay with the experience in saying, that his counselor was

> waiting for it to get here to tell you to go. If you need anything, go to your EOP counselor, right? But then, when you hit your senior year, then they tell you about, 'Oh, there's another person you should have been seeing who is a major advisor.' I was like, 'I could have been seeing my major advisor since I got here. And maybe

that could have helped.' They don't tell you that 'til you're getting closer, but then I wish I heard it earlier. That would have been much more beneficial.

As a result, Michael explained that he could have graduated in Spring Semester of 2020 if he had been better informed about the course schedules and the availability of course offerings. Instead, as he explained, he was introduced to his major advisor too late in the process and was, therefore, unable to make adjustments to the order in which he took his courses. The lack of information resulted in him having to extend his time to degree by an additional seven months.

I feel like once you get closer to the end, it's very narrow compared to when you first started. You know when you first start you have all of these classes you got to take, so you can do it however you want? But when it's getting narrowed down, then you have—for example, me. One of my classes is not offered in spring, so I have to wait and take it in fall next year. So even though I'm working, I have to come back for those classes. But I wish I could have taken it now and not have to work and come back. And it's only two classes that are not offered in the spring.

Michael acknowledged the need for information and understanding as a means of becoming self-sufficient through the academic processes. His story illustrates the way in which information can be used to develop autonomy and competence.

Autonomy & Competence. Self-Determination Theory's dimensions of autonomy and competence center around the student's volition and sense of efficacy. Lavon demonstrated his autonomy and competence through self-reliance in picking courses and attributing the results of his courses to his own efforts. Lavon says that he relies most heavily on outside resources and self-awareness. When asked if he attributes his satisfactory GPA to the counselor in the support program, Lavon responded, "No.

Based off of me. My grades are just based off of me. More deeper, Rate My Professor, and then trying to figure out myself how I study and stuff like that."

To the contrary, Michael talked about how more thorough support from his counselor could have facilitated a shorter time to degree. Recognizing that he was not given enough information in a timely manner, Michael lamented, "If I really knew about it a long time ago, maybe I could have taken those classes, substituted with this one, and probably wouldn't have to wait for it to come back in the spring. But I didn't know. I was just going with the flow." Michael discussed his advising experience as one that navigated him through without an understanding of the processes and without developing a sense of agency, autonomy, and competence for when he transitioned to his major advisor.

As both Michael and Lavon discussed, this made the participants feel "hand-held" and without agency in their own academic transactions. While Michael admitted the counselors' methods of "hand-holding" are beneficial for students newer to the college experience, he also mentioned the process would be better if the counseling and advising was more informative in ways that empowered the students to understand the course selection process and to participate more in choosing their own classes. The students noted the importance of instilling a sense of autonomy, agency, and competency through providing information and tutorials that prepare them to be self-sufficient in navigating college processes. As Michael explained,

> It's good and bad that they can hold your hand, but at the same time, I feel like they should help show you, 'Hey, if this doesn't work, maybe try looking into this and that.' Navigate you through and help you also understand the reason why you're taking this class at this time. Because some classes are not offered in spring, and some classes are not offered in fall. […] The thing is they navigate you through and if you don't really understand it, and you don't know what's

going on, and you just get navigated through, you wouldn't know what mistakes you can do because you're just like, 'Oh, my gosh, they took care of it.' 'Oh, yeah, he did this one.' But why do you think he did that for you?

Lavon agreed with Michael's assessment of the advising practices. In fact, the "hand-holding" approach allowed Lavon to go through the class selection process without understanding it. He detailed the following account which describes his lack of autonomy and competence in the course selection process:

> In my opinion, I've had the experience where I've been hand-held in EOP. I didn't even look at my classes based off of the GE sheet. So, what was it? E4s, all that stuff. I didn't actually do that. I mean, I had some understanding but I didn't have a real understanding of it until 2018, something like that. After [community college] I think. Yeah, after [community college], I think, I've had a bigger grasp than starting in 2013. So I changed my major to psychology, and then there's all these classes, and I had to actually look through it. And then I had the EOP actually do that for me. So, I've had that experience where I was just hand-held.

Lavon's story illustrated the way CSUEB navigated him through processes without instilling knowledge. Only after he transferred to a community college did Lavon's counselors provide explanations to help him understand and control his own course path thereby creating a sense of autonomy and feelings of competence. When asked what CSUEB's EOP could do better to serve his needs as a student, Lavon suggested supporting the development of student competence: "For me, if I had a more in-depth understanding on how to take classes, I guess like a tutorial, then that would be beneficial." Students don't know what information they lack, nor do they understand which questions are appropriate to ask when they are in the process of discovering university life. As Lavon, summarized, "I would probably say, just due to my abilities

and understandings, I probably wasn't asking the right questions to my EOP counselor, maybe. But, from there, I will say that there's some hand-held aspect to it."

Although some participants acknowledged that the support was, in some ways, excessive and even detrimental for the way in which it inhibited the development of autonomy and competence, they all relied on the programs and the counselors therein. Michael described the necessity for his advising appointments in saying,

> I really need to see my counselor. Well, I would say, well maybe not freshman and sophomore year, but when I reached my junior year, I felt like I had to see my counselor at least twice in a month because things change. Policies change, and plus we have a switch from quarter to semester, a lot of things change. So, I wanted to make sure every class I take is what I need to take, so I don't have to retake any class that I want to. So, I will always see my counselor just to double check.

Moreover, while it is clear that some students could further benefit from additional explanation of processes in order to develop a sense of agency, feelings of competence, and autonomy, all participants agreed that the support programs and counselors were advantageous and necessary to their university experience. Lavon said that his experience with the support program was "good, overall." As Kenny said, "My overall experience with Sankofa was I felt like I learned enough and did enough to put me in the position where I am today.

Relational Support

Relational Support Experiences on Campus

The relational aspect of institutional support was primarily built around faculty and staff interactions within the university. While most interview references to relational

support were positive, those positive experiences were discussed in the context of the support programs. Within the campus as a whole, participants contended with a lack of support. Further, there were some mentions about implicit bias and mundane extreme environmental stress (MEES) in the context of classroom experiences.

While the four student interviewees each attested to feeling welcomed at the university, the experiences they described illustrated an unsupportive campus environment which was mitigated through the support programs. Larger class sizes in college make it more difficult for students to connect with faculty when compared to their previous high school environments. One interview participant, Michael, discussed the need to exert more effort and intentionality toward building relationships with his professors. After discussing the ease with which he connected with his teachers in high school, he stated,

> But when it comes to here, it's a little different. Some classes—I feel some lecture classes are pretty big and professors don't know who you are until you step up and go, 'Hey, I would like to come to your office hours.' You have to do more as a student in college than you did in high school.

Michael further explained, "If you don't engage with them, they're never going to know you. I mean, they will probably know you're in the class, but they don't know who you are." In discussing a need for support, he also mentioned that "[faculty and staff] can only give you so much but you might be independent." Through his accounts, Michael noted the lack of initiative taken by university faculty to build relationships and connect with students. In order to mitigate the disconnect, Michael was intentional about initiating contact and developing relationships with his professors so that he would not feel unsupported.

Kenny also noticed a need to initiate a relationship with faculty and revealed his struggle in his Statistics class. He presented a detailed account of the response he received when asking for help and how his initiative with the instructor helped to facilitate passing the math course.

> When I first got here, Fall 2018, in my statistics class— First of all, I didn't want to take stats at all, but it was required for my major. I was like, damn. The professor, he wasn't very good. Yeah. It irked my nerve. Every day was a challenge. He was an older White man. The way he would teach, he would twitch and flinch every time like, what. Then he wouldn't offer no tutoring. When we'll ask him to explain the problem again, he wouldn't do it. Or he'll say something like, 'Oh, I just did it right here. It's right here.' Yeah. Almost everybody in that class failed. I didn't though, I was like no, I'm in here every day; You going to pass me. […] He barely passed me though. He gave me a C-.

Kenny's experience shows a professor who refused to offer in-class support and was not available after the class session to explain areas that were taught in an unclear manner. When asked if he felt that he learned the material presented in the class, Kenny responded,

> I feel because I communicated with him. I'm not going to lie, I failed every test that man threw at us. That was hard. That was a hard one, but I just feel like my dedication, because I was in class literally every day, I tried to ask questions when I could. I was engaged even though I didn't understand it at all. He even said that to me. He was like, 'Because you was here every day and that you turned in all your homework,' he was like, 'I'll pass you.'

As a student, Kenny admitted that, due to the lack of support, he was unable to develop competency in the course subject. Kenny further explained his experience with seeking support and assistance in the classroom:

> I would ask him specifically to show it to me. He was like, 'Oh, go to so-and-so' Or, 'Ask him. He know it.' […] I'm like, 'No, no. I'm asking you.' Then he'll just brush it away or whatever and like, no. […] As soon as class was over, I'll just be one of the ones to talk to him while he's gathering his stuff, whatever, at the desk. I'd just have a little mini convo with him. That was it.

Although he regularly sought help and clarification of the concepts presented in class, Kenny explained that he received no support in the statistics class. The student initiated interactions with his professor and, while the student says he failed every exam and did not understand the subject, he was given a passing grade for which he credits his efforts to talk to the instructor. In addition to Kenny, David also recounted a lack of relational support on the university campus.

In his interviews, David witnessed the mundane extreme environmental stress as some of his Black classmates experienced it. According to David, "There's been times, not for me, but there's been times where some of the students in class, from one of the teachers, felt like they couldn't ask certain questions— just ask questions, because they'd feel like they'd always be wrong." For David, the experience had become so mundane, that he was able to minimize it in his mind. When asked whether he experienced a similar occurrence, he responded, "Well yes, but I didn't feel any type of way." Faculty responses to students are an important part of a college education which can either encourage or hinder learning and development. When a student is stifled and made uncomfortable to ask clarifying questions in a classroom setting, learning is diminished.

Another classroom experience was described by Lavon, who said he "could handle" the MEES presented by his instructor.

> In one class, I had this teacher, I think he was ignoring me because if I raised my hand, he wouldn't look at me but he would talk to everybody else. I put my hand up; He would call on someone who didn't have their hand up. I didn't care at first but sometimes when I have a question, I need help. So, this one time I was raising my hand and he looked at me but he acted like he didn't see me so I just asked the question anyway. But then he got a attitude and told me I'm interrupting the lesson. I didn't ask no more questions.

Lavon said he considered dropping the class after this interaction but because the deadline to drop classes had passed, he says, "I just stayed. I could handle it though." When specifically asked whether there were other Black students in the classroom, Lavon described the only other Black student: "I don't think she talked in class really. I mean I guess I didn't either." Ignoring students is also a way in which professors can stifle student learning.

In a different course for his major, Lavon casually mentioned an instance of implicit bias in which the faculty member suggested on the first day of class that the student did not belong in the computer engineering class. Lavon shared, "I had a teacher that told me I shouldn't take his class." While Lavon made the assumption that his professor was warning him of the difficulty of the class, it should be noted that it was unlikely that the professor had prior knowledge of the student's academic history and only Lavon was addressed by the professor in such a manner. According to Strayhorn (2008b), such microaggressions create feelings of exclusion and incompetence and Smith et al. (2011) warn that regular exposure to an environment of microaggressions can create barriers to relationship building for Black males on university campuses.

David also discussed an example of feeling unsupported when seeking help within the general university campus. In his interview, he divulged that one worker in the Financial Aid department was not accommodating. "She wasn't very helpful. I had multiple questions, and felt like she was just kind of rushing me a little bit." David later explains that he began avoiding that staff person and was thankful to have found one who was much more supportive.

The lack of support is seen within general education advising as well. As Michael stated, "If you talk about the university in general, I feel like I don't get any help from them." Specifically with regard to advising, student interviewee, Kenny, discussed the reputation of the campus' lower division and general education advising department: "From what I heard, AACE don't really help people with their classes." The preconceived negative perception was a part of Kenny's decision to join Sankofa. Student David shared his experience with the Academic Advising & Career Education (AACE) department, sharing that they did not accurately inform him of his course needs. He explained, "So when I picked my classes, I went to AACE and they helped me pick my classes, but there were some classes that I wasn't supposed to be in." David's experience matched the information that Kenny received showing that the advising department for the general university was, in some ways, a perceived detriment to the student experience. In contrast, interview participants spoke highly of the support programs in which they participated and David said that his program "balances" the lack of support he feels within the rest of campus.

Relational Support Experiences Within Support Programs

Although David and Kenny expressed having little faith in the Academic Advising & Career Education department available to the general student community, both spoke of effective and productive advising within the context of their respective support

programs. Like Kenny, David found the Sankofa Scholars program to be a better support for his advising needs. David described his experience in the program saying, "So, once I got to Sankofa, then they kind of told me about the classes that I needed to be in and stuff like that. So, Sankofa was really helpful in that aspect, as far as picking my classes."

Participants talked about the value of the advising experiences saying that the counselors were beneficial with regard to, as Michael put it, "telling me the right classes to take" and David said that he met with his counselor to "check in for my classes, and advising, and stuff like that." Kenny talked about how his counselor checked in with him: "She was giving suggestions like the WST [i.e., Writing Skills Test], everything, how your other classes doing, checking up with us. I let her know this [Statistics] class is a struggle. She be like, 'Yeah, just talk to your professor. If not, go to his bosses, if anything.'"

Participant David shared how his advising experiences with his counselor were valuable to his degree progress. "For me, I needed a lot of support, just because I didn't know what I was doing when I first started, as far as just picking classes and all that stuff." He mentioned how one of the other counselors also provided assistance by providing some academic advising: "One of the counselors, and he's not even my counselor, he helped me immediately, help switching a class, or thinking about a class I wanted." As David drew nearer to completion of his graduation requirements, he continued to see the advantages of meeting regularly with his counselor. Said David of his counselor, "I did Zoom with him earlier this week. I just wanted to make sure that I was on track for graduating next spring. So, he just kind of broke down all my classes, the classes that I have took, the classes that I need to take."

In one case, the counselor also guided the student in his choice of major. Michael talked about how he came into the university as a pre-nursing student and, through a discussion about his future goals, was guided into choosing a major in Biological

Sciences with a concentration in Forensic Science due to his counselor delving beyond basic advising.

> Oh, yeah, that's another thing that I like about my EOP counselor is because, you might not know or be sure what exactly you want to do, major-wise. Because when I first got here, I got here as pre-nursing, and I had this idea of becoming a nurse. And I figured out pre-nursing is not even a degree after the year, my freshman year. And the good thing is, I was feeling the science field so that told me you are taking pretty much most of the classes that the science field take for now. But as you start going deeper, it's going to change. So, pre-nursing is not a major. What is the purpose of you choosing that? It tries to make me find the reason for the major. And I was like, 'I just wanted to work in healthcare.' He was like, 'Have you looked into the health science or biology? They're all related to the healthcare.' And so I did health science, and I figured I don't like health science. Then he was like, 'Well, then do biology.' Even in bio like he told me to, he was like, 'What do you want to focus on?' There's general biology. Most of my friends are doing that. There's forensics if you're interested in that work. And at that time, I was really interested in doing lab work and stuff because there were lots of labs. And I was really good at them. I was like, 'Actually, I think I like lab working.' And then he said, 'Do forensics.' And it's pretty fun.

With Michael, the EOP counselor helped guide the student into a better fit through asking questions surrounding the student's interests. Getting to know the student more personally allowed the counselor to make a fitting recommendation which worked well for the advisee.

Conversely, Lavon did not get personalized guidance with his major selection. He started at CSUEB as a Freshman in 2013 and was struggling in his major. After three

years, Lavon's EOP counselor suggested that he transfer to a community college, in order to preserve his financial aid, until he was able to get on the "right track" with regard to his classes. It was in the community college that Lavon was advised to change majors.

> I've been here for very long, to be honest. I've been here since 2013, switched my major. It was computer engineering for three years. And then I went to [a community college] for two [years], and then I came back 2018. So then from there, switching to psychology. And throughout my time, I've had help from EOP, which was good, overall. There are some EOP counselors that have— they have changed jobs. They are no longer here. I've had my last EOP counselor before this current one— I forgot her name. […] She was very helpful. We would just have meetings on what my path should be. So, since I was computer engineering and I was going up and down with the math portion of it, she noticed and let me know that if I keep the trend up, then I would go ahead and run out of financial aid. So, we were strategizing what I should be doing. Eventually, it was recommended that I go to [a nearby community college], do some more revisions. And then I chose that route. But overall, my EOP counselor […] was a really big help.

Partially due to the guidance from his counselor to leave Cal State East Bay for a community college, and partially due to the community college's advising to switch majors, Lavon said he is "doing way better" after returning to the university.

While the two Sankofa student participants spoke positively about their conversations with program counselors, the EOP students spoke less positively. Neither negative, nor positive, Lavon said he's "not discouraged" by anything his counselor says or does. Michael, however, talked about feeling discouraged sometimes after meeting with his counselor:

Sometimes when I'm leaving [my counselor], she goes, 'The ugly truth is just sad to hear.' […] She would just tell you what it is, how is it. And there's no sugar-coating. This is what's going to happen. And sometimes just hearing the truth just sucks and you just have to move past it. But so, if it's true, there's no sugar-coating. That's one thing I don't like about her is just, she would tell you as it is, 'You messed up here and this is what you're going to fix.' And she will tell you what she can do to help you, but that's the other thing. So, I've left sometimes really discouraged and I just have to pick myself up again. And it happens. It's just life.

Nevertheless, Michael felt that the conversations were to his benefit. He also noted that the discouraging conversations did come with help, support, and possible solutions from his counselor. Kenny also described a counselor who "didn't sugar-coat anything" but said that characteristic was what he "admired most about her." "She gave you the real, whether you wanted to hear it or not. That's what I liked the most." He also described a counselor from the EOP, who he forged a friendship with, as going above and beyond the requirements of the job.

He'll take time out of his time to make sure I was good. If I needed a favor, he'll pause his work to do what I need to be done. Anything about a class, school-related or anything, paperwork, he'll look out for me, make sure I'm good.

Kenny's own Sankofa counselor provided beneficial support as well. "She was helpful, making sure I had the right classes and taking them in the right order instead of going backwards."

Interviewees described the staff of the programs as "friendly," "smart," "pretty nice," "helpful," "real," "hard-working," and "educated." David talked about how

approachable the staff workers in Sankofa are: "You can have a normal conversation with her. I like that about [her]. And the same with [my counselor]."

Specifically, David shared that his advisor was available for various conversations around various topics. Those conversations enabled David to connect his family and personal life to his campus experiences. David said that he felt free to talk about "anything. Any time [my counselor's] there and I have anything that I want to talk about, then he's always there for me to talk about whatever I need to. If it's about school, or my kids, or just regular life stuff. I like that about him." David also explained how conversations with his Sankofa counselor helped him to see other perspectives and encouraged him to stay in his classes despite in-class struggles.

> It would be a teacher I didn't necessarily like; I didn't like how they did something in class, or you got to be in class by a certain time, and I didn't like it. And [my counselor] always gives a different outlook on it, so a more positive outlook on it. So then if you're not looking at something a certain way, then he can kind of change my thought process. So he can help me. It helps me, because then I'll be like, 'Okay, yeah, you're probably right. I shouldn't look at it all as a negative aspect.' So, then it just gets me to kind of focus in and lock in more, so I can get the kind of grades that I want. Instead of just being upset about whatever the professor is doing.

Such interactions with his counselor, David suggests, have a positive impact on his grade point average as he otherwise might not attend the classes for which he was enrolled.

The quantitative survey data, however, showed that staff interactions may not directly impact student grade point averages. I conducted two-tailed, two-sample, T-tests assuming unequal variances. I analyzed two different indicators for student success based on the student survey. The null hypothesis was that there was no significant difference

between the dataset that indicated frequent meetings (i.e., survey responses indicating "somewhat" or "very much" on the Likert scale when asked "How often do you meet with your EOP/Sankofa counselor?") with the advisors when compared to the dataset which denoted infrequent (i.e., responses indicating "not at all" or "not much") meetings with the advisors. Working with a significance level of 5% determines that p-values less than 0.05 indicate a low probability that the results are due to random chance. Analysis comparing the grade point averages between students who met with their program support counselor three or more times per semester ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.53$) to those who met only one or two times per semester ($M = 3.01$, $SD = .65$) indicated no significant difference in GPA (p = .76), as shown in Figure 13.

When investigating the academics construct, data analysis showed a statistically significant difference in student attitudes about their own academic performance when they meet with their counselors more often. Specifically, when exploring survey data from the EOP participants, there was a statistically significant difference (p < .001) in attitudes about academics when comparing students who met with their counselor three or more times per semester ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.50$) to those who met only one or two times per semester ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.67$). Because the p-value was low, the null hypothesis was rejected, an indication that there was indeed a difference in student attitudes about their academics.

Support Group	Construct	Up to two meetings per semester			Three or more meetings per semester			t-statistic
		n =	Mean	SD	n =	Mean	SD	
EOP	Academics	172	2.81	0.67	49	3.13	0.50	0.05
	GPA		3.01	0.65		3.13	0.53	0.76

Figure 13: Difference in GPA and Student Attitudes About Academics for EOP
Source: Student survey data

When looking at the data for Sankofa participants, again, the null hypothesis was that the number of advising sessions had no statistically significant impact on

student attitudes around their academics. Using a 0.05 significance level, data showed a statistically significant difference in attitudes about academics (p < .001) when comparing students who met with their Sankofa counselor two or more times per semester (M = 3.13, SD = 0.63) to those who met only once per semester (M = 2.85, SD = 0.83). Contrarywise, when evaluating grade point averages, there was no statistically significant difference (p = .25) based on how often a student met with their counselor. Thus, while student attitudes may have been impacted by the number of visits to the support program, grade point averages remained unaffected (see Figure 14).

Support Group	Construct	One meeting per semester			Two or more meetings per semester			t-statistic
		n =	Mean	SD	n =	Mean	SD	
Sankofa	Academics	10	2.85	0.83	17	3.13	0.63	4.55×10^{-5}
	GPA		2.74	1.16		2.87	0.46	0.25

Figure 14: Difference in GPA and Student Attitudes About Academics for Sankofa
Source: Student survey data

Although the data showed that grades were unaffected by counselor interaction, David expressed appreciation for the opportunity "to talk to them and be open with them about just real life, real life stuff." Specifically, David shared the following explanation of a more holistic support experience:

As the semesters progressed, I had some stuff that was going on with me personally or whatever, and I was able to— I'm always able to go talk to [my counselor], and have a conversation with him about what I'm going through. Even if it's about school, or just life in general. So, I love that about Sankofa.

David also mentioned other staff within the support program with whom he was able to build relationships: one with whom he could have "conversations about basketball and school" and another with whom he could "talk about school and personal stuff."

Researchers (e.g., Beattie & Thiele, 2016; Hamilton, 2005; Inkelas & Weisman, 2003; Lee 2018; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1978) show that relationships with university

employees positively influence student academic achievement and persistence. Strayhorn (2008b), Plunkett et al. (2016), and Rogers (2012) explained how those relationships provide students with access to information and resources necessary to navigate through the college experience.

In discussing the institutional support theme with regard to the research questions, research question 2 asks, "What strategies are employed at CSUEB to create relational supports for Black male students?" Within the context of the support programs, CSUEB employs strategies from the institutional support theme: the provision of access to resources and information as well as relational supports such as academic advising and counseling. Addressing research question #2a, the quantitative data show that providing relational support as an intervention strategy does not directly impact academic performance for Black male students when considering only grades. In fact, Figure 15 shows that Black males within the EOP and Sankofa programs have lower grade point averages than Black male students on the CSUEB campus not affiliated with either program. The opposite is true for Black females in the two programs. Although access to resources and information and access to relational supports offered by the two programs do not seem to impact grades, they do positively impact student attitudes about their academic performance.

Grade Point Averages for Black Students
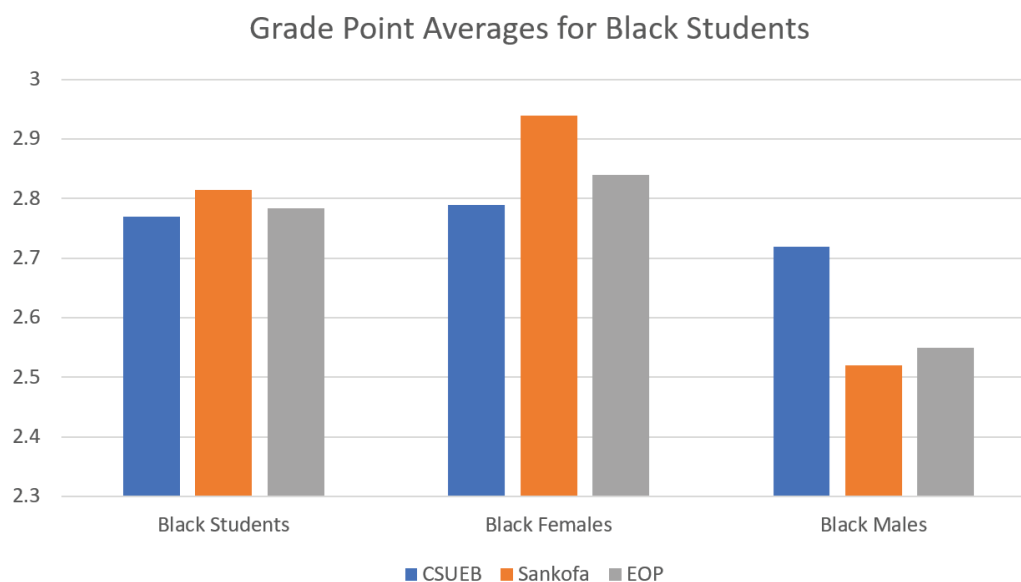
Figure 15: GPA Comparison of Black Students in Programs vs. the General
CSUEB Campus
Source: Program data combined with CSUEB university data from https://csueb.campus.
eab.com/analytics

Sense of Belonging and Feelings of Relatedness

Also necessary for navigating through the college experience is a sense of
belonging and feelings of relatedness. A sense of belonging and feelings of relatedness
was another common theme discussed during the interview portion of the research. As
discussed in Chapter One, a sense of belonging results from peer relationships (Harper,
2003) and is necessary to bolster social adjustment while in college (Harper, 2003).
Maslow (1962) and Strayhorn (2019) described belonging as a basic human need and
Tovar and Simon (2010) defined belonging as "an individual's sense of identification
or positioning in relation to a group or to the college community, which may yield an
affective response" (p. 200). Further, Strayhorn (2019) framed a sense of belonging as

being "part of a larger motivational framework" (p. 5) which is "sufficient to influence behavior" (p. 4). Ryan & Deci (2017) talked about relatedness and being socially connected as "feeling significant among others" (p. 11). Osterman (2000) described belonging through Self-Determination Theory as "a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 324). Through his interview, Michael provided an example of this concept in which he described the relationship with his counselor as one that supported his need for assistance and made him feel seen on the university campus. Michael expressed the importance of a sense of belonging and feelings of relatedness through emphasizing the connection between his relationship with his EOP counselor and his ability to access information: "If I have a question that is related to my graduation and things like that, I want to ask [my counselor] first because she knows more about me." Throughout the interviews, a sense of belonging was mentioned within a variety of contexts: acceptance, representation, and connection to the campus.

Acceptance

According to Yaqin, Morey, and Soliman (2018), "belonging is about acceptance [and] feeling welcome" (p. v). All four student interview participants conveyed that they felt "welcome" at Cal State East Bay. Participant Kenny described the way in which he was welcomed to the campus:

> I would say I feel welcome, because when I first got here, I knew I was going to get welcomed, but it's just by who and when. Being new to a school it's like, man I don't really know nobody but I'm not going to go out and seek nobody. Well, personally me, I'm not going to go seek out some friends because I'm not thirsty for friends like that. Whatever connections I do make it's going to genuinely happen on its own. Most of my relationships, it did.

Kenny suggested that he arrived at the university with an expectation of building friendships and doing so organically. As a new student on campus, he also expected to be welcomed through friendly gestures, although he was not immediately sure from whom he would receive the favorable reception or in what way the relationships would evolve. Kenny was not disappointed by the welcoming presence and found that other students and peers at the university were the ones to accept and welcome him:

> Like I said, when I first got here everybody was helpful, wanted to get me involved, people was inviting me to places, showing me around, introducing me to people. Over time I kept seeing those familiar faces and each time it just grew into something more. Before I know it, I was like, just welcomed in. Sometimes I feel like the new kid on the block, but no. Since I've been here, my experience has gotten better and better.

The way by which students accepted Kenny and guided him through his time at Cal State East Bay made him feel a sense of belonging and relatedness within a peer group during a time when he was entering a new environment.

Another participant also talked about encountering acceptance. For David, his feeling of belonging stemmed from knowing that he was not alone in his journey. While the general enrollment classes were described as having "not a lot of interaction," David described a community environment in his Sankofa-assigned class. He explained,

> But then [two of the Sankofa counselors] had came in to talk to us, and they were just asking— I think it was probably the fifth week of school and they kind of asked us how things were going, and what we were going through and stuff. And then some other people were talking about stuff that they're going through. So, it made me be like, dang you know, like, I'm not the only person going through

stuff, so it made us, like, you know, to be more like a unity, like a community. So, I think that definitely made us closer.

In his interview, David shared that he specifically sought out that same feeling of fellowship and acceptance after having experienced it while attending community college.

> I was a part of the Umoja program at the [community college before transferring to CSUEB]. The lady that was in charge of the Umoja program had told me about Sankofa. The Umoja program that I was in, we were a real community, and we took classes together. So, it was an amazing experience. I just kind of wanted to have that same experience when I got to East Bay.

David's pursuit of fellowship and acceptance was successful. He stated that the Sankofa Scholars Program "kind of created a community for me, just being able to interact with all walks of different types of life, just in general. Regardless of age or whatever, I can talk to somebody. That's basically it. Just a positive community."

Michael also spoke about acceptance when he said that he felt "comfortable going to school." He further explained, "I just feel okay going to school, seeing everyone. It's a good environment." Feeling comfortable in the environment was a way in which Michael felt accepted on the university campus. In addition to acceptance, another way students feel a sense of belonging on campuses is through seeing themselves represented within the university community.

Representation

Representation within the university environment addresses Self-Determination Theory's dimension of relatedness. Strayhorn (2019) wrote that a "lack of a critical mass [on college campuses] can lead to feelings of isolation, marginalization, and alienation

both inside and outside the classroom" (p. 110). While some researchers (e.g., Flemings, 1984; Strayhorn, 2019; Turner, 1994) suggest that Black men have more difficulty forging relationships with peers due to the underrepresentation of Black men on many college campuses, Strayhorn (2019) shows that belonging helps to mitigate the feelings of exclusion that may result from the mundane extreme environmental stress. According to Yaqin et al. (2018), belonging is about "a sense of identification" (p. v).

As Kenny said,

What's most encouraging in my school experience here is, I'll say [...] it's seeing people come here that look like me, same color as me, and succeeding, doing good things in life, in their community. I know before I came here— Well the last time I've had a Black teacher was in eighth grade. When I got here Sankofa gave me three, four of them. I was like, wow. That was encouraging here.

He went on to discuss the importance of Black professors and the way in which they are motivational for Black students:

I feel like it would have been an advantage, it would have been motivational. It would have made me more determined to do my schoolwork, because I feel like they would have probably talked to me on a real personal level, because Black people, most Black people come from the same background. Come from the same circumstances, you know, inner cities, single parent households, not White, you know. So, I just feel like if I would have had more Black teachers, they would have been able to relate to me, and also put the extra time to make sure that their Black students succeed in their classes. And like I said, for the first teacher, they would have just been down in the role, and riding me hard to make sure I pass my classes, so yeah, I feel like it would have been more of an advantage.

Although Kenny mentioned being encouraged by the presence of some racially representative faculty, he also acknowledged that, at times, he became discouraged.

> What's discouraging is looking at the statistical numbers on how Black students don't graduate within four years compared to other races. They graduate in five, six years. That is kind of discouraging. […] It's just one of them things you just look at like, wow, I didn't even know that. That's bad.

Kenny's understanding of the nation's current statistical data undermined his sense of relatedness, causing feelings of unimportance and disconnection from the university. Being in the Sankofa program, however, helped to ease some of the discouragement and disconnection that Kenny felt.

David also benefitted from the connection opportunities offered through the Sankofa program. One of the important aspects of relatedness that Sankofa offered to David was like-minded company. He expressed the significance of relatedness and a sense of belonging through "just being able to be in a setting where there's other people that look like you, or are having the same type of issues." Also of note for David was "having conversations with other Black people." Further, he was inspired by being in an environment with successful Black adults. "For me, the environments that I have grown up in, I've never seen Black people, or Black women in general, be that hard working, or being that educated. So that just in itself kind of motivates me." While he said that attending a Historically Black University would have been preferable, David also said "you get that experience [in Sankofa]. Because you're surrounded around a whole bunch of Black people. So that experience is great."

Notably, only the interview participants from the Sankofa program spoke specifically about racial representation and their appreciation for Black faculty, staff, and students. This suggested that Sankofa was more deliberate in addressing a sense of

belonging and feelings of relatedness. While Lavon made no mention of representation, Michael mentioned diversity in general by saying, "I feel like here, the diversity and just everything that's here, you get a piece of everything." While, indeed, CSUEB is the fifth most diverse university in the nation (Lloyd, 2015), only 10.1% of the student body are Black and a mere 3.25% are Black males.

Campus Connectedness

Feeling a sense of belonging, support, attachment and satisfaction with the university help the students form a connection to the campus. Although excluding the general campus, David said, "I feel connected to Sankofa," specifically identifying the support program as his attachment to the campus.

Peer Interactions

Lavon was the only student who was not employed at the university and was the only student who claimed not to have any close friends on the campus. Lavon stated, "When I was a freshman, I'd always go to my friend's dorm." He later detailed,

> Maybe since I was new to the college system, it's just— you're not as focused, in my opinion, I would say. You have all your friends and stuff like, just hanging out in this, like, this college experience. That was my experience, so I guess I could just talk for myself, but I was just more focused into, like, I guess getting involved with, like, campus activities and stuff. I was trying to do fraternities and stuff like that. I wasn't really worried about classes and stuff.

Lavon recounted that his friends were of greater importance when he was newer to college but, as he progressed closer toward graduation, his course work became a higher priority. In agreement with Lavon, Michael shared the following statements:

As soon as you reach junior year and you realize that you've been on campus for so long, you want to get out of here. But when you first get here, you have a different type— When I was a freshman, I was more about family, having friends and stuff like that, because I feel like that would be why I want to be on campus. Otherwise, I would just come to school and leave and go home.

The thing is, like I said, when you're a freshman and now, like right now, I feel like I don't have time to hang out during the week, the weekdays, at all. Maybe weekends, sometimes we'll catch up here and there. Probably go eat out again, but during the weekdays, I'm here working. After work, I go home, do my thing, I want to go to bed. Wake up, same things. But when I was a freshman, we used to kick it all the time. My friends would be like, 'Hey, are you done with your class yet? Let's go to Broncos[8].' And we'd all hit that. But now I don't have time to go to Broncos. I bring my meal now.

In response, Lavon agreed, later explaining that "you grow up. Friends change. Priorities change." Nevertheless, Lavon did have "a couple of friends," at the time of the interview, who worked on campus, though he did not consider them close. He recalled spending "a lot of time in the library" with these friends to study. Peer interactions, such as this, emerged from the data as specific ways in which connections to campus were developed.

Michael met "most of the friends" through his on-campus job and said that, because of the job, they were "always coming [to the campus] at the same time." He described their camaraderie:

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[8] "Bronco's" refers to Bronco Billy's Pizza Palace, an eatery located less than one mile from the CSUEB university campus.

I have friends on campus, we do stuff together. It's more of hanging out. At that time, EOP had a pretty family friendly environment. You always go there and just chill, just sit there, talk for hours after we're done with our classes.

Kenny had connections to the campus before he arrived as a student. He explained,

I just heard nothing but good things about East Bay. I got a couple friends that went here previously. When I came here, they helped me out, got me around the right people, connect or network with the right people and put me in the right situation so I was able to thrive, in a sense. My overall experience at East Bay has been good, I'll say. I like it.

Although it was his peer group to welcome him to campus, show him around, and include him, and although it is "mostly students [he's] been really connecting with," Kenny refers to most of his peers as "acquaintances." However, Kenny did have close friends who were "in [his] circle." As an example, he brought up his "frat brothers" with whom he would "chill."

David experienced friendships through his Sankofa classes which allowed for a cohort experience in which students would take the same set of classes together. He explained the relationship that developed in the process:

We have classes with each other now, and if we miss class, or something's going on, if one other person notices something about us, then they will call, and check on us or text us, or tell us we got an assignment due or something like that. I like that aspect of it.

For me, the community with coming in with students, and having orientation, and taking classes and stuff with them just created a different kind of community.

When I say the community, like when I interact with other students that's in the Sankofa, we got a group text.

As David said, "my relationship with [other students] makes it easier. I think it makes it more, like I'm in a happier place, because I'm laughing and stuff like that." As he explained it, David interacted with students both from within and outside of the Sankofa group. Of his friends from Sankofa, he said, "So after class sometimes or before class we'll have lunch, or... Not all the time, but we'll have lunch, or we'll talk about, or try to do the work that's in class and stuff. Yeah, we for sure hang out." Referring to classmates not related to Sankofa, David said that they would gather "once in a while. When there's an event, like somebody came to speak, and there were some of my classmates, we'd go watch the speaker. But not very often, no."

Especially important for David was the support that he received from other students and peers:

When you come in with a group of people, like the Sankofa people I came in with, we had the same classes together. We're all different ages. There's a couple people in our group that are mothers, I have kids. There's somebody else, 21, a couple people are 21 that come from junior college. But there's no drama. We just interact with each other. We have the same classes, sometimes we'll sit down and do homework, or we have a project due, we'll do that. If somebody's going through something, we'll send them a text and be like, "Hey, I hope you're doing okay." So, with this group, we're really... You know, we're not fighting or anything. So, I think there is a good balance. Because if we see each other, we'll talk to each other, give each other a hug, and just talk about whatever class we're taking and stuff.

For David, these interactions were with peers and students who were considered "good friends." David benefitted from the mutual support of his peers and felt a sense of belonging that connected him to the group.

On-campus Employment

Another way in which students connected to peers was through on-campus employment. Three of the four student interviewees held jobs on campus. Ricks (2013) suggested on-campus employment as a means of indoctrinating Black male students into the university. Michael discussed how, in his job, he had "to constantly be talking to students" which helped him to connect with students as well as required him to become more knowledgeable about the campus and the policies therein.

> I know I feel connected. I know a lot about the campus, with AACE and everything. If you're a part of [my department] you've got to know about the campus. It's a must because dealing with students, especially for me [in my role], I've got to know more about the campus because I got to tell the students. You have to know about the campus. Knowing about the campus makes you connected. At class, here, you always see the President come through here sometimes. So, we always see constant faces of all these people.

For Michael, his position as a university employee encouraged him to become more knowledgeable about different aspects of campus life. In working to help other students, Michael found that his on-campus job was contributing to his own campus connectedness.

Activities

In addition to working on campus, students developed a deeper connection to the university through participating in activities. Involvement in university events,

organizations, and other activities encourages students to spend more time on campus and helps to relate their schooling to other aspects of life. Kenny participated in the fraternity activities on campus and also attended "mainly all the D9[9] events, the Greek events." Michael also participated in a fraternity and Lavon said that he "was trying to do fraternities and stuff like that" when he was a freshman in college.

Directly related to the Sankofa Scholars Program was Umoja Day. "I'm trying to remember. I would say the only events that I remember was Umoja day. That was at UC Davis. We all carpooled over there. As far as anything else, we'd have little potlucks, no real events really. That was it." While Kenny had difficulty remembering events through his program, Michael suggested that his program provide more activities for the students.

> I feel like more events will keep the students interested. […] I feel like if they
> have more events, and they do get-together stuff, that it would try to keep us all
> together, and at the same time, also make us like a family, like a home.

Other on-campus events to appear in the data included Welcome Day and Al Fresco, two events held at the beginning of the school year in order to help students learn about and connect with the university. Michael commented, "There was a Welcome Day that we had, and it was amazing because I didn't know I was going to meet all these people. I met all the students." Of Al Fresco, David said, "at the University, there's been different events where stuff has gone on, and you go to the different booths, and everybody's nice, and talkative." David also talked about going with friends to attend speaking engagements that were held at the university. "I have, once in a while. When there's an

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[9] "D9" refers to the Divine Nine or the National Pan-Hellenic Council, the nine historically Black fraternities and sororities that include Delta Sigma Theta, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Alpha Phi Alpha, Omega Psi Phi, Phi Beta Sigma, Zeta Phi Beta, Sigma Gamma Rho and Iota Phi Theta.

event, like somebody came to speak, and there were some of my classmates, we'd go watch the speaker. But not very often."

Michael shared that, in his sophomore year, he "was getting more involved in things they do at school." He detailed, "That was when I started applying for their positions that they offer, like some of those peer leaders. I became a […] peer leader. I did peer mentoring for a little bit. I was getting more involved on campus and what they offer. Yeah, that was my sophomore year. Now my senior year is just getting involved, and getting out of here is the thing." Some of the ways in which Michael became more involved were through becoming a student advocate and joining an ethnic club. While time management can be the method by which students juggle multiple activities, proper time management may require students to forgo activities that would otherwise deepen their connection to the university campus. Lavon's experience differed from Michael's as he said, "I've been trying to be more involved, but still trying to work on the time management."

Connection to campus could also be observed in the students' study habits. Kenny talked about how he prefers a quiet environment for his studies.

> Just the other day I was at the library. I was at my own table, doing my work, and one of my close friends and other people that I knew was at the next table talking, talking. I'm like, yeah see. Then even one of them came from that table. He was like, 'I'm going to come sit with you because you actually do your work.' I'm like, 'Yeah.' Yeah.

As he says, "you need your friends, your colleagues to keep you motivated and dedicated."

As with Kenny the other students also found connection to the university through the resources offered. As mentioned earlier, Lavon spent a lot of time in the library to

study. David was fond of the study room, located in the Sankofa area, which gave him a peaceful and quiet place to study. Kenny said, "everything I really need is on campus" and talked about how he didn't have to leave the university grounds often because he lived on campus. He mentioned "living in the dorms, eating food," the "little mini grocery store place", "the gym," and the ability to "go see a doctor" without leaving the campus.

The interview data revealed that on-campus employment, peer interactions, and activities are strategies used by the university to create relational supports for Black male students. In reviewing the survey, three survey constructs can be applied to the research question to determine how CSUEB support strategies impact academic performance: 1) Peer interaction, 2) Activities, and 2) Connection to Campus. The survey data show that, again, GPA shows little statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$) when looking at how students individually rate their peer interactions, campus connection, and involvement in activity. However, when comparing the grade point averages of students whose belonging scores (the average of campus connectivity, peer interaction, and activity) rated 2.0 and above, there was a notable difference, as seen in Figure 16. While not statistically significant, the p-value was 0.08. However, further data analysis using the Pearson Correlation indicated that there was little association between belonging scores and grade point averages ($r(247) = .03$, $p = .59$).

Further, the quantitative data analysis showed a statistically significant difference when comparing students' attitudes about their academics. Both the Pearson coefficient and the two-tailed, two-sample, T-test assuming unequal variances were used for this analysis. After reviewing the three constructs related to belonging (i.e., activities, campus connection, and peer interaction), and then averaging and combining the Likert scores, data analysis showed a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$) when comparing students whose sense of belonging rated under 2.0 on the survey Likert scale to those who

averaged 2.0 and above. Results of the Pearson Correlation showed a significant positive relationship between belonging scores and student attitudes about their academics ($r(247)$ = .74, $p < .001$).

Construct	Belonging rated below 2 on Likert			Belonging rated above 2 on Likert			t-statistic
	n =	Mean	SD	n =	Mean	SD	
GPA	26	2.74	0.83	222	3.05	0.62	0.08
Academics	26	1.94	0.56	222	3.01	0.57	1.91×10^{-10}

Figure 16: Sense of Belonging's Impact on Grades and Attitudes About Academics

Addressing the research questions, the relational support strategies intended to impact a student's sense of belonging do not appear to have a strong effect on grade point averages. However, the academic construct, as on the survey, denotes student attitudes toward their academic achievement and does show a statistically significant difference when analyzed against sense of belonging.

Also of note, participants from the Sankofa Scholars Program, on average, had higher Likert scores for the survey constructs relating to belonging than did the participants in the Equal Opportunity Program. As Figure 17 details, the survey construct for campus connectivity revealed an average Likert scoring of 3.35 from the Sankofa students on a scale of 1 – 4 where 1 represents 'not at all' and 4 is 'very much.' That rating was slightly higher than the 3.20 average rated by the EOP students. The data for the peer interaction construct, again, revealed that EOP students also showed lower Likert Scale ratings implying less opportunity to interact with other students (i.e., Sankofa's survey average for the peer interaction construct was 3.27 compared to EOP's average of 2.61). Together, the two constructs[10] around peer interactions and campus connectivity

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[10] While there were three constructs related to Sense of Belonging (i.e., peer interaction, connection to campus, and activities), only two were used to calculate the numerical Sense of Belonging scores. This was due to the fact that the survey questions around

addressed the students' sense of belonging based on their survey answers and revealed that the Sankofa program better supported a sense of belonging than did the Educational Opportunity Program.

Average Belonging Constructs from the Survey
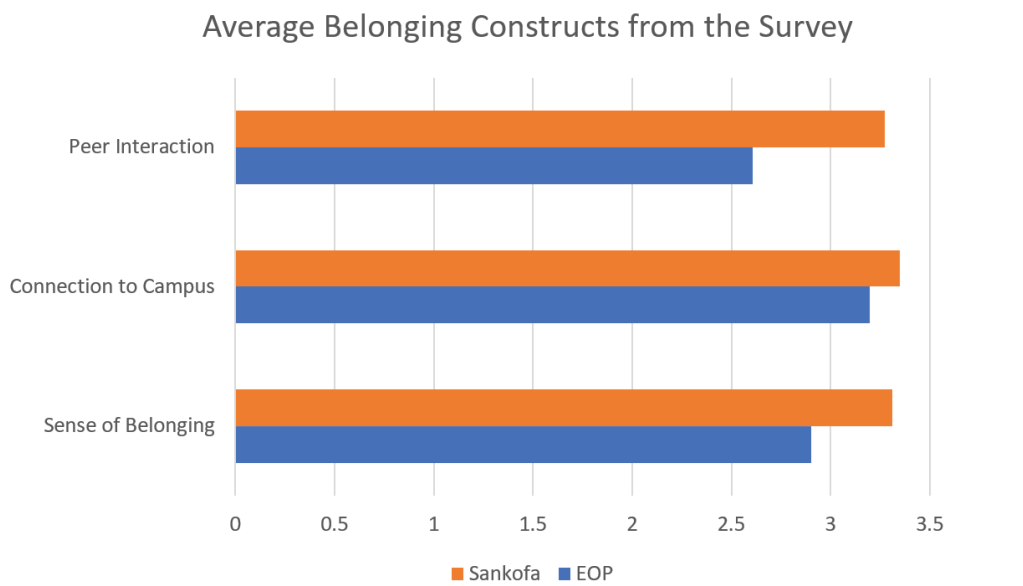
Figure 17: Sense of Belonging Program Comparison
Source: Student survey data

Life Strategy

Life strategy delves into the students' work toward goals and objectives. Centered around future-thinking, purpose, and goals, this theme includes topics about extrinsic motivation. In addition to family, the subthemes included social mobility with regard to financial management and career aspirations. Each subtheme within the larger life strategy theme demonstrates future-thinking and is a motivating factor for participants.

For each student interview participant, the broad goal was to successfully complete college. In this case, each of the four men shared that their aim was for a

activities were open ended rather than on the Likert scale and, therefore the survey results around that construct did not provide numerical data which could be averaged.

degree, and for Kenny, that ambition was more about obtaining the degree itself than achieving knowledge or mastering a subject area. As Kenny said, "as long as I passed, I was cool with whatever." David found the community atmosphere of Sankofa as "a great environment to be in, so [he] can kind of be able to reach [his] goals." Like the others, his overarching purpose and goal, as David voiced, was "to get a degree," which he repeated four times during the course of his interview. He explained that he attended college previously but discontinued before earning his baccalaureate degree. As a result, he "decided to come back to school last year, so [he] could finish." Michael also talked about graduating with a degree when he said, "Now, my senior year is just getting involved, and getting out of here is the thing." Michael, who had an interest in healthcare, was the only participant to mention the possibility of attending graduate school after earning a four-year degree.

In addition to his specifically expressed desire to earn a four-year degree, Kenny was distinct in that his goal had time constraints. "'They'll make sure you'll graduate on time, if not earlier. I did that and it paid off." He emphasized the point by elaborating to say,

> Now I'm only three classes away from graduating. I'm taking those three right now. As compared to everybody else, they have to put on hold some other classes to take Sankofa courses or whatever, and then it pushed back their graduation. I just feel like for me, everything fell into place.

Family

One of the motivating factors for students to pursue their college degree is family. For Kenny, he wants his mother to feel a sense of pride in his accomplishments.

Also, my mom. She motivates me, being a single parent taking care of kids by herself all her life. I just want to at least do something that she always envisioned me of doing, to make her proud, give her something to brag about to her friends, whatever. Like, 'My baby got a degree,' yeah.

In David's story, while family can be the source of one's motivation, it can also delay student progress toward a degree as well. After David's mother got sick, he left school to return home to care for her. He explained, "and then she passed away. So, after that I just stopped going to school and had kids and stuff like that." As a single parent, David found Sankofa to be especially helpful because of the way the program supported him throughout his college journey. Michael also had a sick family member who was unable to get proper medical care. That was the motivation behind his choice of major.

Michael's family also impacted his choice of university. According to him, "my mom specifically told me, 'You're not going far.' I was, like, 'Okay.'" Tuition cost was a factor as well. As Michael explained,

I didn't want to put any burden on my mom and dad, because they're going through so much stuff, so I didn't want my school to be a problem for them. So I chose East Bay, because I'm not in debt. I go to school for free.

In addition, he considered transportation costs. "I could just take the bus and get here. I feel like I'll save more money as an undergrad." While Michael tried to avoid being a "burden" to his parents, Kenny found his parents to be a strong support system. "Also need your parents financially, emotionally, and physically, like, to keep you sane, keep you calm and collected for those times that you may think that you may not finish school. Call them up for support."

Social Mobility

Social mobility also emerged in the data as a positive motiving force. Assari (2018) defined social mobility as one's ability to produce "change in social status based on education, wealth, and occupation" (p. 2). According to Crawford (2015), degree attainment can impact social mobility. The data revealed two subthemes related to social mobility: financial management and career aspirations.

Financial Management. Financial management refers to how the students budget and utilize their sources of money. In addition to some of the participants working on campus for income, three of the four student interviewees qualified for and benefitted from financial aid at the university. Despite poor customer service, because financial aid was a necessity, David talked about his need of the service and how he tried to avoid one of the employees in order get help. He mentioned that he was able to contact the counselor in his support program for more generalized help with financial aid. Through his support program, one student, Lavon, was counseled with regard to his financial aid. Because there was a possibility that he would "run out of financial aid," his counselor advised that he leave the university and take classes at a two-year community college until he could transfer back to CSUEB as a junior. The money spent toward tuition and education expenses was not only an investment in the futures of the participants, but it also served as a motivator to pass classes and finish the degree requirements. As an example, Kenny explained, "For one, I didn't pay all these thousands just to fail."

Career Aspirations & Future Investment. Strongly related to financial management is career. Thinking about his future career, David decided that he wanted "to be a college basketball coach." Regarding his reason for returning to college, he explained, "I just didn't like what I was doing, and I didn't want to work in the field that I was in, so I was just like, 'I got to come back and go to school.'" Lavon saw his future degree as a means to "better opportunities. I mean, someone with just a high school

diploma, the highest, it doesn't really look as good compared to a bachelor's. […] For employment, yeah. It's better opportunity." Kenny also saw college as an opportunity to advance toward a lucrative career:

> Because I know education is a big thing in the working field, I know you're not going to get your career job having under a 3.0 average. You're not going to get it with a 2.8, 2.9. That motivates me.

He recognized college as a place for "networking, meeting the right people, [and] being put in the right situation just to succeed." He also talked about how one university faculty was able to provide "a letter of recommendation" for him to use for future employment.

Although he says that his membership in Sankofa did "pay off in the long run," Kenny was a bit disappointed when he found out that he missed a career-related opportunity on the CSUEB campus. Due to that oversight, he suggested that something was lacking from his college experience in saying, "it just feels like there's just something a little more that the campus could offer in certain situations." In suggesting how the program could improve, Kenny lamented,

> I would say job-wise because I thought the purpose of the last year, graduating college and getting ready to go into your career, they don't really push you to go to intern, or link you with businesses with people that you're interested in going into. I just feel like, me personally, I want to get into law enforcement and just recently they had a law enforcement career fair but I didn't know anything about it.

He suggested that either the university or the support counselors could be more deliberate about knowing the long-term goals of the students and connecting them with career-related events, activities, and employment opportunities that can benefit them in the

future. He did briefly mention that, at one time, his counselor offered minimal support by mentioning his career goals and instructing him to "check to see if they're hiring." Despite the lack of career support, however, Kenny does feel that his membership with the support program was worth his time because it served his purpose and supported him toward his graduation goal.

Michael, who "wanted to work in healthcare," also expressed perceived shortcomings on the campus with regard to preparation for his future career. According to his experience, he was supported in "not my long-term goal. But for my short-term goals, they are helping me." When asked how his support program or the university could better support his long-term goals, Michael had this to say:

An opportunity to talk to actual doctors, like people in the health field. Or maybe for different major, I know health is not the only— I mean, STEM is not the only majors that is in East Bay. […] Pretty much making events where we can talk to professionals and get to know more about how it feels to be a certain profession or certain things that people are interested in. Like a doctor or like a lawyer. Like criminal justice majors are interested in being a police officer, but— Making us start talking to them and asking them questions about the challenges and things they face. That can kind of give us a good idea of things to look forward to or obstacles that is going to come our way and maybe better prepare for it. So maybe things like that will be helpful. […] I'm looking for something more like speaking to an actual— someone who has been through it. Not someone who's just going to talk to me about it. And— because the career— okay, maybe I might be like, because the career fairs that I went to, I think that was in my junior year. They were just talking about their jobs pretty much like, how do I explain it? Not necessarily like as a profession, but pretty much like their company overview. ...

It's just like that was what they were talking about. But I'm just talking about the profession, itself.

It was important to Michael to have more direct experiences related to his career choice. While he acknowledged that career fairs did occur on the CSUEB campus, he described how those events lacked the level of detail and expertise that he needed. Nevertheless, he says he did utilize the "workshops to improve our skills and stuff like that."

Tying all aspects of life strategy together, David talked about social mobility as his motivation for attending college and pursuing a four-year degree.

For me, what my motivation is, I want to get a degree for my kids, so I can make more money. I know that the way society is structured, you have to have some form of education for them to pay more money. So for me, it's really big for me just to get multiple degrees, so I can just change the dynamic of my family history. I just really, I want to create generational wealth for my family, for my kids after me, and I know that I have to get degrees for people to even consider me for the kind of position that I want. So that's kind of my motivation.

Importantly, while these life strategy topics of family, social mobility, and life skills were identified as motivators and as the students' reasons for embarking on the college journey, they were rarely mentioned in the context of the support programs or the university. At times, life strategy topics were mentioned with negative implications in regard to the impact on the student. This indicates the institutional support programs did not prioritize the students' values when determining their support strategies. As Lavon said, what captures the student interest is when classes and services are "related to real life." According to the data, intentionally addressing life strategy was not one of the ways in which CSUEB addressed the existing equity gap. However, the university used institutional supports to create relational support and provide equitable access to

information and resources. Further, CSUEB addressed students' sense of belonging and feelings of relatedness through the support programs by providing opportunities to experience acceptance, representation, and campus connectedness. Activities and experiences related to life strategy, although important to the participants, was not used as a potential method for addressing the existing equity gap.

Summary of the Findings

The data revealed three major themes which were important to Black male students on the Cal State East Bay university campus: institutional supports, sense of belonging and feelings of relatedness, and life strategy. Institutional support uncovered topics around equitable access to both resources and information. Data showed that the resources provided through the support programs were beneficial to and appreciated by the students. While participants expressed a desire for more information, some students explained that they were navigated through college processes without ever understanding them. Institutional support also included subjects around relational support. Relational support data showed that university support experiences outside of the support programs were adverse for the students. However, students spoke favorably of relational supports within the program, specifically, academic advising and general conversations with program staff. Although institutional support was the most salient theme, the survey data presented no statistically significant relationship between staff interaction and academic achievement as it was measured by student grade point averages. However, data analysis showed that institutional support had a positive impact on student attitudes about their academics.

The second major theme, belonging, addressed matters about acceptance, representation, and connection to the campus. Regarding acceptance, students from the

Sankofa program spoke more than EOP students did about this topic saying that they had a peaceful environment in which they felt comfortable to be themselves. Representation referred to the presence of other Black people within the university campus. The evidence showed that Black professors were especially valuable to Black students and yet the data showed that the presence of Black faculty was lacking on the campus. Additionally, the study showed that students who interacted more frequently with other Black students through the Sankofa program felt a greater sense of belonging than those who were members of EOP. However, this sense of belonging was not available throughout the CSUEB campus but rather was limited to areas directly impacted by the Sankofa Scholars Program.

Life strategy emerged as the third theme and it addressed goals and purpose leading toward family and financial management. Student stories emphasized the need for a degree over a desire for mastery of course content. Participants saw college as a means to obtaining their career objectives but noted that university staff, even in the support programs, did not contribute to nor support their career aspirations. Students discussed being motivated by their families and aspired for the ability to provide for their families and create generational wealth. While these life strategy areas were discussed as the foundation for college attendance, the study showed that this aspect was relatively unsupported through school processes.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

From an asset-based perspective, this study sought to provide a deeper understanding of the Black male graduation rates through exploring institutional onus at the university level. The research questions served as the foundation for this study, which aimed to answer the following:

1. In what ways has the existing equity gap been addressed at Cal State East Bay?

2. What strategies are employed at CSUEB to create relational supports for Black male students?

   a. How do these strategies impact academic performance (e.g., grade point average)?

Data collection and analysis resulted in the emergence of three major themes of importance which emphasized topics around support, purpose, and goals. For each theme, this chapter summarizes the research findings and follows with a discussion of the discoveries. Next, the chapter examines the implications for practice and research, then presents recommendations for action to improve in each thematic area.

Summary of the Findings

Chapter Four highlighted three major themes which emerged from the data: institutional supports, sense of belonging and feelings of relatedness, and life strategy. Equitable institutional support considers social justice when establishing support systems, policies, and procedures and focuses discourse about student achievement around institutional onus. Equitable access and relational support are the two notable aspects of institutional support revealed by the data. In discussing institutional support, the participants mentioned physical resources. The interview data also showed the importance of having information as a resource. Students who were first-generation college students found the support programs particularly helpful because they did not get college-related support at home. The support programs provided academic advising which directed students in which classes to register for each term with regard to the general education requirements. While counselors served as a source of information, they were also a relational support for the students. Although participants shared a variety of unsupportive experiences that occurred in their classrooms and within the general campus, the students conveyed that they felt welcomed on the CSUEB campus due to the support received in EOP and Sankofa. Participants said that their relational experiences with their counselors benefitted them academically, and the survey data showed a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of students depending on how often they met with their counselors. However, the survey data did not show a statistically significant difference in grade point averages. In fact, Black male students in the support programs had lower GPAs than the Black male students not affiliated with either Sankofa or EOP.

According to Harper (2003), a strong sense of belonging helps students to socially adjust in college. The sense of belonging theme was developed from the subthemes

of acceptance, representation, and connection to the campus. Although not through interactions on the general campus, students felt a sense of belonging through acceptance, peer interactions, and through the support programs. While peer interactions were an integral part of the process for the participants to adjust to their college lifestyles, participants also recognized the importance of representation and discussed the necessity for Black professors on the college campus. In addition to acceptance and representation, students also spoke about their connection to the campus through activities and on-campus employment. Working on campus connected students to an increased number of students, staff, and faculty and also exposed them to the availability of more resources. The qualitative data showed that on-campus employment, peer interactions, and activities emerged through the data as strategies used by the university to create relational supports through connecting Black male students to the campus. The quantitative survey data was used to develop a sense of belonging measurement (i.e., the average Likert ratings for connection to campus, peer interaction, and activities constructs) which was shown to impact student attitudes about their academics when comparing students who rated the belonging measurement below 2.0 to those whose average was 2.0 and above on the Likert scale. The data also revealed higher belonging scores from participants of the Sankofa Program when compared to those from the EOP.

Future-thinking is the foundation for the life strategy theme which addressed the motivating factors for college enrollment. These extrinsic motivators were specifically named as family and social mobility. The participants spoke about family as a source of motivation for going to college. All participants expressed a desire to obtain their four-year baccalaureate level degrees from the university. Interestingly, students were less interested in grade achievements for individual classes and only mentioned graduating as the academic goal. The emphasis on the degree was due to the students' broader goals for social mobility. Importantly, while these life strategy topics of family and social

mobility were identified as motivators and as the students' reasons for embarking on the college journey, they were rarely mentioned in the context of the support programs or the university. According to the data, life strategy, although important to the participants, is not used as a potential method for addressing the existing equity gap. This suggests that little attention was given to intentionally addressing the students' aspirational goals.

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Discussion

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Institutional Support: The Importance of Bridging the Gap Between Counseling and Mentoring

The Sankofa Scholars Program provided a sense of community for its Black students through having a facility in which students could access various material resources, congregate with other Black students and interact casually with the program staff. In fact, only Sankofa students discussed their counselors in a context that showed more personal conversations. The counselors whom students described as most impactful and spoke most fondly of were the ones who crossed the lines of advising, bridging into mentorship roles. Although mentorship was not mentioned in the context of the Educational Opportunity Program, all students mentioned their counselors in a positive light and each student commented on the benefits of program membership.

However, one instance of note was Lavon's move from CSUEB into a community college at the advice of his EOP counselor. Lavon left the university with the belief that his counselor provided the best advice for him because it allowed for him to use less of his financial aid at a time when he was not succeeding in his university courses. At the community college, Lavon was advised to change his major to an option better suitable to him and later returned to CSUEB as a more successful student. This event in Lavon's

college experience suggests that the student was not properly supported at CSUEB. He clearly was capable of success, and his endeavors were, in fact, fruitful on a different college campus. Although he met with his EOP advisor regularly, he was not provided with useful resources (e.g., tutoring or mentorship) nor was he introduced to alternative major choices which might have been a better fit for his skillset or interests. This instance is a good example of how capable students are not properly supported within CSUEB. If he was able to get proper advising at another college, that suggests that the problem did not lie with the student and that the university failed in some area. A social justice perspective would have caused the counselor to reevaluate the student through a lens of institutional onus rather than sending him away.

One possibility for this institutional shortcoming could be explained in the way that students said they felt "hand-held" and were provided support without information. Being supported without an understanding of processes causes students to rely more heavily on staff and impedes autonomy building and the development of competency. Specifically, the students relied heavily on the staff of their support programs because, as Michael explained, he was disconnected from the services offered on other parts of the campus due to focusing on the services within his program. When the time came for Michael to use outside advising, he felt blindsided and wished he would have been informed about the need for a major advisor earlier in his schooling. Michael believes this gap in information may have negatively impacted his time to degree.

Kenny shared a similar experience as he recalled missing a career fair about which he was uninformed. Students who are taught to rely on university staff, without being taught how to navigate procedures or how to find information on their own, never fully develop agency or autonomy within the university. Further, being thoroughly immersed in only one small part of the campus prevents students from exploring on their own, especially when support programs do not guide and refer students to other areas in a

timely manner or at all. Through a siloed approach such as this, students are left unaware of the range of resources available to them and, instead hone their need for supports and services in on one area. As Michael mentioned, the counselors' "hand- holding" methods were beneficial for students newer to the college experience. However, the counseling process lacked autonomy building as Michael noted that the counselors failed to empower students in the understanding of university processes. In effect, they were taught to bypass resources offered on the general campus in order to get their full support from the programs. As a result, when the program staff falls short, student needs are left unaddressed and students are unaware of alternative options.

Such a strong reliance on program staff may cause students to feel less competent and capable and thereby lessens the students' level of confidence regarding his own ability to navigate the university systems. While three of four participants already made it to their senior year at the time of the interviews, two said they did not feel a sense of agency and still did not have a clear understanding of how to pick classes. According to the Self-Determination Theory, as detailed by Ryan & Deci (2017), autonomy and competence are important factors to student success and motivation. Without an understanding of his degree requirements nor the ability to participate in the selection of his own courses, Lavon could not have autonomy in this important part of his college experience. Further, he was unable to develop a sense of competence without an understanding of the reasoning behind his class selections. When support lessens or ceases, it is important that students were instilled with the ability to fill the void on their own through progressive responsibility. As noted by the student participants, a high level of support is good for those who are new to the university. However, it is important that student growth and development is not stifled by "hand-holding" in the latter years when they should be scaffolded into autonomy.

Lavon's feelings of competence were also likely negatively impacted by mundane extreme environmental stress (MEES) and the microaggressions of professors who either ignored him or suggested he was incapable of success. According to Bailey and Moore (2004), Davis (2003), and Moore (2000), Black men continue to face issues of negative perceptions by their faculty. Strayhorn (2008b) suggests these negative perceptions perpetuate negative stereotypes and inhibit the ability for Black male students to connect with faculty and staff in order to get the necessary support they need to succeed in higher education environments. Hucks (2011) shows that such an inability to obtain the necessary support creates in-school risk factors: Professors are less likely to encourage students who they see through a negative lens and this limits the student's access to faculty support. Although Lavon stated that he "could handle it," these encounters with microaggressions created mundane extreme environmental stress (Smith et al., 2011) for the student. While it seemed mundane enough for Lavon to dismiss, the pervasiveness of racism, as Wilson (2018) notes, is a normative experience which, according to Smith et al. (2011,) creates racial battle fatigue in Black men. This combination of experiences could explain why Lavon was more successful in an environment that, perhaps, did not expose him to as much MEES.

The support the institution provided through the Sankofa Scholars Program and EOP, mitigated some of the impact of these harmful MEES experiences allowing the students to say they felt welcomed at the university overall. The two programs were places for students to seek help. However, it is possible that some aspects of the support were not enough to assuage the impact and depth of an onslaught of microaggressions. It is also possible that some of the support methods are detrimental for being more directive than informational. This issue may explain why the data show lower GPAs for Black male students who participate in the support programs when compared to Black male students who are not associated with the two programs.

Sense of Belonging: The Importance of Representation and Critical Mass

David was particularly impacted by being exposed to educated Black adults, a feature he said he lacked in his personal life. As a first-generation college student who had little exposure to Black teachers, David was particularly motivated in his schooling by having access to the Black staff of Sankofa. Kenny also noticed the lack of Black teachers in his early schooling and said he was benefitted by the Black professors who taught his Sankofa-related courses. Representation is particularly important for Black males in college because, as Kenny said, a lack of Black professors is "a cripple for Black students." He described having a strong presence of Black faculty as advantageous and motivational because "they would have been able to relate to me." According to Hylton (2013), student relationships with Black faculty are strongly correlated to the academic achievement of Black male students in college. This is particularly important as, due to institutionalized barriers, 42% of Black students are the first in their families to attend college (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2018) and therefore lack the support of receiving the shared first-hand experience, knowledge, information, and advice from their parents.

In addition to a representative staff and faculty, representation among peers also proved to be especially important, particularly during the earlier years at the university. Participants discussed the necessity for their peer relationships in becoming acclimated to the campus. Moreover, the participants said they appreciated seeing other Black males on campus. As David described, his peers were an additional source of support and were more valuable when being able to discuss shared experiences as Black students. Kenny also shared that he felt encouraged by seeing other students who looked like himself. This was reflected in the data analysis: Scores rating the students' sense of belonging were higher for Sankofa participants than for EOP participants. Both Kenny and David were

members of the Sankofa Scholars program which focused on catering to Black students and thereby made connecting with someone of their own race less difficult.

Lavon, on the other hand was a member of the Equal Opportunity Program which, although it contained a relatively large number of Black students compared to other programs on the campus, did not cater to the needs of Black students nor was it a predominately Black group. Researchers (Flemings, 1984; Strayhorn, 2019; Turner, 1994) suggest that Black men have more difficulty forging relationships with peers due to the underrepresentation of Black men on many college campuses. This may have impacted Lavon who said he lacked close friends. Strayhorn (2019) warned that a "lack of a critical mass [on college campuses] can lead to feelings of isolation, marginalization, and alienation both inside and outside the classroom" (p. 110). Further, Lavon was the only one of the four participants who did not hold a job on the university campus. Campus employment was one of the ways in which students felt connected to the campus and increased their sense of belonging and feelings of relatedness. Strayhorn (2008b, 2019) showed that a sense of belonging helped to mitigate the feelings of exclusion that may result from mundane extreme environmental stress. Lavon experienced MEES and was faced with microaggressions while trying to learn in the classroom. His lack of connection and low sense of belonging might be connected to the lack of success he had at CSUEB in his earlier years prior to transferring to a junior college. In fact, the survey data demonstrated a nearly statistically significant difference in grades when average belonging was rated below 2.0 on the Likert scale when compared to ratings of greater than 2.0.

Life Strategy: The Importance of Mitigating the Disparity Between Aspirations and Unmet Expectations

As Kenny said, he would be okay with passing classes without learning the material "because the end result is you getting your degree, finish with school, you're getting these fulfilling grades, fulfilling GPA for your future employers, like for companies you apply to" but, he said, "you're not learning anything that you can apply to your future occupation, your future job." Although future career goals are the very purpose that motivated participants to attend college, Kenny suggested that there was a disconnect between his reason for attending and the way in which the college served its students. What students saw as the purpose for attending college was not appropriately addressed through university services, programs, or course curriculum. As Lavon said, what captures the student interest is when classes and services are "related to real life." The concepts of interest and value are also explained through Ryan & Deci's (2017) Self-Determination Theory when discussing motivation and autonomy. Understanding this gap between purpose and service is integral to understanding the equity gap of Black male students in higher education.

Students spoke a great deal about their goals and their purpose but never in the context of their support program or the university unless to mention a failure. While a curriculum that is neither culturally responsive nor directly applicable to job training will contribute to a gap that separates higher education from student life strategies, a perceived failure in what exists of the career support can only broaden the divide.

Today's Black and White educational equity gap is a symptom of an opportunity gap rooted in slavery and segregation. Generationally, Black students, according to Ramsey (2019), have had more systemic obstacles to obtaining academic opportunities than any other ethnic group. There are many elements which may influence the disparity in educational attainment rates and my research data indicates that a lack of attention

to life strategy is an important issue for Black male students. Because 42% of Black students are the first in their families to attend college and therefore lack the support of receiving the shared first-hand experience (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2018), it is particularly essential that students are provided with a meaningful college experience that bridges the gap between college and "real life."

Participants expressed their recognition of historical inequities and talked about a desire to change those dynamics. Seeing a four-year degree as a pathway toward social mobility, as described by Crawford (2015), participants sought to change their family dynamic through degree acquisition. However, upon entering college and observing a lack of support with regard to career aspirations as well as a culturally inappropriate pedagogy, participants likely lost motivation to succeed to institutional standards and, instead, aimed merely to achieve a degree. This could explain the statistically significant difference that was observed in attitudes about academics despite the relatively low grade point averages: Students are content to receive passing grades and do not necessarily aspire to achieve more than the minimum required to graduate.

This is particularly important when examining graduation rates because students who aim to complete the minimum requirements to pass a class are more likely not to earn a passing grade should they fail any small aspect in achieving their goals. Students who find the curriculum more relevant to their own cultures become intrinsically motivated to do well in each class and, thereby, have more room for error in their studies. Students who do not pass a class in any given semester are less likely to retain to the next semester.

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Future Research

Policy and Practice

One of the first items of note is the distinction between EOP and Sankofa. EOP attends to populations who are marginalized such as first-generation students, students with low-socioeconomic status, and minorities. Due to the nature of EOP's target population, the membership is very diverse. Sankofa is cultural in nature and serves a predominately Black group of students. One of the requirements for EOP is that students cannot join other programs. That policy ignores intersectionality and prevents the Black students in the EOP group from joining the Sankofa Scholars Program to benefit from its culturally responsive services. While the study participants from Sankofa expressed the many benefits of Sankofa's culturally-centered service, EOP students could not access that benefit.

That issue is compounded by the lack of representation on the campus as a whole. Black male students notice the lack of Black faculty on the CSUEB campus and within their entire educational careers. While Sankofa deliberately matches their student participants with Black faculty when available within Sankofa required classes, EOP does not offer a similar service for its participants. As a result, EOP students are more vulnerable to the effects of a lack of critical mass and diversity among the campus faculty. This lack of representation indicates a systemic issue in the teacher pipeline but also suggests there is room for improvement in the hiring practices at CSUEB. Lavon shared a couple of his experiences with MEES. MEES and microaggressions stem from the negative perceptions that others have toward Black students, particularly Black males. A sense of belonging helps to mitigate the feelings of exclusion that result from the mundane extreme environmental stress (Strayhorn, 2008) and the EOP policy prevented Lavon from accessing a program and service that was specifically designed to create a

sense of belonging for Black male students. As a result, Lavon did not have close friends on the campus and, in fact, struggled so greatly that his counselor recommended he leave the campus to find a better fit. It is problematic when the best advice a university has to offer is a suggestion for departure. That problem is magnified by knowing that Lavon was, indeed, capable of success on an alternate campus. This suggests that there is something about Cal State East Bay that hindered his success as a student.

The students' stories highlighted in the previous chapter exemplify the critical role of mentorship. Counselors within the EOP and Sankofa support programs were captured as essential resources, however, it was the mentorship interactions which extended beyond advising that students claimed were motivational. The Sankofa counselors were spoken of as mentors who helped to bridge the gap between school and home life while the relationships within EOP focused more on academic advising. Additionally, students were also motivated by seeing a higher concentration of Black faculty and staff, despite their seeming limitation to the Sankofa Scholars Program area. For these reasons, students, particularly Black male students, should have access to mentors on the CSUEB campus who can relate to them. Hylton (2013) and Moon (2015) showed the importance of mentor-mentee relationships in addressing the academic equity gap. Particularly, Moon (2015) noted that mentoring should be done through culturally responsive experiences.

Students feeling "hand-held" is also important to review. As the participants described, some counselors were completing tasks on the students' behalf rather than supporting students in a way that helped them to accomplish the task on their own. These situations imply that staff advising methods do not allow students to learn policies, navigate processes, nor build a sense of agency and autonomy through the college experience. In fact, such situations may signify that the staff perception of the students is one of incompetence. Many studies (e.g., Bailey & Moore, 2004; Davis, 2003; Gibbs, 1988; Majors & Billson, 1992; Mincy, 1994; Moore, 2000; Parham & McDavis, 1987;

Strayhorn 2008) indicate that perception of university personnel is an integral part of how students see themselves due to the implicit biases and conscious or unconscious ways in which faculty and staff enact their perceptions. While students perceived as capable and high achieving might receive the benefit of increased relational supports, students who are viewed as deficient, unskilled, or unintelligent are less likely to receive the same level of support. By viewing students though a deficit lens and treating them as if they were incapable, staff may, in fact, be teaching students that they are unable to navigate university processes on their own, thereby inculcating a learned helplessness. Kavadias et al. (2017) showed the benefits of helping students to gain a better understanding of their own intelligence and Strayhorn's study (2008) illustrated the positive impact supportive relationships have on college satisfaction and retention. Rather than being helped and supported in their understanding of processes, participants recounted getting advanced into their senior year without an understanding of how to select their own courses or strategize in planning for upcoming semesters. While it is unlikely that counselors intended any ill-will in providing this type of assistance, planning one's own course schedule uses the skills of time management, foresight, and future planning, in addition to developing autonomy and competence. Students miss out on exercising these skills when the planning is done for them. Further, when students are not knowledgeable about the processes, they miss out on being able to make adjustments to suit their personal goals. As an example, Michael talked about having to extend his graduation date by seven months because he was unaware of the details around course offerings.

Perhaps the most important implication relates to life strategy. Students who attend a university as a means to prepare for a career are disappointed when they come to CSUEB. Michael explained that the university does not have useful career fairs for its students. Kenny talked about missing a relevant career fair despite having informed his counselor about his career goals. Kenny also suggested that he did not learn anything

usable toward his goals and Lavon suggested the university should provide courses that are more applicable toward "real life." Comments such as these denote a loss of the motivation that brought students to the campus. While they may persist to graduation, they do not find value in the journey toward graduation but rather seek only to earn the degree.

Future Research

This exploration of the equity gap of Black male students specifically focused on support strategies in relation to grade point averages. In carrying out my study, I noticed various implications for future research. One major implication for future research is the acknowledgement of varying goals for different students. In examining the equity gap with regard to grade point averages, it became apparent that some students simply aim for a passing grade rather than mastery of content. The interview data illustrated that students felt the curriculum was not useful or relevant to their lives and therefore did not value individual courses for anything more than gateways to their desired degree. Although their goals should be acknowledged, one cannot dismiss the presence of inequities. Black male students find the curriculum irrelevant and unengaging because curriculum was not designed through a social justice lens which values their backgrounds.

Also, in considering differences in goals, universities count graduation rates at the four-year rate and the six-year rate for first-year students and at the two-year and four-year rate for transfer students. Those data do not consider students who may have different timelines nor do they consider graduates who take more than six or four years for first time students and transfer students, respectively. This excludes many students who may have persisted to degree completion on an extended timeline due to alternate desires or other life obligations (e.g., working full-time, raising children, budget constraints, etc.).

Further, because each of the interview participants who discussed their parents'
college background were first-generation college students, it would be beneficial to
know if there is a disparity shown in the data between Black male students who are first-
generation and those who are not. A future study could examine that detail.

Particularly, with the data's emphasis on life strategy, an ideal follow-up study
would examine grade point averages of students who do indeed get sufficient support
toward their career goals. Such a study could be done with Black males on a campus that
has a particularly strong career program to see how their grade point averages compare to
students on a campus with a less useful career support system. Alternatively, the research
could be done on a single campus where some Black male students are connected to
strong career supports toward their future goals and others are not as connected. This
would be useful in determining how important the life strategy theme is in the lives of
Black male students in higher education.

Moreover, because the intention of my study was to explore the equity gap of
graduation rates, a longer research period would yield more effective and accurate results.
Ideally, this study would have taken on a case study methodology to begin with first-
year students and follow their progress toward degree. Doing a case study would allow
time to interview more students and also would provide more details about their support
experiences. Perhaps more importantly, a longer duration would provide opportunity to
see which students leave the university and make comparisons to those who remain. Due
to the nature of my study, I was unable to obtain the perspective of students who were not
present at the university during the time the research took place.

Recommendations: Mentoring, Career, and Representation

Analysis of the research data emphasized a few clear needs which either remain
unmet for Black male students on the CSUEB campus or which could be expanded

in order to positively impact a greater number of students. The three unmet needs

that emerged through the research findings include mentorship, career support, and

representation across campus. This section discusses my recommendations for bridging

the gaps highlighted through participant stories.

Mentorship

Student mentorship is necessary for universities to include in their service

offerings. Many students begin their college journey with no home support and are in

need of university personnel to bridge the gap in information. Specifically, 42% of Black

students are first-generation college students (Postsecondary National Policy Institute,

2018) so, like Michael, David, and Lavon, they do not know what to expect. Michael

and Lavon experienced a Summer Bridge program during the summer after graduating

high school. The Summer Bridge program effectively bridges some of the gaps leading

into the first year of college that come with being a first-generation student and provides

information to students, acquaints them with the campus, and connects them to other

people within the university. Although the participants said the Summer Bridge was

valuable, the program was discontinued. Because this program was so beneficial for

the participants, it is suggested that the university reestablish the program particularly

in Black neighborhoods to attract a greater number of Black students. Going deeper

to serve the need, I suggest using the Summer Bridge program to match students with

staff and faculty mentors that will be available to them starting the first summer and

through graduation, preferably with a handoff to some type of career resource within the

university campus as students enter their junior year.

Although all students are required to go through advising sessions at CSUEB,

not all students are connected with strong mentorship. EOP students discussed their

counselors as skilled academic advisors who navigated them through the course selection

process. As a result of feeling uninformed, Michael and Lavon suggested that they would prefer to understand the processes than to simply be directed toward what courses to take.

Lavon made a suggestion that he believes would have helped his sense of agency: "For me, if I had a more in-depth understanding on how to take classes, I guess like a tutorial, then that would be beneficial." Similarly, Michael said advising should include a process by which counselors "help you also understand the reason why you're taking this class at this time." In response to Lavon's suggestion, Michael agreed and then added another idea that he says would have improved his experience at the university.

> Same. With classes but also with nothing to do with classes. Like with things that they expect. Because, as we're going, we don't know what's going to change. And when changes happen, I wish they would notify us, instead of— I don't know, maybe it's too much on them, too. But I wish they would notify us that it's, I guess, changing so we know. Because sometimes you might never know, things that the campus do change, like policies that get changed and things like that. You don't know. And then you just saw it and you're like, 'Oh, wow, I can't do it because it's past due.' Or too late for you. You're just taken by surprise.

These suggestions express an appeal for more information. Their ideas also indicated a desire for the ability to make a greater number of independent decisions and to be able to make them as informed students.

Conversely, Sankofa students described their counselors more as mentors with conversations focused on "real life" topics. While Sankofa staff did guide the students through academic advising, they also played a more important role in the students' college experience. Providing mentorship relationships in addition to advising could lead to increased continuity for the student and such a relationship should extend through to graduation when possible.

In recounting the changes that he faced when he got assigned from one EOP counselor to another, Michael said, "I wish I got stuck with one counselor the whole way through and don't have to switch." In the same vein, he expressed disdain for a process that transitioned him from his EOP advisor to a major advisor. To smooth the transition, Michael suggested a "way more beneficial" format in which "the major advisors and the EOP team are together."

Kenny's suggestion for program improvement also included continuity. For him, expanding the program relationship beyond the initial year and outside of the program space would have been beneficial. He stated,

> I would say, continue to do a better job of following up with people, like certain people. Even though people are supposed to be in Sankofa for a number amount of years, like one or two years, like don't let that be the last time you talk to them, or like see them. Like, reach out, or follow up like, 'How's everything? You need anything? Like, how are your grades, like?' Kinda, still maintain that relationship as if they still were in Sankofa.

Maintaining that connection would have provided ongoing support and accountability which, Kenny suggested, would have been welcomed. While he said he "learned enough and did enough" in the program to feel as though he was in a good position and nearing graduation according to his own goals, he did suggest that it would have been valuable for his program counselor to maintain their relationship.

David mentioned how he lacked positive Black role models in his personal life so the mentorship relationship through Sankofa was particularly beneficial. The recommendation that comes out of this observation is for the university to intentionally connect Black male students with opportunities for mentorship, belonging, and

engagement with one another. This could include an expansion of the Sankofa program. As Brandon said,

> I think that there's a lot more African-American students on campus that don't know about Sankofa. So, I think if it was more students just, I guess, having information about Sankofa and what they do, then I think it would be even more of a bigger community, and you would be able to develop more relationships with other students too. So, I think that could be one thing that would be more welcoming, is you could be able to interact with more people.

In addition to increasing the student capacity, another option is to deliberately connect Black students with Black faculty and staff in mentorship roles. Further, on-campus employment for students could come through mentorship arrangements which would help them learn to navigate policies and procedures more aptly. Additionally, careful pairing of mentors to mentees could address some of the gaps in career relevance.

Career Support

Career relevance could also be addressed through required internships or externships. Better career fairs which bring representatives from desired positions to the campus would allow students to ask more relevant questions about the roles rather than the company. Michael explained his vision for making career fairs more useful by providing

> an opportunity to talk to actual doctors, like people in the health field. Or maybe for different major, I know health is not the only— I mean, STEM is not the only majors that is in East Bay. […] Pretty much making events where we can talk to professionals and get to know more about how it feels to be a certain profession or certain things that people are interested in. Like a doctor or like a lawyer. Like

criminal justice majors are interested in being a police officer, but— Making us start talking to them and asking them questions about the challenges and things they face. That can kind of give us a good idea of things to look forward to or obstacles that is going to come our way and maybe better prepare for it. So maybe things like that will be helpful.

He went on to describe his previous experience with career fairs which he found unbeneficial.

I've heard of career affairs that happens on campus. But honestly, I don't know. […] I'm looking for something more like speaking to an actual— someone who has been through it. Not someone who's just going to talk to me about it. And— because the career— okay, maybe I might be like, because the career fairs that I went to, I think that was in my junior year. They were just talking about their jobs pretty much like, how do I explain it? Not necessarily like as a profession, but pretty much like their company overview. ... It's just like that was what they were talking about. But I'm just talking about the profession, itself.

Students also spoke about on-campus jobs as a way to connect to people and the campus; it would be beneficial if university jobs for students were available in the areas in which they were interested.

In order to truly bridge the gap in this area, the university needs to provide career-relevant experiences and curriculum throughout the students' time on campus. Doing so will increase student interest and value, and thus motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Moreover, it is important to remember the students' original purpose and focus for enrolling in college: social mobility. Thus, the university is not successful until it has fulfilled this need by fostering a college experience that is "related to real life," as Michael says, with provision of skills that, according to Kenny, "you can apply to your

future occupation, your future job." Therefore, I recommend the university develop the existing career services center in a way that connects students in their last year of college with jobs and networking opportunities that fulfill their purpose.

Representation Across Campus

Hiring practices at CSUEB do not attract and retain Black professors. Ideally, the faculty demographic would more closely match that of the students served within each department. Further, certain policies prevent the university from immediately removing faculty who may prove to be detrimental to the student experience. Barriers such as tenure status and unions impede universities from dismissing professors who enact their implicit biases out on students. Smith et al. (2011) showed that experiences with microaggressions and MEES create racial battle fatigue which is an in-school barrier to student success. Such encounters as Lavon's can have a lasting impact on a student's path toward degree and, thus, his social mobility. While it would be nice to simply dismiss damaging professors and replace them with professors who respect all students and their backgrounds, that seems to be difficult for the administration at CSUEB to put into practice. Therefore, at a minimum, all existing faculty should have regularly required sessions of professional development which focus on implicit biases and culturally responsive pedagogy to inform their practice. Moreover, future hires to such a diverse campus should have position requirements that highlight experience with diverse populations and place an emphasis on equity and inclusion.

Additionally, hiring a greater number of Black faculty, particularly male, could also potentially improve outcomes. As David said, "For me, the environments that I have grown up in, I've never seen Black people or Black women in general be that hard working, or being that educated. So that just in itself kind of motivates me." Specifically, two of the student interview participants noted that they had minimal exposure to Black

teachers prior to their college years. Further, after entering Cal State East Bay, while they did have, at most, a few classes with Black professors, participants felt that the amount was "not enough, compared to the White and Hispanic teachers I've had, not enough." The students indicated a need for a stronger Black faculty presence. While David acknowledges the benefit of seeing Black females in a position of power, providing a stronger presence of Black male professors would allow the Black male students, who have the lowest graduation and retention rates, to see themselves reflected in the classrooms. Kenny explained the reason Black students need to see themselves reflected in the faculty:

> I feel like [having more Black professors] would have been an advantage. It would have been motivational. It would have made me more determined to do my schoolwork, because I feel like they would have probably talked to me on a real personal level, because Black people, most Black people come from the same background. Come from the same circumstances, you know, inner cities, single parent households, not White, you know. So I just feel like if I would have had more Black teachers, they would have been able to relate to me, and also put the extra time to make sure that their Black students succeed in their classes. And like I said, for the first teacher, they would have just been down in the role, and riding me hard to make sure I pass my classes, so yeah, I feel like it would have been more of an advantage.

Without Black professors, Black students suffer. Kenny described the following:

> I feel like it's a disadvantage for Black students, it's a cripple for Black students. Because I feel like the things that I've said would have driven me to push for better grades if I would have had a Black teacher, I feel like other Black students would've felt the same way. If they would have had more Black teachers in their

school years. So yeah, I just feel like the school system needs to do a better job of recruiting and bringing in more Black teachers, but I understand that Black teachers are held to a higher standard.

David also talked about the benefits of having a Black teacher:

My first Black teacher was not— well, no I had two in college. Three in junior college. But my African Literature teacher, oh, I actually had four. My African Leadership Literature teacher was very like, she was just so dope. The way she broke down stuff. She was younger, too, at the time she was teaching us, too. So even if something was very hard, she was able to break it down to us to make it easier. And if we had personal stuff going on, then she would talk to us and stuff. So, it was just kind of a different interaction. […] I feel that it impacts a lot. I think the teaching— I don't know about at Cal State, it's been a little different compared to the junior college teachers, for Black teachers. But yeah, I do think it impacts.

In addition to hiring more Black professors, it is also important to support peer interactions which deepen the students' sense of belonging and feelings of relatedness. Regarding peer interactions, students from EOP could benefit from the services of Sankofa. Although funding constraints may prevent this, students should have opportunities to blend programs since they exist on an intersectionality of dimensions. It is clear, through the research, that Lavon lacked a sense of belonging and connection to campus. As an EOP member, and a struggling student, he was unable to access resources that Kenny and David touted. David frequented the study room and had exposure to and personal interaction with educated staff and professors who looked like himself. Kenny was well connected to the campus and relied on the friendships which he made through the Sankofa program.

Representation of Black students on campus is important. Students are more likely to retain and graduate if they do not feel isolated. To ensure this critical mass, David suggested "more outreach." He explained that outreach would provide a "bigger community, and you would be able to develop more relationships with other students too." Informing more students about Sankofa would not only be advantageous to the newly joined students who will become a part of the community of like-minded people; it would also benefit the current members of the program who say that a "bigger community" would allow existing program members to "develop more relationships with other students." In discussing the suggestion to build Black program membership, it is important to note that outside of the Sankofa program within the general campus, the presence of Black males lessens. While David suggests recruiting more Black students into the Sankofa program, an additional suggestion would be for the university to be intentional about recruiting more Black students to the campus.

Further, it is important that peers are able to interact with each other. To enact this suggestion Michael proposed "more events and […] get-together stuff, […] try to keep us all together, and at the same time, also make us like a family, like a home." While EOP and Sankofa may have barriers to officially combining, the programs could host more collaborative events that connect students to the culturally-centered programs on campus.

Conclusion

If the CSUEB team was able to improve the academic outcomes of its Black male students, it would alleviate some of the dispiritedness that the students face. Kenny mentioned feeling disheartened upon learning about the data on the graduation rates of Black students.

I will say, what's discouraging is looking at the statistical numbers on how Black

students don't graduate within four years compared to other races. They graduate

in five, six years. That is kind of discouraging. […] It's just one of them things

you just look at like, wow I didn't even know that. That's bad.

If CSUEB could successfully improve its graduation rates for its institutionally

underserved students, that would serve as a source of encouragement for Black males as

well as a marketing tactic for the university in order to attract more Black male students

and bridge the gap to critical mass.

The research questions, served as the foundation for this study and sought to

better understand the equity gap that plagues Black male students in higher education.

With the hope of highlighting some of the issues, the following questions were addressed:

1. In what ways has the existing equity gap been addressed at Cal State

   East Bay?

2. What strategies are employed at CSUEB to create relational supports for

   Black male students?

   a. How do these strategies impact academic performance (e.g., grade point

      average)?

In response to the first question, two major themes arose: Institutional support

and sense of belonging and feelings of relatedness. Institutional support includes

the provision of equitable access to resources and information as well as appropriate

relational supports. Interview data revealed that institutional support was an essential

provision through support programs because the support was not felt on campus. While

research highlighted its necessity for Black males to succeed toward college completion

(Smith et al., 2011; Strayhorn, 2008b, 2019; Wood & Palmer, 2015), the study data

showed that institutional support did not have a direct impact on grade point averages

within the CSUEB context. That could be due to students being "hand-held" and provided support without information or opportunities for autonomy. While three of four participants had already made it to their senior year at the time of the study, two say they did not feel a sense of agency and still did not have a clear understanding of how to pick their own classes.

One of the support programs focuses specifically on Black students, and it is through that support program that participants expressed a deeper sense of belonging due to the focus on ethnicity which facilitated acceptance, representation, and campus connectedness. Literature shows that a sense of belonging contributes to completion rates (Flemings, 1984; Harper, 2003; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2019; Turner, 1994). Still, the data from my study showed that, while a sense of belonging may have increased the grade point averages for Black females, Black males in the support programs have a lower GPA than Black males who do not participate in either of the two programs. While literature suggests that institutional supports and a sense of belonging are essential to degree completion, we do not see a positive impact on grade point averages. Such a result may be, in part, because a high GPA was not necessarily a goal for the participants. The result also could be explained by the report from staff that there are no interventions that target Black male students specifically.

The second research question aimed to review relational support strategies for Black male students. These specific strategies were concentrated within the support programs and emerged through advising, counseling, and mentorship practices. The data also addressed a sense of belonging and feelings of relatedness which constitutes acceptance, representation, and campus connection. Campus connection was facilitated through using tactics around on-campus employment, encouraging peer interactions, and activities. These tactics related to the students' sense of belonging, and had a positive effect on student attitudes about their academia. However, the quantitative data addressed

the latter part of the second research question by showing that the named strategies did not directly impact academic performance as measured by grade point averages.

The lack of impact could be explained by the third theme which emerged from the interview data. The student participants talked a lot about life strategy, their initial purpose in attending, families, and their career goals. However, the qualitative data show that, in a lot of ways, life strategy remained unaddressed through either the university or the support programs. Attention to life strategy emerged as an area of underperformance by the campus but also as necessary to a successful student experience for Black male students. In fact, participants spoke specifically about the absence of support through their careers and futures and provided examples of having missed opportunities that they should have known about. Experiences such as those explain the difficulties Black males have in relating the college experience to their personal lives and future goals. While better addressing life strategy could positively impact all students, it is particularly important for Black male students in pursuit of higher education as they are an institutionally underserved group. Thus, it is important for institutions to bridge this gap between higher education and real-world experiences, thereby including Black males as a priority in the institutionalized practices of the university.

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APPENDIX A

CAL STATE EAST BAY EQUITY GAPS, AS OF NOVEMBER 2017

Freshman Equity Gap, 2017															
	1st Year Retention			2nd Year Retention			4-Year Grad Rates			6-Year Grad Rates			8-Year Grad Rates		
	Black Male	Non-URM Male	Gap	Black Male	Non-URM Male	Gap	Black Male	Non-URM Male	Gap	Black Male	Non-URM Male	Gap	Black Male	Non-URM Male	Gap
2004													41%	53%	12%
2005													40%	53%	13%
2006										16%	46%	30%	21%	51%	30%
2007										22%	42%	20%	25%	50%	25%
2008							4%	11%	7%	26%	42%	16%	30%	47%	17%
2009							1%	12%	11%	19%	50%	31%			
2010	64%	80%	16%				3%	13%	10%	25%	45%	20%			
2011	55%	83%	28%	38%	71%	33%	2%	12%	10%						
2012	72%	81%	9%	61%	70%	9%	4%	14%	10%						
2013	70%	82%	12%	59%	70%	11%									
2014	69%	82%	13%	49%	71%	22%									
2015	72%	81%	9%												

Transfer Equity Gap, 2017															
	1st Year Retention			2nd Year Retention			2-Year Grad Rates			4-Year Grad Rates			6-Year Grad Rates		
	Black Male	Non-URM Male	Gap	Black Male	Non-URM Male	Gap	Black Male	Non-URM Male	Gap	Black Male	Non-URM Male	Gap	Black Male	Non-URM Male	Gap
2008										40%	62%	22%	42%	66%	24%
2009										47%	68%	21%	49%	73%	24%
2010	80%	86%	6%				20%	34%	14%	60%	74%	14%	67%	79%	12%
2011	63%	88%	25%	47%	80%	33%	11%	36%	25%	37%	75%	38%			
2012	85%	86%	1%	68%	77%	9%	23%	36%	13%	45%	72%	27%			
2013	81%	84%	3%	67%	78%	11%	31%	34%	3%						
2014	79%	88%	9%	82%	82%	0%	37%	30%	-7%						
2015	74%	87%	13%												

Key	
Blue	< 0%
Green	1% to 5%
Purple	6% to 10%
Red	> 11%

APPENDIX B

California State University, East Bay
ANNUAL GRADUATION RATES FOR FIRST-TIME FULL-TIME* FRESHMEN
Fall 2005 - FALL 2016 COHORTS ENROLLED AS OF FALL 2016
BY IPEDS ETHNICITY

Fall Cohort		Grad Year 4		Grad Year 5		Grad Year 6		Grad Year 7	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fall 2007	Black, non-Hispanic	6	3.9	22	14.5	31	20.4	38	25
	American Indian or Alaska Native								
	Asian	32	12.6	97	38.3	121	47.8	139	54.9
	Hawaiian/Other Pacific Island	2	10.5	3	15.8	3	15.8	4	21.1
	Hispanic	15	6.9	54	24.8	68	31.2	74	33.9
	White	21	15.7	39	29.1	55	41	60	44.8
	Multiple ethnicity								
	Race/ethnicity unknown	21	11.5	63	34.6	77	42.3	86	47.3
	Nonresident aliens	10	16.9	20	33.9	29	49.2	31	52.5
	Total	107	10.5	298	29.2	384	37.7	432	42.4
Fall 2008	Black, non-Hispanic	8	3.2	49	19.5	65	25.9	72	28.7
	American Indian or Alaska Native			3	37.5	4	50	4	50
	Asian	51	15.1	120	35.5	155	45.9	165	48.8
	Hawaiian/Other Pacific Island	5	12.5	7	17.5	10	25	11	27.5
	Hispanic	23	6.7	89	25.9	117	34	128	37.2
	White	26	13.8	60	31.7	80	42.3	86	45.5
	Multiple ethnicity								
	Race/ethnicity unknown	12	10.9	37	33.6	47	42.7	50	45.5
	Nonresident aliens	10	15.9	25	39.7	32	50.8	32	50.8
	Total	135	10.1	390	29	510	38	548	40.8
Fall 2009	Black, non-Hispanic	11	5.3	42	20.1	58	27.8	66	31.6
	American Indian or Alaska Native								
	Asian	55	16.3	133	39.5	185	54.9	202	59.9
	Hawaiian/Other Pacific Island	4	17.4	9	39.1	11	47.8	12	52.2
	Hispanic	51	11.9	129	30.2	180	42.2	201	47.1
	White	27	14.3	70	37	87	46	96	50.8
	Multiple ethnicity	11	11.2	36	36.7	49	50	50	51
	Race/ethnicity unknown	3	6.8	13	29.5	17	38.6	18	40.9
	Nonresident aliens	14	15.6	42	46.7	51	56.7	54	60
	Total	176	12.4	474	33.4	638	44.9	699	49.2
Fall 2010	Black, non-Hispanic	11	6.7	41	25.2	62	38		
	American Indian or Alaska Native								
	Asian	43	15.1	121	42.5	165	57.9		
	Hawaiian/Other Pacific Island	5	21.7	12	52.2	14	60.9		
	Hispanic	43	12.3	119	33.9	158	45		
	White	25	15.2	61	37	73	44.2		
	Multiple ethnicity	9	10.8	26	31.3	34	41		
	Race/ethnicity unknown	3	10.3	8	27.6	12	41.4		
	Nonresident aliens	29	31.5	52	56.5	57	62		
	Total	168	14.1	440	36.9	575	48.2		

Source: CSU ERSS Statistical Extract; Source: CSU ERSD Statistical Extract / Office of Institutional Research, Analysis & Decision Support | Cal State East Bay / *CSU System undergraduate full-time are students attempting 12 or more hours in a term

APPENDIX C

California State University, East Bay
GRADUATION RATES FOR FIRST-TIME FULL-TIME UPPER DIVISION TRANSFERS
FALL 2005 - FALL 2016 COHORTS ENROLLED AS OF FALL 2016: BY ETHNICITY

Fall Cohort		Grad Year 2		Grad Year 3		Grad Year 4	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Fall 2011	Black, non-Hispanic	41	34.5	64	53.8	74	62.2
	American Indian or Alaska Native	2	50	4	100	4	100
	Asian	138	38.5	252	70.4	280	78.2
	Hawaiian/Other and Pacific Island	4	44.4	6	66.7	7	77.8
	Hispanic	100	38.5	181	69.6	200	76.9
	White	144	41.5	251	72.3	274	79
	Multiple ethnicity	20	32.3	34	54.8	40	64.5
	Race/ethnicity unknown	28	40.6	43	62.3	49	71
	Nonresident aliens	10	19.2	33	63.5	38	73.1
	Cohort Total	487	38	868	67.8	966	75.5
Fall 2012	Black, non-Hispanic	38	27	70	49.6	80	56.7
	American Indian or Alaska Native	1	50	2	100	2	100
	Asian	157	39.7	278	70.4	305	77.2
	Hawaiian/Other and Pacific Island	3	23.1	6	46.2	9	69.2
	Hispanic	105	34.7	177	58.4	204	67.3
	White	148	39.5	260	69.3	289	77.1
	Multiple ethnicity	28	31.8	51	58	63	71.6
	Race/ethnicity unknown	26	30.6	48	56.5	56	65.9
	Nonresident aliens	15	22.4	40	59.7	48	71.6
	Cohort Total	521	35.5	932	63.4	1056	71.9
Fall 2013	Black, non-Hispanic	52	35.9	84	57.9		
	American Indian or Alaska Native	3	50	4	66.7		
	Asian	176	38.4	327	71.4		
	Hawaiian/Other and Pacific Island	8	72.7	10	90.9		
	Hispanic	172	43.7	274	69.5		
	White	187	43	314	72.2		
	Multiple ethnicity	38	38.8	70	71.4		
	Race/ethnicity unknown	38	35.5	76	71		
	Nonresident aliens	21	30	41	58.6		
	Cohort Total	695	40.3	1200	69.6		
Fall 2014	Black, non-Hispanic	55	31.8				
	American Indian or Alaska Native						
	Asian	186	40.4				
	Hawaiian/Other and Pacific Island	9	52.9				
	Hispanic	189	41.6				
	White	167	40.3				
	Multiple ethnicity	47	39.5				
	Race/ethnicity unknown	28	28.3				
	Nonresident aliens	19	24.7				
	Cohort Total	700	38.5				

Office of Institutional Research, Analysis & Decision Support | Cal State East Bay

APPENDIX D

CSU East Bay: Peer Comparison Graduation Rates and Gaps (Freshmen Rates)

4-Year Overall Grad Rate (2012)	
Buffalo State SUNY	22.5%
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania	22.5%
Indiana State University	21.6%
Eastern Washington University	19.8%
Kean University	19.2%
Northwestern State Univ. of Louisiana	18.1%
Southern Connecticut State University	17.3%
East Tennessee State University	16.3%
University of West Georgia	15.0%
Valdosta State University	15.0%
California State University-East Bay	14.9%
Columbus State University	13.4%
Colorado Mesa University	13.2%
University of Massachusetts-Boston	12.9%
California State University-San Marcos	12.7%
University of Southern Mississippi	1.5%

4-Year URM Grad Rate (2012)	
Buffalo State SUNY	28.4%
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania	15.2%
Kean University	13.9%
University of West Georgia	13.6%
Eastern Washington University	13.3%
Northwestern State Univ. of Louisiana	12.7%
Valdosta State University	12.2%
California State University-San Marcos	11.7%
Southern Connecticut State University	10.6%
University of Massachusetts-Boston	8.8%
Columbus State University	8.5%
East Tennessee State University	8.0%
California State University-East Bay	7.1%
Colorado Mesa University	6.1%
Indiana State University	5.6%
University of Southern Mississippi	1.0%

4-Year Grad URM/Non-URM Rate GAP (2012)	
Buffalo State SUNY	NO GAP
University of Southern Mississippi	0.7% pts
California State University-San Marcos	2.0% pts
University of West Georgia	2.1% pts
Valdosta State University	3.8% pts
University of Massachusetts-Boston	3.9% pts
Columbus State University	7.3% pts
Eastern Washington University	7.9% pts
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania	8.1% pts
Northwestern State Univ. of Louisiana	8.3% pts
Colorado Mesa University	8.5% pts
Southern Connecticut State University	8.5% pts
East Tennessee State University	8.8% pts
Kean University	9.2% pts
California State University-East Bay	12.2% pts
Indiana State University	19.8% pts

6-Year Overall Grad Rate (2012)	
Kean University	50.0%
University of Southern Mississippi	49.5%
Buffalo State SUNY	48.1%
Eastern Washington University	46.5%
California State University-San Marcos	44.6%
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania	44.5%
Southern Connecticut State University	43.7%
Indiana State University	42.5%
California State University-East Bay	41.0%
East Tennessee State University	40.7%
Valdosta State University	40.7%
University of Massachusetts-Boston	37.9%
University of West Georgia	36.9%
Northwestern State Univ. of Louisiana	36.3%
Columbus State University	34.3%
Colorado Mesa University	28.8%

6-Year URM Grad Rate (2012)	
Buffalo State SUNY	50.6%
Kean University	43.8%
University of Southern Mississippi	42.1%
California State University-San Marcos	40.6%
Valdosta State University	39.3%
University of West Georgia	38.6%
Eastern Washington University	34.8%
Southern Connecticut State University	33.3%
University of Massachusetts-Boston	32.9%
Northwestern State Univ. of Louisiana	32.0%
East Tennessee State University	31.3%
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania	31.3%
California State University-East Bay	26.9%
Columbus State University	26.4%
Indiana State University	25.9%
Colorado Mesa University	21.2%

6-Year URM/Non-URM Grad Rate GAP (2012)	
Buffalo State SUNY	NO GAP
University of West Georgia	NO GAP
Valdosta State University	1.8% pts
California State University-San Marcos	5.8% pts
University of Massachusetts-Boston	6.0% pts
Northwestern State Univ. of Louisiana	6.8% pts
Colorado Mesa University	9.1% pts
East Tennessee State University	10.2% pts
Kean University	11.0% pts
University of Southern Mississippi	11.8% pts
Columbus State University	12.4% pts
Southern Connecticut State University	12.9% pts
Eastern Washington University	14.2% pts
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania	14.8% pts
Indiana State University	20.9% pts
California State University-East Bay	23.2% pts

Source: www.csueastbay.edu/.../ssac/ssac-ees/ssac-gradinitiative/files/csu-eb-gradinit-2025.pdf

APPENDIX E

Sankofa Scholars Program Demographics

RACE/ETHNICITY		
Asian Indian	1	0.34%
Black/AfAm	276	93.56%
Black Males	67	22.71%
Decline to State	5	1.69%
European	1	0.34%
Filipino	1	0.34%
Mexican	2	0.68%
Not Specified	1	0.34%
Other Central American	1	0.34%
Two or More Ethnicities	6	2.03%
Vietnamese	1	0.34%

GRADE POINT AVERAGE		
GPA 1st	126	42.71%
GPA 0-0.5		0.00%
GPA 0.51-1.0		0.00%
GPA 1.01-1.5	4	1.36%
GPA 1.51-2	8	2.71%
GPA 2.1-2.5	32	10.85%
GPA 2.51-3	61	20.68%
GPA 3.1-3.5	46	15.59%
GPA 3.51-4	18	6.10%

TOTAL STUDENTS	295

GENDER		
Male	73	24.75%
Female	222	75.25%

POINT OF ENTRY		
Freshman	174	58.98%
Transfer	121	41.02%

AGE		
17-19	174	58.98%
20-25	43	14.58%
26-30	24	8.14%
31-35	16	5.42%
36-40	11	3.73%
41-45	4	1.36%
46-50	8	2.71%
51-55	4	1.36%
56-60	6	2.03%
61-65	3	1.02%
66+	2	0.68%

MAJOR		
Anthropology	2	0.68%
Art	10	3.39%
Biochemistry	1	0.34%
Biological Science	22	7.46%
Business Administration	45	15.25%
Chemistry	6	2.03%
Communication	13	4.41%
Computer Engineering	1	0.34%
Computer Science	7	2.37%
Criminal Justice Administration	8	2.71%
Criminal Justice	20	6.78%
English	5	1.69%
Environmental Science BS	1	0.34%
Ethnic Studies	9	3.05%
Health Science	23	7.80%
History	3	1.02%
Hospitality and Tourism	3	1.02%
Human Development	6	2.03%
Industrial Engineering	1	0.34%
Kinesiology	6	2.03%
Liberal Studies	8	2.71%
Mathematics	1	0.34%
Music	1	0.34%
Political Science	3	1.02%
Psychology	19	6.44%
Recreation	3	1.02%
Sociology	35	11.86%
Spanish	1	0.34%
Theatre Arts	3	1.02%
Undeclared	8	2.71%
Undeclared interest in NURS	21	7.12%

APPENDIX F

EOP Program Demographics

RACE/ETHNICITY		
Asian	3	0.28%
Asian Indian	20	1.89%
Black/AfAm	198	18.68%
Black Males	44	4.15%
Burmese	1	0.09%
Cambodian	6	0.57%
Chilean	1	0.09%
Chinese	22	2.08%
Colombian	1	0.09%
Costa Rican	1	0.09%
Decline to State	23	2.17%
Ecuadorian	4	0.38%
European	27	2.55%
Filipino	28	2.64%
Guatemalan	29	2.74%
Hispanic/Latino	6	0.57%
Hmong	5	0.47%
Honduran	5	0.47%
Indonesian	1	0.09%
Laotian	5	0.47%
Mexican	470	44.34%
Middle Easterner	14	1.32%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	9	0.85%
Nepalese	1	0.09%
Nicaraguan	10	0.94%
No Response	1	0.09%
Not Specified	1	0.09%
Ohlone	1	0.09%
Other American Indian Tribes	1	0.09%
Other Asian	10	0.94%
Other Central American	0	0.00%
Other Latino, Hispanic	18	1.70%
Other South American	1	0.09%
Other White	7	0.66%
Pakistani	4	0.38%
Peruvian	4	0.38%
Puerto Rican	5	0.47%
Salvadoran	40	3.77%
Spanish	1	0.09%
Taiwanese	1	0.09%
Two or More Ethnicities	37	3.49%
Vietnamese	36	3.40%
White	2	0.19%

TOTAL STUDENTS	1060

GENDER		
Male	284	26.79%
Female	776	73.21%

POINT OF ENTRY		
Freshman	712	67.17%
Transfer	348	32.83%

GRADE POINT AVERAGE		
GPA 1st	171	16.13%
GPA 0-0.5	0	0.00%
GPA 0.51-1.0	4	0.38%
GPA 1.01-1.5	9	0.85%
GPA 1.51-2	47	4.43%
GPA 2.1-2.5	150	14.15%
GPA 2.51-3	267	25.19%
GPA 3.1-3.5	273	25.75%
GPA 3.51-4	139	13.11%

AGE		
17-19	399	37.64%
20-25	496	46.79%
26-30	81	7.64%
31-35	34	3.21%
36-40	17	1.60%
41-45	15	1.42%
46-50	3	0.28%
51-55	7	0.66%
56-60	3	0.28%
61-65	4	0.38%
66+	1	0.09%

MAJOR		
Anthropology	5	0.47%
Art	43	4.06%
Biochemistry	5	0.47%
Biological Science	54	5.09%
Business Administration	122	11.51%
Chemistry	5	0.47%
Communication	32	3.02%
Computer Engineering	13	1.23%
Computer Science	30	2.83%
Construction Management	11	1.04%
Criminal Justice Administration	34	3.21%
Criminal Justice	80	7.55%
Economics	3	0.28%
English	15	1.42%
Environmental Science BS	3	0.28%
Environmental Studies BA	2	0.19%
Ethnic Studies	13	1.23%
Health Science	70	6.60%
History	2	0.19%
Hospitality and Tourism	4	0.38%
Human Development	75	7.08%
Industrial Engineering	2	0.19%
International Studies	5	0.47%
Kinesiology	48	4.53%
Liberal Studies	18	1.70%
Mathematics	9	0.85%
Music	3	0.28%
Nursing	10	0.94%
Physics	1	0.09%
Political Science	30	2.83%
Psychology	116	10.94%
Recreation	6	0.57%
Sociology	84	7.92%
Spanish	9	0.85%
Speech Pathology & Audiology	10	0.94%
Theatre Arts	8	0.75%
Undeclared	21	1.98%
Undeclared interest in NURS	59	5.57%

APPENDIX G

<u>Staff Interview Protocol</u>

Date: ASAP
Time: TBA
Location: CSUEB, EOP Office (or available conference room TBA)
Duration: 45 min. max.

Participants: 2-3 Staff persons who work to support the EOP/Sankofa programs at CSUEB
Sampling: Purposeful sampling based on place of employment and availability

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<u>Research Question</u>

1. In what ways has CSUEB addressed the existing equity gap?
2. What strategies does CSUEB use to create relational supports for Black male students?
    a. How do these strategies affect academic performance (e.g., grade point average)?

<u>Procedure</u>

1. Interview time and location will be pre-arranged with participant for one-on-one recorded interviews
2. Consent signed
3. Introductory comments
    a. Welcome & thank you
    b. Research to introduce self and provide overview of the study
    c. Discuss guidelines, confidentiality & how the information will be used
        i. Also, because the interview will include discussion of personal opinions, extra measures will be taken to protect each participant's privacy. Only the researcher will have access to the data collected. Any voice recordings and transcripts of the interview will be kept under password protection and
4. Ask if there are questions.
5. Ask the Interview Questions.
6. Thank participant for their participation.
7.

Staff Interview Questions

Intro Questions
1. In your own words, please tell about the program.   2. What is your role in the program?   3. What do you think students get from being in the program?   4. Walk me through a student's time in the program? (from join to end)   a. Is their end time usually graduation, separating from the university, or leaving the program?
Academics

5. How does the program support the students academically?
 6. Tell me how the program improves student outcomes (grades, retention, graduation)?
 7. How does the program encourage students to get good grades or do well in school?
    a. What specifically is the student's role in this?
 8. Specifically, how does the program help a student navigate college life?
 9. Although CSUEB is very diverse, there is a persistent equity gap that shows Black males with the lowest graduation and retention rates. Is that something you were aware of previously?
    b. Has this program implemented any changes to intentionally address that specific problem? If so, what?
    c. In your opinion, does the program help with that problem whether intentionally or not? In what ways?

On-campus Activities
10. In what ways does EOP/Sankofa get students involved in on-campus activities?   11. Does EOP/Sankofa encourage students to take on leadership roles in campus activities?   12. Does the program require students to participate in any on-campus activities?
Peer Interactions
13. How does the program promote connection among student peers?   14. Are there EOP/Sankofa supported student activities?   15. Does the program require group work of any kind?   16. Are counseling sessions ever done in groups?

Faculty/Staff Interactions
17. What do staff and faculty do as a part of the program? What is their role? 18. In what ways do *you* interact directly with students? 19. What do you talk about with students? 20. What types of advice do you give students? 21. How does the program promote connection between the students and staff/faculty? 22. Does the program facilitate a connection to academic advisors in AACE or the major department?
Concluding
23. Is there anything else the program does to support Black males specifically? If so, what? 24. What would you say the program does exceptionally well, if anything? 25. What would you say the program needs to improve, if anything? 26. If funding were not an issue, what would you do to make the program better? 27. Is there anything else you want to mention?

APPENDIX H

STUDENT SURVEY PROTOCOL

Surveys were administered through email by the researcher using the program listserv. Counselors also invited students to complete the survey while they waited for their appointments if not previously completed. Students were informed that the survey was optional.

Question Codes:
    YN – YES or NO answer
    DD – Uses Drop Down Menu options
    OE – Short Open-Ended answers
    LK – Likert questions on a consistent scale (1 = not at all, 2 = not much, 3 = somewhat, 4 = very much)
    MC – Multiple choice

Research Questions

1. In what ways has CSUEB addressed the existing equity gap?
2. What strategies does CSUEB use to create relational supports for Black male students?
    a. How do these strategies affect academic performance (e.g., grade point average)?

Implied Consent to Participate in Research

Data collected from this confidential survey will be used for completion of a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership at California State University, East Bay. The information gathered will be used for research on the university's programs and how the institution serves students.

The survey questions will be about your experiences with Cal State East Bay and your experiences in EOP/Sankofa. You have been invited to participate as a participant in EOP and/or Sankofa.

*You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. There are no immediate risks or benefits to you in participating in this survey. You may choose to participate or not. You may answer only the questions you feel comfortable answering, and you may stop at any time. If you do not wish to participate, you may stop now. If you do choose to participate, **completion and return of the survey indicates your consent to the above conditions.***

Please do not put your name in the survey. *We ask instead for your netID which will be kept under password protection. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Any questions or concerns should be directed to the principal investigator, Denise Johnson at denise.johnson@csueastbay.edu, the research advisor, Professor Arriaza at gilberto.arriaza@csueastbay.edu, or the CSUEB Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at irb@csueastbay.edu or 510-885-4212.*

Student Survey Questions

Intro Questions
1) Implied Consent
2) DD - Please provide your grade level: Freshman / Sophomore / Jr / Sr / Grad
3) DD - Did you start at CSUEB as a freshman or did you transfer from another college?   Select: Freshman / Transfer
4) DD – How long were you a student at Cal State East Bay before you joined EOP?
5) DD - Do you live on campus?   Select: Yes / no
a. MC - If NO, how long does it take you to get to school?
6) OE - Briefly tell me what the purpose EOP/Sankofa is. (character limit)
7) OE - What made you decide to join EOP/Sankofa?
8) OE – Briefly tell me about your involvement in EOP/Sankofa. What do you do as a part of the program?
9) Y/N - Do you feel EOP/Sankofa is helpful to you? (question logic)
a. OE - How is the program helpful? (if yes)
b. OE - Why do you feel EOP/Sankofa is not helpful? What could the program do better? (if no)

Academics (Likert range = not at all – not much – somewhat - very much)
10) LK - Do you learn important things through the EOP/Sankofa program?
11) LK – How much has EOP/Sankofa helped you to improve your grades in college?
12) LK – How much more confident do you feel about your grades because of EOP/Sankofa?
13) LK – How much does EOP/Sankofa help you to improve your study strategies?
14) LK - How much do you feel your grades have improved since you joined EOP/Sankofa?
15) LK - How much do you feel your grades have worsened since you joined EOP/Sankofa?
16) LK - To what extent is EOP *directly* responsible for a change in your grades?
17) LK - To what extent is EOP *indirectly* responsible for a change in your grades?

On-campus Activities

18) YN - Are you in any clubs, groups, sports teams, or organizations on campus other than this one?
   a. OE – Please list the club(s)/group(s)/sports team(s)/organization(s) you joined?
   b. OE – What caused you to join?
   c. DD – Does EOP make it easier or harder for you to participate in the group/club/team/organization? (question logic)
      i. OE – In what ways does EOP/Sankofa make participation in the group/club/team/organization easier/harder?
19) YN – Has anyone from EOP/Sankofa, suggested that you join a club/group/team/organization?
   a. YN – (if yes) Was this person's suggestion the *main reason* that you joined a club(s)/group(s)/sports team(s)/organization(s)?
20) YNU - Have you ever volunteered to do work for EOP/Sankofa? (question logic)
   a. OE – (if yes) What did you volunteer to do?
21) MC - Does EOP/Sankofa encourage or require you to participate in any extracurricular activities?
22) MC - Does EOP/Sankofa let you know when events/activities are happening on campus?

Peer Interactions

23) MC – Do you have any friends who are also in EOP/Sankofa? (Question Logic)
   a. MC - If Yes, did you meet that friend through EOP/Sankofa or outside of the program?
   b. LK - How much was EOP/Sankofa a part of building that friendship?
24) LK – How much do you believe that EOP/Sankofa has helped you to make friends on campus?
25) LK – How much does EOP/Sankofa provide opportunities for you to talk to other students?
26) LK – How much does EOP/Sankofa provide opportunities for you to work with other students?
27) LK – How easy was it for you to connect with other students before you joined EOP/Sankofa?
28) LK – How easy was it for you to talk to other students before you joined EOP/Sankofa?
29) LK – How easy is it for you to connect with other students after you joined EOP/Sankofa?
30) LK - How easy is it for you to talk to other students after you joined EOP/Sankofa?

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Faculty/Staff Interactions
31) YN - Do you believe that EOP/Sankofa has helped you connect to someone who works at the university?
32) MC - How many times per semester do you meet with your EOP counselor?
33) MC - How many times per year do you meet with your EOP counselor?
34) LK – To what extent do you discuss your personal home lives with your EOP counselor?
35) LK - How much do your meetings with your EOP/Sankofa counselor help you in school?
36) LK – How much does the EOP/Sankofa staff expect you to be successful?
37) LK - How often do you meet with your EOP/Sankofa counselor?
38) LK – How much do the EOP/Sankofa workers encourage you to get good grades?
39) LK – How *discouraged* do you feel after talking to your EOP counselor?
40) LK – How *encouraged* do you feel after talking to your EOP counselor?
41) LK - How much do your meetings with your EOP counselor help you to get better grades?
42) LK - How much do your meetings with your EOP counselor help you in choosing your classes?
43) LK – To what extent do you discuss your personal struggles with your EOP counselor?
44) LK - To what extent do you discuss your school-related struggles with your EOP counselor?
45) LK - How much do you trust the counselor at EOP/Sankofa?
46) LK – How helpful was EOP in connecting you with your major advisor?
47) LK - How easy was it for you to connect with and talk to a CSUEB staff person before you joined EOP/Sankofa?
48) LK - How easy is it for you to connect with and talk to a CSUEB staff person after you joined EOP/Sankofa?
Connectivity to Campus
49) LK - How much do you like CSUEB?
50) LK - How welcome do you feel on the university campus?
51) LK - Do you believe that EOP/Sankofa makes your college experience more enjoyable?
52) LK - Does EOP/Sankofa make you feel more connected to campus?
53) LK – Do you have trouble feeling connected to the Cal State East Bay campus because of EOP?
54) LK – How much does EOP/Sankofa help you with non-academic parts of your life (not school related)?
55) LK – How much does EOP/Sankofa make you feel more confident about your experience in college?

56) LK - How easy was it for you to join EOP/Sankofa?   57) LK - How connected do you feel to the CSUEB campus?   58) LK – Does EOP/Sankofa make you feel *more* welcome at CSUEB?   59) LK – Does EOP/Sankofa make you feel *less* welcome at CSUEB?   60) LK – Does EOP/Sankofa make you enjoy CSUEB more?   61) LK – Does EOP/Sankofa make you enjoy CSUEB less?
Concluding
62) LK – To what extent does EOP/Sankofa require you to do extra work?   63) LK – Please rate your *expectation* of the following: Your college experience, Cal State East Bay, EOP   64) LK – Please rate your *actual experience* with the following: Your college experience, Cal State East Bay, EOP   65) OE - Is there anything else you want me to know about your experience with EOP/Sankofa?   66) Y/N - Do you want to be entered into the drawing for a $50 Visa gift card?   a. Please your netID in order to be entered into the contest (your survey answers will remain anonymous).

APPENDIX I

STUDENT SURVEY CONSTRUCTS

Construct	Definition	Item Count	Example Questions	Likert Avg.
Academics	This construct addresses student grades, retention, and graduation rates.	8	How much more confident do you feel about your grades because of EOP/Sankofa? How much do you feel your grades have improved since you joined EOP/Sankofa?	2.90
On-campus Activities	This area includes participation in any activity that occurs on the CSUEB campus which may or may not be hosted through one of the support programs.	11	Has anyone from EOP/Sankofa, suggested that you join a club/group/team/organization? Does EOP/Sankofa let you know when events/activities are happening on campus?	n/a
Peer Interactions	The exploration of this construct examines peer relationships among students.	10	How much does EOP/Sankofa provide opportunities for you to talk to other students? How easy is it for you to connect with other students *after* you joined EOP/Sankofa?	2.68
Faculty/Staff Interactions	This construct highlights bonds between the campus employees and the students. It incorporates discussions, advice, greetings, time spent, and other connections that demonstrate the relationship between the student and a faculty or staff person.	18	Do you believe that EOP/Sankofa has helped you connect to someone who works at the university? To what extent do you discuss your personal struggles with your EOP counselor?	3.14
Campus Connectivity	Feeling a sense of belonging, support, attachment and satisfaction with the university is addressed through this construct.	13	How welcome do you feel on the university campus? Does EOP/Sankofa make you feel *more* welcome at CSUEB?	3.21

Source: Student Survey question set and results, administered 2019
Note: The On-campus Activities construct contained no Likert Questions

APPENDIX J

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date:	[after survey results]
Time:	[by appointment]
Location:	Face-to-face interviews were on campus in conference rooms.
	Online interviews took place over a Zoom video conference.
Duration:	Approx. 1 hour

Participants: 4 Black male students who are EOP/Sankofa members at CSUEB (two groups)

Sampling: Purposeful sampling based on survey results and with the help of the program managers.

___

Research Question

1. In what ways has CSUEB addressed the existing equity gap?
2. What strategies does CSUEB use to create relational supports for Black male students?
    a. How do these strategies affect academic performance (e.g., grade point average)?

Procedure

1. Interview questions were decided/finalized after the results of the survey are analyzed as the purpose of the interview was to delve deeper into the survey responses.
2. Interview time and location were pre-arranged with participant for one-on-one recorded interviews.
3. Introductory comments
    a. Welcome & thank you
    b. Researcher introduced self and provided overview of the study
    c. Participants were informed that recording devices will be used.
    d. Discuss guidelines, confidentiality & how the information will be used
        i. Also, because the interview will include discussion of personal

opinions, extra measures will be taken to protect each participant's privacy. Only the researcher will have access to the data collected. Any voice recordings and transcripts of the interview will be kept under password protection and

4. Ask if there are questions.
5. Ask the Interview Questions.
6. Thank participant for their participation.

Interview Questions

Intro Questions
1. What made you pick CSUEB as your college? 2. What were your expectations of the college experience? (What did you think college would be like?)   a. In your opinion, does CSUEB meet your expectations? Explain. 3. What made you pick EOP/Sankofa? 4. What were your expectations of the program? Does the program meet your expectations?

Academics

5. What motivates you to do well in school? Does the program play a part in that?
6. How much support do you think you need to succeed in college?
    a. What type of support do you feel you get, in general?
    b. What type of support do you get from the program?
7. How do you feel you're doing in class?
8. Do you think the program has had a positive or negative effect on your grades? Explain.
9. Do you think the program has had a positive or negative effect on your college experience? Explain.

On-campus Activities

10. Does anyone live on campus?
11. Other than attend class, what else do you do on campus?
    a. Are there any activities that you attend because of the program (requirements, advertising, sponsors, incentives)?
    b. Tell me about the people you met at these events? Any of them you still talk to?
12. Are there any activities on campus that have connected you with the professors or employees?
13. Where do you go when you don't know what to do about school issues?

Peer Interactions
14. In what ways do you interact with other students in the program? 15. In what ways do you interact with CSUEB students outside of the program? 16. For those that have roommates here on campus, in what ways do you interact with them outside of your living space? 17. Do you feel your relationship with the other students has any effect on how you do in school? Explain.

Faculty/Staff Interactions
18. Who are the people in the program that help you? What are their titles? (note language and use in the following questions) 19. Do you know who your [academic advisor] is and have you met with them? 20. How did you find out who your advisor was? 21. What do you think of the [program counselor]? Tell me about your relationship with the counselor. 22. In what ways does [program counselor] support you? Are there any ways that you feel your counselor is negative toward you? 23. How are you encouraged by your professors (if at all)? Are there any ways they are discouraging? Do you feel you get more or less encouragement from your [program counselor]? 24. Do you talk to your [program counselor] outside of the regularly scheduled session? If so, what do you talk about? If not, why not? 25. Do you feel your [program counselors] are helpful to your academic achievement? Explain?
Connectivity to Campus

26. In what ways do you feel connected to the campus? Disconnected?
27. I want you to think about, overall, do you feel welcome or unwelcome on this campus. Then tell me why?
    a. What could CSUEB do to make you feel more welcome? Or What has CSUEB done to make you feel welcome?
    b. What could EOP/Sankofa do to make you feel more welcome? Or How has EOP/Sankofa made you feel welcome?
28. Knowing what you know now, if you could start over, would you still choose CSUEB? Why or why not?
29. Knowing what you know now, if you could start over, would you still join EOP/Sankofa? Why or why not?

Concluding
30. Is there anything about the program or its staff that surprised you or that you did not expect? 31. What would you do to make the program better? 32. Is there anything else you think I should know?

APPENDIX K

CORRELATION MATRIX (PARTIAL)

	Cum.GPA	Q. 10	Q. 11	Q. 12	Q. 14	Q. 24
Cum.GPA	1	-0.039875745	-0.075528824	0.026975975	-0.014353235	-0.048175857
Q. 10	-0.039875745	1	0.427064824	0.386618363	0.430729556	0.453493149
Q. 11	-0.075528824	0.427064824	1	0.774376556	0.610037088	0.489917578
Q. 12	0.026975975	0.386618363	0.774376556	1	0.662159033	0.495100695
Q. 13	-0.014353235	0.430729556	0.610037088	0.662159033	1	0.581825115
Q. 24	-0.048175857	0.453493149	0.489917578	0.495100695	0.581825115	1
Q. 25	-0.00493612	0.454842125	0.47611098	0.449827257	0.48227768	0.669679075
Q. 34	-0.054321998	0.388590498	0.383395201	0.361021863	0.428280797	0.372899522
Q. 35	-0.003668026	0.398508276	0.303708096	0.33665562	0.333343925	0.229291264
Q. 36	-0.014245104	0.423150004	0.412806944	0.400522226	0.391744719	0.225041203
Q. 37	-0.033519956	0.331213353	0.322020673	0.401466725	0.320011503	0.317306884
Q. 38	0.041716505	0.516909063	0.411885318	0.451435031	0.420148816	0.379370351
Q. 49	0.014106758	0.125730832	0.068492064	0.076192163	0.072401697	0.100358981
Q. 50	0.090523201	0.178077978	0.121767387	0.101477127	0.044725588	0.129436002
Q. 51	0.02141935	0.460458694	0.485592122	0.493709746	0.436245577	0.388658611
Q. 52	0.004105948	0.507876653	0.455200062	0.442211856	0.426721755	0.463734384
Q. 53	0.010613037	-0.015341745	0.136490958	0.159622225	0.216140315	0.254051173
Q. 54	-0.007677481	0.331406359	0.353626933	0.405232553	0.451208031	0.528284188
Q. 39	-0.077480612	-0.120020877	-0.025414883	-0.043827464	0.045082923	0.130706394
Q. 40	0.055851444	0.446297281	0.325588044	0.364189861	0.35411006	0.311122714
Q. 14	-0.010888487	0.453309691	0.703347829	0.664740868	0.606943907	0.476928031
Q. 15	-0.132509735	-0.037058265	0.064044128	0.118248534	0.167896536	0.241567922
Q. 16	-0.068628189	0.270746063	0.491875585	0.523527666	0.480298263	0.361572999
Q. 17	-0.13528885	0.157878401	0.275344203	0.279980845	0.248272003	0.246666144
Q. 26	0.038761949	0.403445417	0.391674212	0.393161768	0.423576551	0.551994513
Q. 41	-0.028493615	0.363084692	0.570664342	0.540580196	0.503784075	0.404368175
Q. 42	0.004117361	0.419092585	0.339633916	0.333656716	0.302337516	0.188169184
Q. 43	0.041982488	0.31456441	0.290482389	0.273124997	0.335856558	0.317880251
Q. 44	0.027382831	0.38181147	0.319286103	0.340414465	0.339990657	0.349026017
Q. 45	0.027615614	0.403063312	0.394742708	0.377319299	0.353046653	0.225951651
Q. 46	0.052550145	0.231823921	0.29565404	0.349594258	0.319874702	0.280087965
Q. 55	0.011294029	0.519785149	0.431084607	0.444228465	0.408729226	0.347223688
Q. 56	-0.078246817	0.203987994	-0.007682892	-0.053367766	0.060218055	0.034810567
Q. 57	0.017207404	0.294631938	0.3108808	0.290197376	0.231379864	0.334199018
Q. 58	0.126709475	0.392079585	0.396738612	0.383976064	0.337322487	0.443878034
Q. 59	-0.044769548	-0.059580025	0.106612999	0.105836259	0.148552631	0.167914913
Q. 60	0.055290645	0.511989488	0.421570649	0.452562485	0.429068295	0.415442817
Q. 61	-0.142277438	-0.071067603	0.074968174	0.067878328	0.120254238	0.193875606
Q. 62	0.018936495	0.22841327	0.285981433	0.323533729	0.318218788	0.329221844
Q. 27	-0.080321933	-0.11757927	-0.266814938	-0.067884423	-0.394664881	0.222250222
Q. 28	-0.052704628	-0.077151675	0.032826608	0.200445931	-0.119522861	0.28125
Q. 47	0.125988158	0.036885556	-0.219717687	-0.031943828	-0.314285714	0.358568583
Q. 29	0.372953952	-0.125988158	0.285896676	0.43643578	0.195180015	0.3742276
Q. 30	0.027681827	0	0.689655172	0.561489925	0.470823615	0.492399123
Q. 48	-0.45515762	0.235158541	0.667037346	0.509133175	0.425023719	0.444500445
Q. 63a	-0.0543556	0.073652932	0.170915295	0.13974489	0.110035797	0.093004864
Q. 63b	0.040980645	0.170174294	0.159132154	0.146678044	0.155410769	0.10563139
Q. 63c	-0.021306926	0.198730871	0.186915552	0.185842059	0.204640837	0.167005361
Q. 64a	0.012017593	0.202427647	0.220618764	0.17875941	0.167610208	0.157074665
Q. 64b	0.04304101	0.199044665	0.178150343	0.110954978	0.09946462	0.081277347
Q. 64c	0.013116159	0.462322354	0.409079724	0.403787762	0.322155087	0.263606803

Source: Student Survey Data