ABSTRACT
              The importance of selected social integration
variables in the persistence of Black male students on the campuses
of Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) is investigated. This
review attempts to develop a method for generally classifying the
wide variety of research that investigates the persistence of Black
male students attending PWIs. It has been purposely narrowed towards
exploring the relationships between the culturally unique interaction
styles of Black students in general, and Black males in particular,
and their persistence rates at PWIs. Its major focus is on
non-assertive or passive aspects of successful Black male student
adaptation to college. This area appears to provide a promising basis
for additional exploratory research aimed at expanding the current
conceptual framework for the development of a "non-defective" based
theoretical paradigm for Black male student persistence at PWIs.
Contains 287 references. (TS)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSERTIVENESS AND THE
PERSISTENCE OF SUCCESSFUL BLACK MALE STUDENTS
IN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW PAPER

By

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COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW PAPER
OUTLINE

PART I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

A 1983 report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, entitled A Nation At Risk states that "The people of the United States need to know that individuals in our society who do not possess the levels of skill, literacy, and training essential to this new era will be effectively disenfranchised, not simply from the material rewards that accompany competent performance, but also from the chance to participate fully in our national life" and as a result "the very fabric of our society" is at risk (A Nation at Risk, 1983, p. 9). Since 1983, a variety of data has indicated that these individuals will be members of minority populations.

Blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans generally have the highest secondary school drop-out rates combined with the lowest post-secondary attendance and retention rates in the nation. A Nation at Risk estimated that "Functional illiteracy among minority youth may run as high as 40%" (p. 10). The educational statistics documented on

Black male populations are considered so bleak that some have gone so far as to refer to them as *an endangered species.* Ross and Jackson (1991) provided statistics which revealed that "In general, Black males are doing poorly in most aspects of their education from elementary school through college" (p. 78).

Black males flunk, get suspended and are expelled more often than Black females, White males or White females. As a result, a few educators have called for establishment of all male academies so that Black males, who often rebel against the authority of female teachers, can be exposed to positive adult male role models. A variety of research data suggest that because of their early exposure to environments filled with drugs, gang violence and family turbulence, Black males are far more likely to end up in prison, murdered or out of a job than Black females, White males or White females.

Why are inner-city minority males, in particular, heading in the direction of both academic and social failure? Many believe that these factors are all associated with an urban male peer socialization process which rewards super-aggressive, macho behavior. Such Black male behavior produces a cycle of discipline problems, inattentiveness or

M. Haralson, 93

refusal to follow simple directions which leads to negative teacher expectations, perceptions and feedback. As a result, Black males tend to become increasingly discouraged and alienated which helps to explain the disproportionate lack of academic motivation and educational success experienced by these students (Cheek, 1976).

Fleming (1984) stated that "Between 60 and 75 percent of black students are currently enrolled in predominantly white institutions" and that Black colleges produce "70 percent of the degrees earned among blacks because of the attrition rates at white colleges" (p. 10). Fleming believed that increases in Black student enrollment at predominantly White institutions produces socio-cultural adjustment problems that have yet to be resolved. In 1989, the American Council on Education (ACE) reported that despite overall increases in minority college enrollment rates between 1976-1986, the college enrollment rates for Black males 18-24 declined by 7% during this period.

It is becoming readily apparent to those who work with minority youth that entire generations of Black males appear to be rejecting educational achievement as a mechanism to escape from the social conditions associated with the combined effects of poverty and racism.

M. Haralson, 93

Education is no longer viewed by Black males as the ticket needed for obtaining the benefits of the American dream or the good life. Stapes (1978) concluded that much about schooling is no longer attractive to Black males because educational standards "tend to value and reward that which is considered female behavior---politeness, orderliness, and concentration, attributes not often expected or considered the norm for males" (p. 170). Unfortunately, it appears that drug retailing and other forms of crime are currently viewed by large numbers of young Blacks as the ticket to the good life. A cursory examination of recent media reports from urban minority areas reveals that violence and other forms of anti-social behavior are now considered the norm for Black male behavior.

This general devaluation of formal intellectual training has led to much discussion in the literature concerning the declining pool of urban minority students with the capacity to successfully participate in post-secondary educational programs. This discussion has produced a large amount of research aimed at developing more effective strategies for the recruitment and retention of post-secondary level minority students. This research has resulted in the identification of a large number of

M. Haralson, 93

cognitive and non-cognitive variables that traditional research has related to college retention, attrition and persistence. The majority of the strategies developed from this research appear to be more successful with minority females than with minority males. However, Fleming (1984) found that persisting Black male students appeared to lose their social assertiveness and become submissive to external authority on predominantly White campuses. Also, Ross and Jackson (1991) reviewed a number of studies on academically successful Black students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and concluded that successful Black male students are conforming and submissive. It appears that student temperament is an important cultural variable influencing Black student persistence at PWIs.

Purpose

This Comprehensive Review Paper examines the relationship between assertiveness and the persistence of successful Black Male Students in Predominantly White Institutions of Higher Education. This examination focused on the following questions:

(1) Can a general classification scheme be developed that will organize the wide variety of variables explaining traditional

M. Haralson, 93

8

college student persistence into major theoretically based paradigms?

(2) Will the research identifying variables influencing Black college student persistence support the results from the studies of traditional college student populations?

(3) Is there a difference in the temperament or behavioral characteristics of the populations of Black male students who:

a. go on to college but drop out

b. successfully complete their junior* college year?

(*research indicates that most college dropouts leave by their sophomore year, Jackson, 1992)

(4) Does Black academic success improve as institutional perceptions of Black student submissiveness increase?

Significance of the Study

"Minorities on Campus," a 1989 publication of the American Council on Education (ACE) noted that despite the best efforts of universities in trying to promote the recruitment and retention of minority students, "The gap between the participation rates of white students and minority students is growing, and attrition is a major

M. Haralson, 93

problem" (Green, 1989, p. 1). "Minorities on Campus" listed a number of facts about minority students including:

1. Higher education's pool of students is increasingly made up of minority youth — 50% in the larger cities and metropolitan areas.

2. Black and Hispanic students are far less likely than White students to complete a degree — 7% Hispanic, 10% Black, 21% White.

3. Blacks attending historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are more likely to complete a degree than those attending predominantly white institutions (Green, 1989, p. 2-3).

The ACE publication included a number of post-secondary retention strategies for minority students in order to promote increases in equity and diversity in higher education. However, ACE concluded that, "we are painfully aware that the current conceptual framework is not fully adequate; in some areas, we need new language to shape the discussion" (Green, 1989, p. 181). ACE, intended its document to be a "point of departure for the development of new approaches, new paradigms and new insights" (Green, 1989, p. 181).

This comprehensive review paper will attempt to analyze and

M. Haralson, 93

synthesize the current knowledge base in order to generate new insights

towards addressing:

a: the declining pool of minority male students who enroll in urban

universities.

b. the high attrition and low graduation rates of Black male

students in predominantly white universities.

Green (1989) stated that at present Blacks and other minorities bear

the entire burden of adapting to the majority culture on college

campuses but on a truly pluralistic campus, the burden and the rewards

are equally shared. It is hoped that a fresh examination will lead to

exploratory research strategies which will expand the current conceptual

framework in order to develop more effective new models for increasing

the persistence of urban at-risk minority students at PWIs. When

educators begin to recognize and understand the cultural factors in

Black students' college behavior and experiences that are unique to

them, then universities will be better able to improve existing policies and

programs designed to promote these student's ability to persist until

graduation.

M. Haralson, 93

Definitions of Key Terms

1. PERSISTENCE: A student's determination and ability to maintain full-time and continuous enrollment in an education system, despite academic, social, personal, or economic problems (Tinto, 1982).

2. ASSERTIVENESS: The ability to act in one's own best interest without undue anxiety and without denying the rights of others (Spaights, 1988).

3. RETENTION: The attainment of individual student enrollment status in a university as measured by the number of semesters enrolled (Spaights, 1988).

4. TEMPERAMENT: A student's mode of emotional and behavioral response to an institutional environment or campus climate (Haralson, 1993).

5. TRANSITIONS: Points in the education system where students move from one level to another (Black, 1989).

6. TRADITIONAL: Nonminority students of traditional college age (18-22), attending four-year institutions full-time and living on campus (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

7. PREPARATION: Courses taken, curriculum content, grades, achievement test scores, and credits earned (Black, 1989).

M. Haralson, 93

8. POTENTIALLY THREATENING BLACK MALE STUDENT: Non-submissive, independent and eliciting fear reactions in teachers (Ross & Jackson, 1991).

9. DEFECTIVE: A general organizing principle for classifying the research findings explaining the failure of college students to persist until graduation due to characteristics associated with the student, the institution or the interaction between the student and the institution. (Haralson, 1993)

Limitations of the Study

It is beyond the scope of this review to critique every individual variable related to persistence or to comment on all of the wide variety of different and often conflicting results contained in this field of research. This literature review examined the main foundations underlying the research base associated with traditional college student persistence and focused on categorizing and organizing this research base into some system of general classifications which identified similar theoretical philosophies. This organizational classification system allowed a comprehensive summarizing of the current relationships between the main theoretical persistence philosophies associated with

M. Haralson, 93

college students in general and those associated with Black college students in particular.

Assumptions of the Study

Several general assumptions underlie this review. A few of these assumptions follow:

(1) Previous academic preparation is not sufficient to explain the high attrition and low graduation rates of Black students at PWIs.

(2) Successful Black college students share certain common non-cognitive characteristics (yet to be completely identified) that may explain their persistence at PWIs.

and

(3) There may be significant gender differences in the expression of these characteristics by successful Black students at PWIs.

Literature Search Strategy

Initial on-line computer searches of Ollie SYS NET, ERIC DATABASE, PASAR and the Comprehensive Dissertation Index at Georgia State University's William Russell Pullen Library, allowing complete retrospective coverage of all the university library collections in the state of Georgia along with publications of the national academic community, were

M. Haralson, 93

14

completed. Key descriptors and index terms in the searches were divided into three groups which after a series of screening and reduction steps yielded a preliminary list of 384 citations.

Group I, included the terms *College Persistence* and *College Retention*.

Group II, included the phrase *Characteristics of successful college students*, and the key words *self-esteem, gender, satisfaction, academic social and psychological background*.

Group III, *minority students, urban students, Black males and at-risk students*.

Additional information and references were obtained by attending a number of professional conferences including *The National Conference on Student Retention: Noel & Levitz,* San Francisco, CA; *The National Conference on Black Student Retention: Focus: The Black Male,* Houston Texas; and *The National Conference of the National Council of African American Men*, Atlanta, GA; among others. Also, a review of unpublished dissertations indexed in "Dissertation Abstracts International" was completed.

M. Haralson, 93

PART II

COMPREHENSIVE LITERATURE REVIEW PAPER

Introduction

The focus of this literature review is on studies that have identified some of the key variables that influence the persistence of black male students in predominantly White American colleges and universities-(PWIs). The results of a number of studies indicate that Black students in general and Black male students in particular have problems in predominantly White college environments that are not experienced by White students (Astin, 1982; Fleming, 1984; Pavel & Reiser, 1991; Sedlacek & Pelham, 1976). Jackson (1992) stated that "In the late 1960's and early 1970's, most scholars who studied Black student attrition in PWIs focused their research on pre-enrollment characteristics" (p. 14). This focus was primarily based upon the assumption that the factors that influenced the persistence of all college students would have considerable overlap with the factors that influenced Black college student persistence (Porter, 1990).

The research literature identifying variables that appeared to influence traditional college student persistence is extensive. One of the

most difficult decisions to make in attempting a synthesis of a large

body of research is the adoption of a guiding conceptual or

organizational framework (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). In determining

a conceptual framework for presenting research findings, a decision was

made to concentrate on organizing the evidence in terms of theories

explaining college student persistence rates instead of in terms of

theories explaining the effects of college on student development.

This review will discuss the major research on traditional student

persistence as it relates to the persistence of Black male college

students. As a whole, the literature identified factors, related to general

college persistence from a wide variety of conflicting theoretical

paradigms. The basic conceptual frameworks for the organizing

principle underlying these traditional college student studies will be briefly

summarized into three general classifications of theoretical paradigms:

(1) pre-college academic preparation /family background paradigms or

the defective student theories, (2) campus environment paradigms or

the defective institution theories, and (3) institutional fit paradigms or

the defective interaction theories. The basic conceptual frameworks for

the principle foundations underlying the more recent Black college student

M. Haralson, 93

persistence studies will be briefly summarized into the multicultural conflict theoretical paradigm. associated with predominantly White institutions of Higher Education.

The Defective Student

The first group of pre-enrollment characteristics most commonly associated with general college student completion rates were found to be high school grades and admission test scores (Astin 1972, 1982 and 1985; Demitroff, 1974; Mingle, 1987). Academic performance in high school was thought to be the single most powerful predictor of persistence (Pantages and Creedon, 1978; Peng, 1977; Stampen and Cabrera, 1987).

Cognitive Variables

In the beginning, most studies of Black student persistence in PWIs also concentrated on pre-enrollment characteristics (Jackson, 1992). A lack of academic preparation in secondary school was seen as the major variable for explaining the disparities between Black and White student graduation rates cited by Cross (1971) and Gordon and Wilkerson (1966). College student persistence is still viewed, by some, as being mainly Influenced by innate academic ability. As a result, many

M. Haralson, 93

academic institutions are constantly proposing higher admissions

standards in order to lower their drop-out rates by only selecting those

students whose past academic performance indicates a perceived innate

potential for completing college. Evidence, however, has existed from a

number of studies which indicates that designing a selection process

which would identify only the least defective students represents a task

that resembles a classical quest of a mythical nature.

In 1966, Pervin, Reik and Dalrymple noted that at the University of

California, "only the top 15 percent of high-school graduates are eligible

for admission, yet 45 percent of the students withdraw before

completing the requirements for a degree" (p. 8). These same authors

also stated that at Pennsylvania State University, "over 74 percent of

the freshman class came from the top two-fifths of their high-school

class, yet over 50 percent of the class did not graduate in four years,

and in spite of a considerable increase in admission selectivity over the

previous decade, the withdrawal rate showed little change" (p. 8).

Clearly, academic ability alone was not sufficient for the identification of

defective students or the prediction of student persistence. Pervin and

others concluded that non-academic variables were of considerable

M. Haralson, 93

importance in the persistence of college students. Despite these
research findings, many educators still maintained that poor academic
preparation and low achievement motivation are the primary reasons
for the growing lack of Black student persistence.

Non-cognitive Variables

The second group of defective student characteristics thought to
be important to persistence pertained to combinations of
characteristics related to an individual's family background, personality,
sex, income, past educational experiences and future educational
expectations (Tinto 1975). The new operating assumption was that the
non-persisting student is indeed defective but this defect is non-cognitive
in nature (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1984).

Gender differences, in particular, have become an increasing
concern for researchers involved in investigating the persistence of Black
college students because of the growing disparity in the academic
achievement of Black women and Black men. The 1991 American
Council on Education's Tenth Annual Status Report on Minorities in Higher
Education reported that the number of degrees conferred to Black
women in six selected academic fields greatly exceeded the number

M. Haralson, 93

obtained by Black men. For example, a comparative analysis of the report's data reveals that from 1987-1989 the number of bachelor degrees in education increased by 6% for Black women while the number decreased by 14.8% for Black men (Carter & Wilson, 1992).

Psychological and Sociological Development

A large body of research has focused on defects in the student's sense of self, personal identity, self-concept, self-esteem, social, moral and ego development (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). These psychosocial theories tend to view persistence as a consequence of age progression stage combined with sociocultural or environmental influences. Students with low levels of psychosocial maturity would be unable to successfully confront developmental challenges related to college attendance. Some early researchers suggested that persistence might be related to defective personality characteristics possessed by Black male students (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984; Stack, 1986; Staples, 1978).

Carter & Wilson (1992) focused on the identification of personal temperament dimensions which could be associated with a Black male student profile. Among their comparative observations was the finding that Black females are more assertive in learning experiences and gain

M. Haralson, 93

more from academic experiences than Black males. Also, Black females were found to make racial adjustments better than their Black male counterparts. Black students, and Black males in particular, were viewed as possessing of academic, social and psychological defects which were in conflict with traditional university culture. These Black male cultural defects were considered sufficiently severe as to limit their effectiveness in adjusting to and fitting into educational environments.

Comparisons between persisting and non-persisting students, in the literature, has often identified assertiveness as a temperament characteristic of those students who voluntarily withdraw from an institution (Spaights et al., 1987). Students who are unable to adjust to university environments have been characterized as being assertive, hostile, immature, non-conforming, impetuous, aloof, resentful of college rules and regulations, opinionated, distrustful of authority, self-centered, loners, uncertain of the future, interpersonally alien, critical, and uncooperative. There is little agreement in the literature on exactly how assertiveness relates to student non-persistence (Austin, 1965; Bucklin & Bucklin, 1970; Kowalski, 1977; Pantage & Creedon, 1978; Rose & Elton, 1966; Sexton, 1965; Summerskill, 1962).

M. Haralson, 93

The general research consensus was that, "The values of the nonpersisting student tended to be different from those of the persisting student" (Kowalski, 1977, p. 38). However, Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) noted "that the nature of identity development among black and other nonwhite students remains virtually unknown territory and constitutes a glaring and embarrassing gap in our theoretical knowledge" (p. 59).

Persistence for successful Black students depended primarily on (*desocialization*) how well they were able to change their cultural interaction styles in order to accommodate predominantly White campus situations (Loo & Rolison, 1986). While many other researchers questioned the utility of grades and test scores and suggested that non-cognitive factors played more important roles in the prediction of Black student persistence than traditional academic characteristics, there was little agreement between studies as to the exact identity of these factors. As a result, the developmental literature is riddled with a wide variety of conflicting research results (Ayewoh, 1985; Fleming, 1984; Rogus, 1984).

Jackson (1992) feels that the majority of this research tends to

M. Haralson, 93

indicate that college student persistence in general, and Black student persistence in particular is influenced by a wide range of variables, many of which are institutionally related.

The Defective Institution

As early as 1964 some researchers were questioning the validity of the defective student paradigm. "A small but annoying feeling exists, however, that the problem may not be completely 'they' (the students) but may also be a result of attitudes or behaviors by members of the faculty who present the material so poorly or inappropriately that certain students fail to grasp the essential facts and quickly fall behind to become drop-outs for a multitude of apparent reasons which may be unrelated to the real reason" (Montgomery, 1964, p. 6). Later studies, (Astin, 1975; Donovan, 1984; Fleming, 1984; Gordon & Wilkerson, 1966; Nettles, 1988; Rogus, 1984; Sedlacek et al., 1973; and others) have shown that the quality of life provided within an institution can be a very important factor in influencing the persistence of Black college students.

A number of studies related student persistence to institutional characteristics but the literature reveals great differences of opinions regarding the identification of institutional variables. Porter (1990)

M. Haralson, 93

reviewed many of these studies and found that many different specific

college environmental variables had been associated with student

persistence. These environmental variables included: *institutional quality*

(Cope & Hannah, 1975; Lenning, Beal, & Sauer, 1980); *institutional size*

(Astin, 1975 and 1977; Tinto, 1975); *faculty interactions* (Astin, 1975,

1982, and 1985; Pantages & Creedon, 1978; Tinto, 1975 and 1987);

advising and counseling (Beal & Noel, 1980; Lenning, Sauer, & Beal,

1980; Mingle 1987); and *financial and academic support* (Jensen, 1981;

Murdock, 1987; Pearlman, 1962; Stampen & Cabrera, 1987; Woodward,

1988), among others.

Research on Black student persistence under the defective

institution paradigm suggested that persistence is largely the result of

college experiences rather than pre-college characteristics (Astin, 1975;

Allen et al., 1984; Ayewoh, 1985; Donovan, 1984; Fleming, 1984; Tracey

& Sedlacek, 1987). Comparison studies between Black student

populations on historically Black and predominantly White campuses

yielded results indicating that persistence rates were generally higher at

Black institutions (Fleming, 1984). However, Jackson (1992) concluded

that the institutional factors influencing Black student persistence are

M. Haralson, 93

similar to those for the general college population.

The Defective Interaction

A third major body of research data indicated that it was not the students or the institutions, themselves, that were defective but rather the match between the student and the campus environment that was defective. The studies grouped in this paradigm attempted to integrate and explain the results from the other paradigms in one unified theory. The most widely cited and replicated research in the literature appeared to be based on some model of the institutional fit or defective interaction paradigm of student persistence. Defective interaction models, tended to view race as merely one of a variety of individual attributes (e.g., sex, race, ability and temperament) which interacted with both precollege experiences (e.g., academic and social attainments) and family background (e.g., expectations, values, social status) to directly and indirectly impact on persistence.

Traditional Student Models

Defective interaction models all have theoretical roots in the application of Durkheim's theory of suicide as an explanation for college student behavior. Durkheim (1961) believed that suicide is less likely to

M. Haralson, 93

occur when individuals are sufficiently integrated into the fabric of

society. William Spady (1970) was given credit, by Tinto (1975), for

having first applied Durkheim's theory as a descriptive explanation for

college student behavior. Spady believed that student integration and

interactions in the institutional social systems of a college campus would

resemble those of an individual in the wider society. A defective fit

between the individual and society might result in a greater tendency for

suicidal behavior while a defective fit between the student and the

institution might result in a greater tendency for attrition. The less

defective the institutional fit, the more likely the student would be to

achieve and persist. Spady concluded that a student's ability to fit into

an institution's social system was dependent upon the pre-enrollment

characteristics of family background, gender, temperament and

academic ability interacting with certain institutional characteristics to

produce a social pattern of behavior that he termed normative

congruence. Spady, also, was one of the first to modify the structure

of his model in consideration of the differences he identified in the social

integration behaviors of male and female students.

Tinto (1975) built his model by expanding Spady's social

M. Haralson, 93

interactions model to include additional elements. Persistence resulted from a complicated cycle of interactions between specific institutional characteristics and the student's background characteristics. Student background characteristics, interacting with each other, would influence an individual student's institutional and academic goal commitments. Stronger student commitments would result in higher grade performance which would be indicative of increased academic integration. Increased academic integration would produce even greater student goal commitments which would result in stronger peer group and faculty interactions, indicating increased social integration. Increased academic and social integration would feedback, over time, to re-influence the individual student's goal commitments.

Tinto's persistence model has provided the theoretical framework for other research studies that have included a wide variety of additional variables into a number of increasingly complex interaction models designed to explain the processes involved in college student socialization (Astin, 1975 &1977; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977, 1979, 1980, 1986 & 1991; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977, &1978; among others). These expanded models tended to redefine Tinto's social interaction variables

M. Haralson, 93

into campus involvement variables. Porter (1990) provided a historical research overview which effectively summarized this redefinement in one sentence. "Students can be alienated in certain campus arenas, but still persist because their ties in other areas (such as sports, academics, or fraternities/sororities) provide sufficient involvement to maintain a connection" (Porter, 1990, p. 3). Bean and Metzner (1985) incorporated the elements of most of the earlier Tinto based models into a new model. Their model, also, identified an expanded set of individual student characteristics that would affect a student's ability to interact with an institution. However, Bean and Metzner's model was different from the other defective fit paradigm type models in that it was based on the recognition that, due to a lack of social integration, the variables affecting persistence behavior for nontraditional students would be different from those affecting traditional college student behavior. It began to become increasingly clear that the variables identified by traditional student socialization models would not offer an adequate explanation for the persistence behavior of all student sub-populations. As a result, Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) warned that "readers should understand that the evolving character of higher education's clientele,

M. Haralson, 93

specifically the growing numbers of minority group and older students,

raises serious questions about the universal applicability of these

theories and models" (p. 17).

Non-Traditional Student Models

The theoretical base for the defective interaction paradigm was

conceptualized and developed for traditional college student populations

in residential settings (Bean & Metzner, 1985). However, Tinto as early

as 1975 had stated that Durkheim's treatment of suicide was insufficient

to "explain the distribution of suicide within society among differing

individuals" (Tinto, 1975, p. 92). This was particularly true for Black

individuals who did not have extremely high rates of suicide despite the

fact that they were insufficiently integrated into the fabric of American

society. A number of researchers questioned the appropriateness of

this paradigm's main underlying assumption that Black student

assimilation into the sociocultural life of predominantly white campuses

was the major variable associated with Black student persistence.

Allen (1985), among others, concluded that the integration of

Black students into campus social life was not a necessary pre-condition

for academic success. The defective interaction paradigm was viewed

M. Haralson, 93

30

as such a poor explanation for Black student persistence that one of its primary supporters would finally state that "Deviancy from the social and intellectual mainstream of institutional life does not in itself ensure withdrawal. Insofar as individuals are able to find some communal niche on campus, then it is possible for a person to be seen as deviant from the broader college environment and still persist to degree completion" (Tinto, 1987, p. 121).

As a result, Tinto (1988) revised his earlier models to include additional social incongruence type variables related to Black student persistence. Black students were most likely to leave college because of the serious adjustment difficulties they experienced during the transition from a familiar way of life to an unfamiliar environment. "For that reason one would expect that persons from cultural backgrounds and/or home communities with low rates of higher educational participation (e.g., persons from disadvantaged backgrounds) may face particularly severe handicaps in attempting to complete higher educational degree programs. In trying to do so they may frequently be forced to, at least partially, reject membership in communities that have been part of their upbringing" (Tinto, 1987, p. 61). As a result, "A

M. Haralson, 93

31

major barrier to black student retention is the perception by black

students that they are outsiders in the academic world, aliens in a hostile

environment" (Gibbs, 1988, p. 353).

M. Haralson, 93

PART   III

CONCLUSIONS   AND   RECOMMENDATIONS

Black Male Student Persistence At PWIs

Recent shifts in Black American college enrollment indicate that
more than half of the nation's Black college students are now enrolled in
PWIs -- predominantly White institutions (Carter & Wilson, 1992). Gibbs
(1988) reported that the over-all college enrollment rates of Black
students as a percentage of high school graduates has been declining
since 1978. Smith (1988) supported Gibbs' work and revealed that
much of this enrollment decline appeared to be directly related to
decreases in the college enrollment of Black males. Gibbs found, that
while more Black males entered college, Black females actually graduated
from college at higher rates. Fleming (1984) suggested that Black male
students at PWIs were less likely to persist, until graduation, for a
variety of reasons that were only secondarily associated with academic
performance.

Factors affecting the persistence of Black male college students
begin early in their lives. A 1992 examination, "Defining Differences: Black

M. Haralson, 93

Men and Black Women in Higher Education" by the University of Houston, of the conditions affecting Black male persistence reveals what some have called the *rites of educational passage* concept. The process by which Black male students move from childhood through adolescence to graduation in higher education becomes so progressively constrictive and restrictive that it significantly reduces the number of those who can successfully survive the process. Traditional explanations and rationale for why Black males, in particular, fail to survive this process have generally run the gamut from defective student paradigms to defective institutional paradigms to modified defective interaction or adjustment type paradigms. A number of studies, however, produced results which indicated that the variables influencing Black college student persistence did not support the results from the studies of traditional college student populations.

Allen (1985) found that Black male students who appeared to be economically better off and who expressed higher achievement motivation did not have the expected higher college grade point averages. Allen, concluded that "It is conceivable that by college entry Black student populations have become quite homogeneous in economic

M. Haralson, 93

and motivational levels; this being the cumulative result of selection and screening processes (e.g., admissions decisions, financial awards, and academic dismissal procedures)" (Allen, 1985, p. 145). Porter (1990) reported the "puzzling finding" that "Among black students, the students in the highest ability quartile were less likely to complete and more likely to drop out than all other black students except those in the lowest test-score group" (Porter, 1990, p. 34).

However, Ross & Jackson (1991) stated that when teachers perceive that Black male students are nonsubmissive and independent acting then they tend to hold relatively low academic expectations for them. But, when they perceive that Black males are submissive and conforming then the negative evaluations tend to disappear. These negative academic expectations have the potential to become the beginnings of the a self-fulfilling educational prophecy. "Because teachers have lowered academic expectations, Black males (and especially non-submissive Black males) can end up performing at poorer academic levels" (Ross & Jackson, 1991, p. 81). In the case of Black females, even nonsubmissives are not perceived as a threat and so negative evaluations are not produced.

M. Haralson, 93

There was one school of thought in the Adjustment or Defective Interaction Paradigm Literature which viewed defective interactions between Black students and predominantly White institutions (PWIs) as a normal state of affairs (Allen, 1985; Astin, 1964; Beckham, 1987; Burbach & Thompson, 1973; Cheek, 1976; Cherbaut, 1978; Erazo, 1991; Loo & Rolison, 1986; Siggelkow, 1991; Staples, 1978; Steward, Jackson & Jackson, 1990; Suen, 1983; Thompson & Fretz, 1991; Tinto, 1987; Young, 1983; among others). This school of thought would form the research base for a separate non-traditional paradigm explaining Black college student persistence.

In 1972, Willie and McCord found that because Black students expected more social acceptance than they found at predominantly White institutions (PWIs), their resulting anger and despair contributed to a desire to socially and culturally segregate themselves from White students. A major study by Fleming (1984), indicated that Black female students at predominantly White campuses tended to become more socially assertive and manipulative. Fleming viewed Black female students' college institutional interactions as being dominated by the need to assert themselves in response to an unresponsive or hostile

M. Haralson, 93

environment. However, Fleming found that Black male students who persist at predominantly White institutions, when compared to males at historically Black colleges, appeared to lose their social assertiveness and become submissive to external authority. Fleming's study described regional variations in Black student temperament factors which supported the earlier work of Willie & McCord (1972). Gibbs (1988) identified *withdrawal* as the most common adaptation response that Black students employed in coping with identity conflicts associated with White educational environments.

Gibbs (1988) described withdrawal as culminating in the wish to avoid contact with conflict producing situations. The second most common coping adaptation was described by Gibbs as *separation* which was characterized by anger, hostility, and contempt for White middle-class values and behavior patterns. Steward et al. (1990) found that it was necessary for successful Black students to interact differently when in a minority campus status than when in an all-Black campus situation. Their research concluded that "Black students on predominantly White campuses must acknowledge the value of remaining a 'stranger' to protect themselves from events that might contribute to academic

M. Haralson, 93

demise" (Steward et al., 1990, p. 515). As a result, Black and White students became divided into two mutually exclusive campus social communities. Numerous reports of racism and cultural insensitivity on many college campuses suggest that these exclusive communities are engaging in cultural conflict.

The struggle to survive this cultural conflict appeared to selectively affect the educational behavior and social temperament of many Black male students in a process described by Fleming as *depressive withdrawal.* Upon entering predominantly White institutions (alien territory), Black males fell into the primate dominance hierarchical category of *subdominant* males because of their high visibility and small numbers (Fleming, 1984 p. 142). Fleming reported subdominant males "lapse into a nonconfrontational, lethargic state of behavior" adequately described by the depressed developmental profiles of Black males in White college environments (Fleming, 1984, p. 142). Fleming felt that these Black male student campus coping patterns "may not do much for intellectual development, but then survival has always been the first priority of blacks in hostile surroundings" (Fleming, 1984, p. 116).

In 1991, Ross and Jackson reviewed the findings of a number of

M. Haralson, 93

other studies that investigated the temperament of academically

successful Black students at PWIs. "These findings share a common

thread: Successful Black students (especially males) are conforming,

submissive, and prudent" (Ross & Jackson, 1991, p. 79). Ross and

Jackson further suggested that nonsubmissive and independent behavior

in Black males may be threatening to teachers who viewed these

characteristics as undesirable traits for this particular student group.

Sadberry-Wilson, Winfield & Royster (1991) supported Ross & Jackson

by reporting on research which notes that "behaviors viewed as positive

for White males (e.g., aggressive, go-getter) are viewed negatively for

African-American males (e.g., dangerous, needing external controls)"

(Sadberry-Wilson et al., 1991, p. 88).

The MultiCultural Conflict Paradigm

Interestingly, a fairly early cultural explanation for Black male

college student behavior was found in the 1976 work of Donald Cheek.

Dr. Cheek, proposed a conceptual modification of the theoretical base

associated with assertive behavior paradigms in order to include Black

cultural experiences. "Considering the oppressive conditions historically

faced by blacks and one of the survival techniques frequently used...which

M. Haralson, 93

was to appear to ignore a situation...I feel that 'passive' is a more

'culturally' consistent term than 'non-assertive'....the goal of those blacks

interested in surviving was to put on an act for the white man...to act

like you were passive even though you felt aggressive or assertive....since

frequently there was no choice involved " (Cheek, 1976, p. 16). For

these reasons, Cheek used the term *passive* as other authors used the

term non-assertive or submissive when describing Black behavior in

predominantly White environments. Cheek (1976), believed that passive

Black temperament was a normal expression of people who had

lifestyles conditioned by the lingering effects of the "Jim Crow Halo

Effect" (CheeK, 1976, p. 38). Cheek predicted that, in response to

hostile social environmental conditions, Blacks would begin to exhibit one

or more distinct behavioral adjustment styles (Cheek, 1976, p. 38).

Cheek listed the following ten Black style characteristics:

1. Bi-dialectical, which means a knowledge of standard English as

well as a familiarity with or emphasis on Black slang,

2. Cultural paranoia, a general distrust of Whites until proven

otherwise,

3. A preoccupation with race and its importance,

M. Haralson, 93

4. A seething aggression and pent up anger and rage,

5. A lack of loyalty to White institutions or organizations,

6. Conflict in whether to talk 'White' or 'Black',

7. An ability to 'fake it' with White people and not reveal self,

8. An alertness to preferential treatment given to Whites,

9. A sensitivity to non-verbal cues such as body posturing,

manner of walk, use of eyes, sucking of teeth and facial

expressions;

10. A suspiciousness and unconvinced attitude concerning

patriotism, authority, the value of law and hard work.

Cheek (1976), believed that these Black cultural modes or styles of

adjustment varied according to "whether or not the black person is an

adult or a child, has particular religious affiliation, is male or female, has

light or dark skin, is working class or professional, lives in the South or in

another locality" (Cheek, 1976, p. 38). Cheek felt that an awareness of

these cultural styles was necessary for a complete understanding of why

and how Blacks' behavioral reactions would be different from those of

Whites and that the traditional shallow, one-sided, White interpretation of

these behavioral patterns and styles is usually inadequate.

M. Haralson, 93

The literature on Black students at predominantly White

institutions appears to indicate that low Black male persistence stems,

partially, from the fact that college administrators and faculty were not

prepared to adequately accommodate the unique social interaction

styles of this culturally different population. "Even the loud strong voices

of many blacks, their hair styles, manner of dress and use of slang

'street talk' is not in the realm of appropriate behavior as viewed by

many whites" (Cheek, 1976, p. 18). Young Black males who were

described as nonsubmissive clearly received poorer ratings of future

academic success than Black males who were described as submissive

(Ross & Jackson, 1991). It is the view of some, that the cultural

interaction styles of many Black males are probably perceived as

potentially threatening, eliciting fear reactions in White faculty and

administrators (Ross & Jackson, 1991). Others tend to view these

cultural interaction styles as complex defensive reactions to the

multitude of situations and conditions which Black males must adjust to

in order to remain physically safe and psychologically healthy in a society

that still stigmatizes most Blacks as innately inferior (Cheek, 1976).

M. Haralson, 93

Summary

The research literature related to traditional college student persistence can be generally classified into three major theoretical paradigms; the defective student, the defective institution and the defective interaction. The most prominent research theories related to Black college student persistence can be generally classified into two major theoretical paradigms:

1. The traditional paradigm, which argues that the cognitive and noncognitive factors affecting college persistence are basically the same for all sub-groups of students.

2. The multicultural conflict paradigm, which argues that college persistence for minority students is influenced by unique cultural identity/style conflicts at PWIs.

A number of recent studies suggest that Black college student persistence is not adequately explained by the results from the research on traditional college student persistence. There, also, does not appear to be a general traditional research consensus concerning which variables demonstrate the greatest influence on college persistence for Black students.

M. Haralson, 93

Recent research findings from a number of multicultural studies identify *cultural conflict* as the major influence affecting Black college student persistence (Thompson & Fretz, 1991). The exact nature of these conflicts has not yet been completely defined in the literature but they appear to involve the effects of negative institutional perceptions and reactions to cultural differences in Black student temperament and behavioral styles at predominately White institutions (PWIs).

The literature related to multicultural conflict has reported strong gender effect differences in the persistence rates of Black students at PWIs. Some researchers think that Black female students are better at changing their cultural interaction styles in order to accommodate predominantly White campus environments and as a result they have higher college persistence rates. Others, feel that higher Black female persistence rates are a result of the fact that White campus environments tend to view Black female cultural interaction styles as less threatening than the styles of their Black male counterparts.

Multicultural conflict studies have generally concluded that there are differences in the temperament and cultural behavior styles of academically successful Black male students. Successful Black students

M. Haralson, 93

(especially males) tend to be conforming and submissive (Ross and Jackson, 1991). Comparisons between Black male students who graduate from high school but do not go on to college or voluntarily drop out of college before their junior year with successful Black male students have often identified assertiveness as a negative temperament characteristic in relationship to Black male educational persistence (Carter & Wilson, 1992). There appears to be little, if any, research that investigates the possible relationship between cultural temperament or behavioral styles and the successful persistence of high achieving Black male college students. In fact, few studies in the literature have concentrated on aspects related to high achieving Black male college student persistence. The *puzzling* preliminary finding of Porter (1990) that high ability Black students were more likely to drop out; combined with Ross and Jackson (1991) teacher perception/academic expectations results, strongly suggest that Black male academic success improves as perceptions of Black student submissiveness increases.

The literature in this review has been purposely geared towards exploring the relationships between the culturally unique assertive interaction styles of Black students in general, and Black males in

M. Haralson, 93

particular, and their overall persistence rates at predominantly White institutions. The major focus is on non-assertive or passive aspects of successful Black male student adaptation to college. Although the literature on student persistence is extensive, few studies have focused their investigation on the cultural behavioral style adaptations of Black males in relationship to their ability to successfully persist on predominantly White campuses. This area was chosen because it appears to provide a promising basis for exploratory research aimed at expanding the current conceptual framework for the non-defective theoretical paradigm of Black student persistence at PWIs.

FINDINGS

1. The literature reveals great differences of opinion concerning the identification of variables affecting student persistence.

2. More than 65% of the nation's Black college students are enrolled in Predominantly White Institutions - PWIs (Fleming, 1984).

3. Higher education's pool of potential students is increasingly made up of minority youth, however, less than 20% of all the degrees earned by Black students are produced at PWIs (Fleming, 1984).

4. Black male students at PWIs were less likely to persist to

M. Haralson, 93

graduation (Fleming, 1984).

5.   College enrollment rates for Black males are declining (Green, 1989).

6.   Despite the best efforts of PWIs in promoting the recruitment and retention of minority students, the gap between minority student participation rates and those for White students is getting larger (Green, 1989).

7.   High ability/High social economic status Black students appear to have very low persistence rates at PWIs (Porter, 1990).

8.   The literature reveals great differences of opinion on the relationship between traditional student persistence variables and variables related to Black student persistence.

9.   Black male academic success appears to be strongly related to instructor perceptions of Black student submissiveness at PWIs (Ross & Jackson, 1991).

10.   The number of degrees obtained by Black women greatly exceeded the number obtained by Black men from 1987-1989 (Carter & Wilson, 1992).

11.   Assertiveness has been identified as a negative temperament

M. Haralson, 93

characteristic for Black male students at PWIs (Carter & Wilson,

1992).

IMPLICATIONS

I. Educational research has not currently produced any generally

accepted unified theoretical explanation for the successful persistence of

Black male students on predominantly White campuses (PWIs). As a

result, the development of more effective strategies for the recruitment

and retention of post-secondary level minority students has suffered.

2. Traditional Interaction Paradigm Studies have tended to generally

ignore cultural and racial identity development models in formulating

explanations for low Black student persistence rates.

3. The culture of predominantly White institutions appears to negatively

affect Black male students in ways which have not been adequately

addressed in most studies identifying variables related to college student

persistence.

4. A better understanding of the general mechanisms by which

successful Black male students persist at PWIs is fundamental to the

design and development of academic and nonacademic policies,

programs, and practices which will contribute to increases in the rates

M. Haralson, 93

of recruitment and retention of this particular subgroup.

5. Exploratory research on Black male student persistence should be expanded beyond the current reliance on variables associated with _defective_ theoretical paradigms.

Recommendations For Future Research

The literature on college persistence has not focused on culturally unique non-cognitive type variables that might help to explain the low persistence rates of Black male students with strong academic backgrounds. Allen (1984) contended that within-race comparisons offered the best possibilities for future research to explain Black student persistence. Allen's, _homogeneity hypothesis_, has not yet been empirically tested. as an explanation for the low academic success of economically better-off Black male students. Steward et al., (1990) felt that research focusing specifically on the interaction styles of successful Black students" may offer a better understanding of the Black student population on predominantly White campuses" (p. 510). Also, the relationship between Black male persistence and new models of Black or cultural identity formation remains to be investigated. As a result, there is a need for research studies which would investigate non-academic

M. Haralson, 93

differences between Black male college persister and non-persister

student populations.

M. Haralson, 93

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M. Haralson, 93

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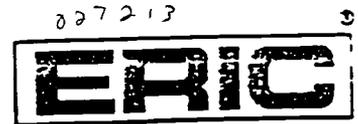
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