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Financial Aid as a Predictor for Retention of First-Year Black Male Community College Students

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Abstract

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MS, Walden University, 2016

BFA, Santa Fe University of Art & Design, 2013

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Black male students are retained in higher education at less than half the rate of their Hispanic and White counterparts. At Southwestern Community College (SWCC, a pseudonym), there were indicators that the amount of financial aid received was related to retention; however, the extent of the relationship was unknown. The purpose of this nonexperimental quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between the amount of financial aid received and the retention of first-to-second-year Black male students at SWCC. Bean and Metzner's model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition provided the theoretical foundation. The research question sought to clarify the extent to which the amount of financial aid received predicts retention of first-year Black male students at SWCC. A convenience sample of archival data were collected on 242 first-year Black male college students who attended SWCC between 2014 and 2019. The college also provided archived financial aid amounts paired with first-to-second-year retention data which were logistically regressed to examine the predictive nature of financial aid received on first-to-second-year retention. Although the model correctly classified 65.8% of the cases for financial aid received and Black male student retention, the findings were not significant ($\beta = .072$, $p = .052$). This finding provided further empirical evidence that financial aid plays some role in Black male student retention. Positive social change will advance when financial aid, combined with other institutional factors related to Black male student retention, are implemented with fidelity to reduce the retention gap for Black male students.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends. Without your constant support and understanding, I would not have gotten through this process. This dissertation is also dedicated to Dr. Christine Guevara and Dr. Laura Nunnelly. Christine and Laura were the catalysts for me pursuing my doctorate, and they were always willing to help me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Retention rates for Black male students both locally and nationally are extremely low despite efforts to increase them, especially at the 2-year public-school sector (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2019; Shapiro et al., 2018). Community colleges, also known as junior colleges, were formed to address different issues than the traditional 4-year institutions (Trainor, 2015). Before community colleges were formed, most colleges were located far from small towns and urban people and were too expensive for average citizens (Grubbs, 2020; Trainor, 2015). When the first community colleges were opened in 1901, they were known as "the people's college" making higher education accessible to those unable to afford a 4-year college (Trainor, 2015). The focus of community colleges was open access for technical and vocational training to equip students for the workforce (Grubbs, 2020).

The open admissions policies at most community colleges have attracted large and diverse populations of working-class students, especially racial minority students (Grubbs, 2020; Trainor, 2015). At the time, community colleges were far more progressive than 4-year institutions in desegregation and admitting students of color, combat veterans, and nontraditional students (Trainor, 2015). According to Grubbs (2020), community colleges are the great equalizer of higher education. The role of community colleges is to provide a flexible, affordable education for those who cannot attend a traditional 4-year college or university. Community colleges have provided staggered enrollment starts, online classes, and flexible evening courses to accommodate

students who are balancing work and school among other external responsibilities (Grubbs, 2020; Tinto, 1993).

Tinto (1993) explained that the intent of community college students can vary from that of a traditional 4-year student. Tinto (1993) reported that common characteristics of community college students are part-time, late entrants, lower socioeconomic status, enrolled in courses unrelated to a particular degree program, and Black or Hispanic. The student's intent is unclear and may not be to complete a degree, and although institutional criteria may deem a student not successful, the student may disagree (Tinto, 2017). Another intent that is a positive testimony of the community college mission is the intent to transfer because community colleges act as a gateway to some who may not have attended college or been able to afford to start and complete at a 4-year institution. Community colleges are empowering students and equipping them with the skill sets to persist and survive at a 4-year institution in which their chances of succeeding may have been bleak when beginning their academic journey. Tinto (2017) made the point that students wish to persist while colleges aim to retain. It is important to see the college experience from the student's eyes and remember that educational institutions are there to serve students first and foremost.

Grubbs (2020) reported that community college infrastructures differed from 4-year institutions and that community colleges rarely provide housing options, have fewer social gatherings, and are used more for the academics, resulting in students accessing campus only for classes and less for other engagement, which is opposite of traditional 4-year colleges. Community colleges are structured differently than 4-year colleges, and

although some improvements have been made to increase engagement, community college students face additional hurdles with nontraditional commuter students. In 2020, Grubbs noted that earlier researchers suggested that the nontraditional commuter experience may be a key reason for community college retention issues. Nontraditional students tend to balance nonacademic responsibilities such as families, jobs, spouses and more, dividing the demands of the student's attention, resources, and motivation. These external factors may be why the student chose a community college, but they also may be contributing to the high attrition rates (Tinto, 1993). Open access admissions and the mission to improve the local community have proven to be somewhat contradictory for community colleges. Although enrollment is high, the college readiness of some students enrolled is not good enough to support successful matriculation, negatively affecting the student's ability to be retained.

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2019) reported that in 2017 community colleges enrolled 144,561 Black students. Forty-two percent of those Black students were retained, 13.3% persisted to another college, and 44.7% did not return to any college. 4-year public institutions in the same year enrolled 100,165 Black students; 63.7% of those Black students were retained, 14.7% persisted, and 21.6% did not return the following year. What these data show is that community colleges in 2017 enrolled more Black students than 4-year colleges, that more Black students dropped out of community college than at 4-year colleges, and that community colleges retained 21.7% fewer Black students than 4-year colleges. It is evident that retention at community colleges is an issue and that Black students are struggling to succeed and are hard to

retain. More research is needed at the community college level for Black students but, more specifically, for first-year Black male students who tend to be less prepared for the rigor of higher education and a 4-year college. Community colleges are supposed to be the gateway for students such as first-year Black males; therefore, retention is paramount for academic success, for upward mobility, and for positive social change for this student group.

I explored the relationship between the amount of financial aid received and retention of first-year Black male community college students and the extent to which this relationship can be predicted. Financial aid was explored because student awards/packages play an important role in the lives of underrepresented students. Awards and aid play a vital role prior to attending college and help college students select whether to attend a 2-year institution rather than a 4-year college (Tinto, 2012) and whether students remain in college or drop out. Tinto (1993) suggested that financial aid programs help prevent student dropout in some cases when students are faced with temporary financial issues. Additionally, financial aid has been reported to have a positive effect on retention (Tinto, 1993). What is not clear is how financial aid affects the Black male student population at the community college level. Knowing the relationship between financial aid received and Black male student retention could assist colleges with developing new funding policies and procedures that encourage Black male students to continue their education.

Both nationally and at Southwestern Community College (SWCC, a pseudonym), some scholarships are awarded based on grade point average (GPA), American college

testing (ACT), and scholastic assessment test (SAT) scores, class rankings, and minimum credits; financial aid has additional stipulations that students are required to maintain (American Psychological Association, 2017; Dynarski, 2004; Federal Student Aid, n.d.; Seltzer, 2017; Winning Scholarships, 2022). Although Black male students tend to be eligible for federal funding, they may miss out on or eventually lose funding opportunities due to their lack of college readiness and are not able to satisfy all financial aid criteria needed to fund their education (Brooks, 2016; Tinto, 1993). This financial issue is stacked on top of their external financial demands to support themselves, a spouse, and/or their family.

Colleges may be able to use the results from current studies to create new financial aid policies and procedures or adjust their current policies to increase the retention of their Black male student population and aid in furthering the success of Black male students. Issues of retention vary from college to college, and what may work for one school may not work for another. Colleges need to do research specific to their institution to remedy their unique retention issues. This chapter provides additional context as to why the retention of Black male students is an issue and why more information is needed to assist colleges with finding a solution. This chapter provides the rationale for this study and how the theoretical foundation supported this study, along with the nature of the study, assumptions, limitations, and significance.

Background

In the United States, retention rates of Black male students are a relevant 21st-century problem (Grier-Reed et al., 2016). In 1965, the Higher Education Act provided

students with financial support along with other support services to improve student success (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education Student Service, 2016). Despite government efforts to increase access through funding, some ethnic groups continued to struggle with retention and completion, especially Black male students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Grier-Reed et al. (2016) and Goings and Goings (2016) reported that researchers could not link this issue to only one variable, and studies indicated an array of negative factors that include oppression, micro/macro-aggressions, lack of postsecondary readiness, and lack of support that includes financial, emotional, and spiritual factors. Additionally, Broton et al. (2022) studied the effect of basic needs and how they affected students' mental health and college performance. In the 1980s, new theorists like Bean emerged, and theories began to stress the importance of additional factors that contribute to students' retention issues, including background characteristics, socioeconomic status, and student satisfaction (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). As more Black students entered college, literature in the 90s began to focus on retention for students of color, underrepresented students, and disadvantaged students. With these theories in mind, Tinto's (1993) revised student integration model identified the need for special attention and group-specific policies and interventions for Black students who tend to be from low-income families and other unique student populations (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011).

SWCC provides scholarships and additional funding opportunities for its students. Each institutional scholarship is tethered to a GPA requirement upon entry to the college,

with most requiring at least a 3.0 GPA, and one scholarship requires students to be in the top 10% of their graduating high school class. Financial aid funding requires students to maintain at least a 2.0 GPA to continue being eligible for funding. This is an institutional and federal regulation known as satisfactory academic progress; additionally, students must attend full-time to access the full suite of financial options (Federal Student Aid, n.d.).

Research showed that student success is linked to grade point average (GPA), American college testing (ACT), and scholastic assessment test (SAT) scores (Burke, 2019; Kerby, 2015; Olbrecht et al., 2016; Whalen et al., 2009). This leads colleges such as SWCC to gear their funding toward students who are more likely to succeed, which improves the college's image and appeases institutional performance-based funding. Black male students entering higher education do not tend to meet these criteria or maintain them, especially those with additional responsibilities outside of the institution such as jobs, families, and more, which is an attribute connected to nontraditional students (Raju, 2015).

More research on the issue of retention of first-year Black male students, primarily for the community college sector, is needed. Most retention studies and theories have been conducted within the context of 4-year institutions. Retention issues for 4-year institutions vary from those of community colleges because the student population and student intent are different (Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016). Community colleges are the gateway into higher education for underrepresented populations and are also the solution to increasing college degree obtainments in the United States (Hafer et al., 2018; Mulhern

et al., 2015). With retention issues plaguing Black male students, additional research is needed to identify the factors that contribute to the successful retention of first-year Black male college students.

The gap in practice at SWCC is the funding that goes to students who may not need the funding but are more likely to succeed academically. In contrast, the students who need the funding may not qualify for it due to their lack of college preparedness and academic capabilities. A systematic investigation of the relationship between financial aid received and the retention of first-year Black male students was lacking. The current study was needed to inform SWCC on whether a policy change is needed to fund first-year Black male students differently to increase Black male student retention. Along with potential policy changes, SWCC could use this study to create or change programs used to support Black male students.

Problem Statement

The problem was low retention rates for Black male students at SWCC and a possible relationship to financial aid received. Concerns have been voiced that the amount of financial aid received by first-year Black male students at SWCC may not be enough to help them continue their degree programs (Director of Institute of Research Effectiveness at SWCC, personal communication, May 6, 2019). In addition, research suggested a possible relationship between student financial stability and retention (Britt et al., 2017; Hinton, 2014). Therefore, it was necessary to clarify the relationship between financial aid received and retention among Black male students at SWCC.

Table 1 shows that SWCC's Black male first-year students have had the lowest first-year retention rates compared to White and Hispanic males. SWCC's data showed a higher retention rate for the Fall 2015 Black male cohort compared to other years, but no research had been conducted at SWCC to determine whether this is related to the amount of financial aid received. This retention gap is not only a problem at SWCC; nationally, retention rates for Black male students are also lower than those of Hispanic and White male students (Shapiro et al., 2018).

Table 1

One-Year Retention of Black, White, and Hispanic Male Students, First Time in College at SWCC

Year	Black	White	Hispanic
2014 enrolled	77	244	160
2014 retained	33.9%	61.4%	62.9%
2015 enrolled	71	250	157
2015 retained	44.8%	67.4%	75%
2016 enrolled	57	259	169
2016 retained	33.7%	63.9%	62.2%
2017 enrolled	61	268	207
2017 retained	36.5%	60.2%	57.6%
2018 enrolled	70	241	166
2018 retained	36.2%	59.4%	56.8%

Note. Adapted from "One-year retention of 2014-2018 cohort - First time in college student demographic information," generated by the Office of Institutional Research (SWCC, 2019).

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center published a 6-year report following the Fall 2012 cohort and reported that 2-year and 4-year institutions share the same retention issues regarding Black male students (Shapiro et al., 2018). Over 6 years, the retention rates for Black, Hispanic, and White male students at 2- and 4-year public

institutions were 26.8%, 35.2% and 50.6%, respectively (Shapiro et al., 2018). The data for 2-year public institutions such as SWCC showed retention rates at 17.9% for Black male students, 23.2% for Hispanic male students, and 55.9% for White male students. Recent research showed that although retention rates for Black male students have increased slightly (Shapiro et al., 2018), they are still significantly behind some male populations, especially White male students.

Overall, there is evidence suggesting a positive relationship between the level of financial aid a student receives and their retention. Hinton (2014) reported that finances have a direct and indirect influence on student retention and that retention is affected by monetary measures that students use for housing, tuition, and other study-related costs. Britt et al. (2017) conducted research with 2,475 undergraduate students on the relationship between finances and student retention, resulting in a statistically significant regression model. With the model Britt et al. were able to predict 84% of cases in which students dropped out of college, identifying the amount of received financial funding as a significant predictor. Britt et al. highlighted the financial stress of students and reported that for every point of reported financial stress, there was a 9% increase in a student's decision to discontinue college. Although the study included Black students, most of the cases stemmed from White students (83%). However, this study provided valuable evidence of the influence of finances on student retention on a general level, an influence that might hold true for Black male first-year students. Research addressing the influence of financial aid received on retention for Black male students was lacking. Most studies

that included Black students had only a small population of them; other studies excluded students of color due to a lack of data from them.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between the amount of financial aid received and retention of first-year Black male students at a community college. The amount of financial aid received (independent variable) was examined to determine whether it was a statistically significant predictor for retention of first-year Black male students (dependent variable) so that research-derived recommendations could be made based on the findings.

Research Question and Hypotheses

In this study, the following research question and hypotheses were addressed:

RQ: To what extent does the amount of financial aid received predict retention of first-year Black male students at SWCC?

H_o: The amount of financial aid received is not a statistically significant predictor of retention for first-year Black male students at SWCC.

H_a: The amount of financial aid received is a statistically significant predictor of retention for first-year Black male students at SWCC.

In this study, amount of financial aid received was operationalized as the grand total of received funds a Black male student has at his disposal resulting from Pell Grant, subsidized/unsubsidized loan options, in-state tuition discounts, residential tuition discounts, work-study funds, institutional assistance, and outside scholarship opportunities (both merit and non-merit). This operationalization related to data that

could be provided by the Institute of Research Effectiveness at SWCC, which collects information on these financial items. Retention of first-year Black male students was operationalized as yes/no depending on whether they returned to SWCC to continue their studies.

Theoretical Framework

The framework for this study was Bean and Metzner's (1985) conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. Bean and Metzner stated that the difference between traditional and nontraditional students could be age, residence, enrollment status, gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. The final item related to the target group of Black male first-year students in the present study. Additionally, Bean and Metzner's conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition identified background, academic, and environment variables as defining variables of academic and psychological outcomes that result in intent to leave. Bean and Metzner reported that environmental variables are presumed to be more critical to nontraditional students, even when academic support is poor. Environmental variables are finances, hours of employment, outside encouragement, family responsibilities, and opportunity/intent to transfer (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Kirk & Lewis, 2015). Bean and Metzner's conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition was relevant to the current study because of its inclusivity of nontraditional students (first-year Black male students in the present study) and finances as an environmental variable (amount of financial aid received in the present study) that directly and indirectly affect a student's decision to drop out of college.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was quantitative and included a nonexperimental correlational design. The independent variable was the amount of financial aid received by first-year Black male students, and the dependent variable was their retention. Archival data pertaining to the types and total of financial aid received along with the first-year retention rates of the 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 fall cohort of Black male students from SWCC were obtained from the school's Institute of Research Effectiveness. A logistic regression test was employed to determine the predictive value of financial aid received for first-year retention. Logistic regression analysis can predict retention when there is a combination of independent variables (amount of several types of aid in the present study) and dichotomous dependent variables (retained or not retained in the present study; see Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2015; Pyke & Sheridan, 1993).

Definitions

For this study, financial aid was defined as Pell Grant, subsidized/unsubsidized loan options, in-state tuition discounts, residential tuition discounts, work-study funds, military and international student assistance, institutional assistance, and outside scholarships opportunities (both merit and non-merit; see Types of Financial Aid, 2019). Retention was defined by a student's enrollment from their first year to their second year (see Burke, 2019). Other important terms were defined as follows:

Attrition: The departure of a student from a higher education institution before completing a degree, certificate, or diploma (Manyanga et al., 2017).

Black/African American males: Men of African descent who reside in the United States (Funston, 2018).

Community college: A regionally accredited, open access, public higher education institution in which the highest educational attainment is an associate degree (Brooks, 2016; Funston, 2018).

Commuter student: Students who spend less time on campus and have a different social interaction experience with their campus (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Expected family contribution (EFC): The EFC determines the eligibility for financial assistance and affects the amount of Federal Pell Grant received by a student each academic year. EFC takes into consideration a family's size, number of colleges students within a household, family assets, government benefits, and taxed and untaxed income of the household. The formula used for EFC is mandated by the United States Congress (Federal Student Aid, n.d.).

Federal Pell Grant: A federal program authorized by the Higher Education Act that provides financial assistance to college and university students; the students must have a financial need, and this grant does not have to be repaid (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant: Campus-based aid for students with exceptional financial need. This aid is administered by the institution's financial aid office and can range from $100 to $4,000 per year. No additional funds from the college can be given that year, and this aid does not have to be repaid (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Federal work-study: Campus-based aid that provides part-time employment for students at institutions. The part-time employment can be on or off campus (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Financial aid awards: An offer of in-kind or financial help to students in one or a combination of Federal Pell Grants, federal work-study, Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant, federal loans, state grants, institutional scholarships, and outside third-party awards of any kind (Federal Student Aid, n.d.; U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Financial aid package: The total assistance package offered to students that includes grants, loans, scholarships, and need-based employment (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Financial aid packaging: The combination of financial aid including Title IV aid, state aid, and internal/external scholarships. To determine a student's financial aid package, schools must receive the student's Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA; U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Financial need: A student's EFC is taken and subtracted from the cost of attendance, yearly, to determine a student's financial need (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

First-year student: A student who has completed less than a year's worth of undergraduate work, which is less than 30 credit hours out of a 120-hour degree program (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): Free application for federal student aid that determines eligibility for government aid (Federal Student Aid, n.d.).

Gift aid: Funds used for educational expenses in the form of grants and scholarships that do not have to be repaid (Brooks, 2016).

Institutional scholarships: Gift aid funds given to eligible students from SWCC. These funds are from permanent endowment funds or annual contributions, and these scholarships are awarded based on need.

Need-based financial aid: Determined by FAFSA and is additional financial assistance in the form of grants or loans that are available to students but do not surpass their financial need (Brooks, 2016).

Nontraditional students: Students who may have one or more of the following characteristics: delayed college enrollment, part-time attendance, financial independence, full-time employment, single parent, spouse, dependents, commuter, and less interaction with the college environment (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Chen & Hossler, 2017; Kirk & Lewis, 2015).

Persistence: A term sometimes used for retention, which refers to continuous college enrollment from one academic year to the next whether at the same college or a new institution to which the student has transferred (Aljohani, 2016).

Resident and/or county discounts: A reduction in the cost per credit hour to attend SWCC if the student is a resident of SWCC's county or SWCC's state (Scott-Clayton, 2015).

Retention: A student's persistence in an educational program at an institution from Year 1 to Year 2 in pursuit of academics (Aljohani, 2016; Funston, 2018).

Trio Student Support Services: A government program designed in 1964 through the Economic Opportunity Act to support low-income, first-generation, and/or disable students (Funston, 2018).

Unmet need: The difference between the student's cost of attendance and the sum of financial resources at the student's disposal (Brooks, 2016).

Assumptions

Assumptions of the current study were that all students understood their financial aid packages and opportunities/options provided to them and that they used those funds correctly. Another assumption was that the college adequately provided all possible options for each student and that the awards given were all that were possible for the students. An additional assumption was that each Black male student's reported information to the institution and on the FAFSA was correct to optimize their potential financial options.

Scope and Delimitations

I used only the information from students who identified as first-year Black male students who attended SWCC in 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018. Only Black male students who were United States citizens were used for this study. All other races and sexes were excluded so that the study would focus on the domestic population of Black male students in the United States. The purpose for using only this group was that researchers had compared Black male students' retention, enrollment, and success with other sexes

and ethnicities but had not focused on the group's dynamic within itself. The reason for excluding other nationalities was the experience and governance that United States Black male citizens share that differ for international students (e.g., federal funding eligibility).

Researchers who have focused on retention have identified key factors that cannot be ignored but were excluded in the current study. I excluded grade point average (GPA), American college testing (ACT), scholastic assessment test (SAT) scores, and student engagement. A student's demographic characteristics could not be excluded for this study. What is known is that student engagement, grade point average (GPA), American college testing (ACT), scholastic assessment test (SAT) scores, sense of belonging, and demographic characteristics are linked to student retention (Burke, 2019; Kerby, 2015). Theoretical models and studies indicated that the student's demographic characteristics and lived experiences cannot be ignored (Burke, 2019). What these studies and theories neglected to do is to ground their work in the community college sector and build on the experience of the nontraditional student. I focused on the first-year Black male population at SWCC due to the services and facilities provided by the college.

Most models indicated that the social and academic spheres influence students' retention, but they did not indicate how these spheres interact. What is known is that when academic and social spheres are well developed and addressed, student persistence increases (Burke, 2019). Bean and Metzner's conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition contains the most factors that contribute to student retention or attrition and focuses on nontraditional students (Aljohani, 2016; Kerby, 2015; Watson & Chen, 2019). Bean and Metzner's model also takes into consideration

the background factors that nontraditional students bring with them as well as the institutional factors that contribute to the decision to stay or depart (Manyanga et al., 2017).

Limitations

The limitations of this study were that the data being used were from one college and included only Black male first-year students who were United States citizens at SWCC. This meant that the economic status of these students could have been similar, and some types of Black male characteristics could have been excluded. The data represented only Black male SWCC students and excluded students from different demographic backgrounds. Other factors beyond finances that may have contributed to the decision to depart the college were excluded from this study. Therefore, the results of this study had limited generalizability to a larger population. The final limitation of this study was that it addressed retention only from Year 1 to Year 2.

Significance

This study was essential for SWCC because it provided data to address an existing retention gap for Black male students, especially when compared to other ethnicities. This study was significant because it could help SWCC administrators better understand the relationship between financial aid and retention of first-year Black male students and provide research-derived recommendations that could contribute to future solutions to increase the retention of Black male students at SWCC. Empirical data on the influence of the amount of financial aid received on first-year Black male student retention may provide insights that could be used for creating new financial aid policies

aimed to help close the retention gap and effect positive social change for Black male first-year students at SWCC. The generalizability of the findings was limited to the extent to which other colleges have demographic and financial characteristics such as those of SWCC. Therefore, a goal was to present those characteristics as accurately as possible within this study.

Summary

This chapter provided the context of the problem of retention Black male students in higher education, locally and nationally. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the amount of financial aid received and retention for first-year Black male students in higher education while being cognizant of the limitations of this study. The chapter included the research question addressing to what extent does the amount of financial aid received predict retention of first-year Black male students at SWCC

The chapter also included Bean and Metzner's (1985) conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition as its framework. Finally, the chapter included the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope, delimitations, limitations, and significance in addressing the retention gap for Black male students. Chapter 2 provides additional information with substantial support from recent literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The retention of Black male students in higher education is an issue at SWCC as well as other higher education institutions in the United States. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the amount of financial aid received and retention of first-year Black male students at SWCC. Recent literature showed that the retention of Black male students in higher education is an issue and that Black male students in higher education are retained at a lower rate than their female counterparts and male students from other races (Banks & Dohy, 2019). Student engagement has been the long-term focus for most retention issues in higher education; despite increased engagement and new programs such as TRIO services, mentorship programs, and Black student support groups, these numbers continue to be subpar (Berumen et al., 2015; Dozier, 2017; Funston, 2018). Historically Black Colleges and Universities are also experiencing retention issues with no proven method to remedy it despite concentrated efforts to make Black students feel more connected to their educational environment (Farmer & Hope, 2015).

Additional psychological factors have been identified as contributors to a Black student's decision to exit a university. Students have reported microaggressions, a lack of belonging, racism in the classroom, and the institution as additional factors that make them want to exit (Funston, 2018; Goings & Goings, 2016; Grier-Reed et al., 2016). Broton et al. (2022) reported that basic needs insecurity affected Black students, and the lack of basic needs affected their mental health. These challenges were found to be associated with lower academic achievement as well as low degree attainments.

Additional research has been done on the cost of attending college, loan eligibility, merit-based vs non-merit-based aid, student debt, and the long-term payout importance in a student's decision to drop out (Brooks, 2016; Herzog, 2018; Olbrecht et al., 2016; Seltzer, 2017). Some studies have reported that an increase in debt leads to students wanting to depart along with issues of access to beneficial resources (Britt et al., 2017). Financial aid plays a vital role in college access for underrepresented students at 4-year institutions (Berumen et al., 2015; Britt et al., 2015; Britt et al., 2017). Additionally, the ability to pay for college and have flexible attendance options plays a role (Lumina Foundation, 2018).

Since the 1970s, there has been a rapid increase in nontraditional student enrollment, specifically in the community college sector, making community colleges the access point in the pursuit of higher education for students who would normally have additional hurdles in attending college (Chen & Hossler, 2017; Goings, 2017). Researchers have not focused on Black male students solely, or the Black male student population within studies has been so small that the results have not been representative. The other issue with recent research is the context in which studies have been set, which has been the 4-your college environment and mostly a traditional student population. Chapter 2 contains a synthesis of recent and older literature on retention/attrition, the role and history of community colleges, funding options for higher education, financial aid, Black male student retention studies, and improvement strategies.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search for relevant articles and studies was conducted using various search engines. The search began with a Google search to identify relevant literature between 2015 to 2020. From there, research articles and other forms of literature were searched for using Google Scholar, Academic Search Complete, EBSCO eBooks, Education Source, ERIC, ERIC and Education Source Combined, Lumina Foundation, ProQuest Central, ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global and Sage Journals. Only peer-reviewed articles were used, and a combination of qualitative and quantitative findings were selected.

Keywords and phrases were repeated in various search engines to find relevant literature. Keywords used included *retention*, *Black men*, *Black males*, *higher education, attrition*, *retention theories*, *financial aid*, *first generation students*, and *Black male retention*. Key phrases used to find research articles were *retention in higher education*, *Black male retention in higher education*, *community college retention*, *Tinto's student departure*, *Tinto student engagement*, *community college retention vs 4-year*, *Black students and scholarships*, *Bean and Metzner non-traditional student*, *student retention rates by race*, *Black men in higher education*, *money and retention*, *impact of finances on retention in higher education*, *Black men in community college*, *student debt and retention*, *first Black men in higher education*, *history of Black men in higher education*, *impact of finances on retention*, *retention strategies*, *Black men and retention in higher education*, *effect of financial aid on community college students*, *trends in community*

college, *traits for college retention*, *student debt and retention*, and *financial aid and retention*.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for this study was Bean and Metzner's conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition (Aljohani, 2016; Bean & Metzner, 1985). Bean and Metzner's (1985) conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition was different from other models in the sense that it focused on nontraditional student retention in the college setting, especially the community college sector where large numbers of nontraditional students were enrolling with varying intent and a slew of impactful external variables. Bean and Metzner recognized the challenges that nontraditional students have and the impact they have on nontraditional students' ability to be retained and obtain a degree in the changing environment of higher education. Student retention observations have led to numerous variables that have been intricately compiled, grouped, and displayed in Bean and Metzner's conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition.

Bean and Metzner's (1985) conceptual model of student attrition characterizes nontraditional students as (a) of any race; (b) from any part of the country; (c) from a rural or urban population; (d) any socioeconomic status; (e) 18 years old and up; (f) employed full- or part-time, unemployed, or retired; (g) male or female; (h) with or without dependents; (i) of any relationship status; (e) and enrolled full- or part-time (one course and up) for vocational/avocational training, degree seeking, or certificate seeking. Four constructs were identified in the model as contributors to students decision to drop

out: (a) academic performance, which is traditionally based on high school GPA; (b) background and defining variable, which is demographic information, high school educational performance, and goals; (c) environmental factors, which have been noted as having a direct effect on dropout; and (4) social integration, more specifically the quality and extent of the students' social interaction within the college's social system/environment.

Bean and Metzner (1985) reported factors that can define a student as nontraditional, but Chickering (1974) believed the most important factor was the commuter status of the student. The commuter status of a student changes their social integration experience at their institution, which is a factor deemed important to retention in other theorists' models. Chickering's model continued to build on and include some of Bean and Metzner's earlier reports that if the academic and environmental variables are good, students are more likely to stay and will exit if those variables are poor. Secondly, students are more likely to drop out if the academic variable is good, but the environment variable is poor. Finally, students are more likely to stay if the environment is good even if the academic variable is poor.

Bean's (1980, 1982) first attempt at the student attrition model suggested that there was not enough evidence to support Durkheim's theory of suicide student attrition. Bean strived to point out variables to indicate why a student was dropping out. Although other theorists such as Spady (1970, 1971) and Tinto (1975, 1993) relied on relationships to the organization and characteristics of the individual within them, Bean's theory was grounded in quantitative data and statistical analysis. Spady and Tinto were grounded in

sociology and philosophy. Bean adopted the workforce organization view and argued that factors influencing turnover in the workplace were directly related to student attrition. Bean believed that the reasons a disgruntled employee would choose to exit their job were the same reasons a student would choose to depart their institution. Bean also noted that male students leave for different reasons than female students; even if male students are satisfied with the institution, their commitment to it is fragile when compared to female students. Other theoretical foundations/models were considered for the current study, but Bean and Metzner's (1985) conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition was the best fit for this study.

Stahl and Pavel (1992) assessed Bean and Metzner's model by using a goodness of fit test combined with the structural equations model and the paths diagram. The reason Stahl and Pavel conducted this study was because at the time, there was a lack of studies validating Bean and Metzner's model with community college student data. Stahl and Pavel concluded that Bean and Metzner's model was weak for the data they collected, which excluded students of color due to the lack of responses received from that student population. Stahl and Pavel created a new community college student retention model based on data from 597 White students, and 68 racial minority students (Black, Hispanic, Native American, and other) were excluded.

McDaniel and Graham (2001) used Bean and Metzner's conceptual model as their theoretical foundation to predict retention for Black residential students and White commuter students at a 4-year historically black university. This study included 25 pre and early matriculation variables as independent variables. McDaniel and Graham stated

that although other retention models exist, Bean and Metzner's was the strongest fit for commuter students. McDaniel and Graham reported that although Tinto indicated concerns about nontraditional student institutions and the model's applicability to student retention in that setting, Tinto's model was inadequate when addressing difference in educational careers for students with varying backgrounds, gender, social status, and race. In alignment with some of the other studies on the topic, the external environmental facts were stressed in McDaniel and Graham's study. The sample for this study was 1,949 first-time degree-seeking first-year students. Interestingly, McDaniel and Graham excluded social integration and academic outcome factors and focused on retention status, ethnicity, and residential status. The results of this study showed significant differences between returners and those who decided not to return, but the most interesting find was that White commuter students were more likely to be retained.

Cunningham (2010) used Bean and Metzner's conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition as an overarching theoretical model to identify factors related to student persistence at a 2-year college. Cunningham's reason for using the model was that it incorporated Tinto's concept of social integration along with Pascarella's et al. (1983) focus on institutions with commuter students. Cunningham was able to identify academic, social integration, and biographical labeling as statistically significant factors contributing to student persistence. The findings were compared with those from Bean and Metzner's conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. Cunningham found Bean and Metzner's model to have weak points, and

Cunningham had to operationalize the study with Stahl and Pavel's community college student retention model.

Although Cunningham (2010) aligned with Stahl and Pavel in seeing Bean and Metzner's model as weak for determining community college student retention, Jeffrey (1998) found Bean and Metzner's model to be fitting for their qualitative study with 97 associate degree nursing students. Jeffrey showed that environmental factors were perceived to be more important to their nontraditional students and that family environment was important to most. However, students of colors constituted most of the 54 questionnaires that were incomplete and not used. Jeffrey was unable to find significance in student retention and suggested that the two factors that may have worked against finding accurate retention data were the excluded questionnaires and the existing 91% retention rate for the study site's nursing program.

Bergman et al. (2014) used returning adult learners for their study and paired Bean and Metzner's (1985) model with Braxton's et al. (2004) theory of departure in commuter college and universities to study the effects of student entry characteristics, external environments, and campus environments. Data were collected from 437 learners. Of the 437, 46% identified as male and 20% identified as African American or Black. The findings showed an increase in institutional responsiveness and student persistence by 63%, and persistence decreased by about 78% for those who felt work and school were in conflict for their time and attention. The findings suggested that environmental factors improved the explanatory intent of the study, and Bergman et al. found that encouragement paired with having the finances to complete a degree increased

persistence, but enough money alone increased persistence by about 40%, controlling for other variables.

The current study included Bean and Metzner's (1985) conceptual model because its key variable (financial aid) was included in the environmental factors of the conceptual model. Bean and Metzner's definition of nontraditional students is broad enough that all research candidates at SWCC fell within it. These students vary in age, socioeconomic status, and commuting status to SWCC. Due to all SWCC students' commuting status, traditional socialization factors and engagement with peers/faculty could differ for SWCC students (see Bean & Metzner, 1985). Bean and Metzner's conceptual model included finances as a factor in deciding to drop out, as did other financial aid and student retention studies (Chen & Hossler, 2017). Some research indicated that financial aid and awards help to reduce dropout risks for students (Tinto, 1993).

One of the variables in the external environment group is finances. Researchers have studied the relationship that finances/financial aid has on student retention. Researchers reported a relationship between student finances/financial aid and retention and that financial stress reduces retention rates (Britt et al., 2017; Joo et al., 2008). Financing higher education, including the toll it takes on students, student success, and students' families, was explored in studies (Banks & Dohy, 2019; Britt et al., 2017; Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Olbrecht et al., 2016; Seltzer, 2017; Troester-Trate, 2017; E. L. Wagner et al., 2019). The government has provided support in higher education via provisions, one of them being student aid (Dozier, 2017).

What the literature could benefit from is whether Black male students' retention rate at SWCC is related to the amount of aid provided to finance their education. Results from this study could be used to influence financial policies at SWCC and encourage other institutions to launch their own internal investigation to create policies that promote retention for first-year Black male students. More research is needed for aid types at an institutional level and how aid affects different student groups.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables

Review of Community Colleges

Community Colleges are the gateway of accessibility for American higher education and gained ground due to the Truman Commission (Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Jones, 2015). Since the 40's, community colleges have played a vital role in keeping education inexpensive for low- income, first-generation and racial minority students (Watson & Chen, 2019). The Obama Administration also saw community colleges as the way to increase the amount of higher education graduates in the United States while serving underrepresented populations (Brooks, 2016; Hafer et al., 2018). With an attractive sticker price, community colleges enroll 43% of the United States student population (Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016) and is tasked with increasing the number of college graduates in the United States. Furthermore, community colleges act as the primary post-secondary education entry point for Black males (Funston, 2018).

Brief History of Community Colleges

Community colleges began in the early 1900s as trade and preparatory schools that aided young people in becoming better homemakers and local workers (Grubbs,

2020). Community colleges stemmed from community advocacy with the intention to improve the local community by educating young adults. The President's Commission on higher education in 1947 (Grubbs, 2020; Jones, 2015) was instrumental in expanding community colleges and the term junior college became less used as the United Stated shifted toward community colleges. This led to a focus shift for community colleges to general and vocational programs. Community colleges worked to provide opportunities to all and strived to provide educational opportunities to African American students and worked on integrating Black students with White students during the 1950s and into the 1960s (Grubbs, 2020). By the 1970s, trade skills boomed as options for students and federal funding expanded to community colleges during this new period coined vocationalisation (Grubbs, 2020). This period had a large part-time enrollment increase in women and nontraditional students that worked in the community while attending college (Grubbs, 2020).

Characteristics of Community Colleges

Community colleges provide flexible class schedules, entry dates, online classes, and evening classes. Community colleges tend to serve a more nontraditional student population who may not have had access to higher education without the flexibility afforded by community colleges (Brooks, 2016). Community colleges tend to enroll low-income students who qualify for Pell (Davidson, 2015). Community colleges are expected to keep cost low while increasing enrollment for those who are unable to take the traditional route.

Residential options for community college lack and students tends to have less social gathering spaces, but this is changing (Grubbs, 2020). Due to the climate of community colleges and the student population it serves, the sense of campus community differs from that of a traditional, 4-year institutions. But retention issues persist for both types of institutions. Researchers have emphasized the importance of creating community to assist retention and community colleges have been improving their physical structure to facilitate and foster a better sense of community to students who come to campus mostly for classes (Grubbs, 2020). Community college's play a major role in closing the financial/upward mobility gap for low-income families, workforce development, human capital formation, local and regional economic development, and community service (Funston, 2018).

Issues in community colleges continue and funding has shifted and is based on student success outcomes (Grubbs, 2020; Olbrecht et al., 2016). Low retention for community colleges means a loss in fees, tuition, and possibly alumni donors (Raju & Schumacker, 2015). Community colleges are seen as a means to educate middle- and lower-class individuals with an open access model that allows students to register and begin classes immediately. While open admissions increase enrollment, completion rates suffer at community colleges and has been expressed as an unfair indicator of community college success, which inherently affects funding (Hafer et al., 2018) and contributes to the loss of financial opportunities for the institution.

Nontraditional Students

Nontraditional students are new to being the center of research and more information is needed to continue supporting this fast-growing student population when 73% of American college students are considered nontraditional (Chen & Hossler, 2017; Kirk & Lewis, 2015). Current literature suggest that the lack of achievement exhibited by nontraditional students is linked to insufficient financial access (Chen & Hossler, 2017).

Nontraditional students face different challenges than traditional students and are more likely to drop out before getting their degree. Kirk and Lewis (2015) reported that the nontraditional student population is also made-up of students of color and students from low social economic status, making these students high risk for dropping out of school (Kirk & Lewis, 2015). For the students of color who are also from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, the odds are stacked against them. The characteristics that define nontraditional students are delayed college enrollment, part-time attendance, financial independence, full-time employment, have dependents or a spouse, single parent, or lack a high school diploma, independent, impacted by external factors, commute, have a family, and balance other life responsibilities on top of attending college (Bean & Metzner, 1985; College Atlas, 2015; Kirk & Lewis, 2015). These defining characteristics are additional responsibilities that contribute to lower retention rates of nontraditional students.

Tinto's student engagement theory is applicable in a traditional 4-year college setting, but it must be reformed for nontraditional two-year commuter college students. Engagement for commuting community college students looks significantly different

than that of traditional 4-year college students. Tinto (1993) reported that departure for commuting college students was less influenced by social events and more by their academics. One could formulate from this that the importance of faculty engagement and learning communities is paramount to the internal college factors that assist with retaining students due to on-campus social engagement being limited. Therefore, one must factor in the external forces that commuter community college students balance to actively participate in learning communities and have a healthy engagement level with their faculty.

Kirk and Lewis (2015) reported that only 59% of commuting students in the United States participate in co-curricular activities compared to that of 75% of students who are residential. Nontraditional students disclosed issues with balancing coursework, employment, and activities while living off campus. Students also reported transportation, time, and family responsibilities as additional barriers to being involved on-campus (Kirk & Lewis, 2015). The consensus was mostly that they would remain uninvolved and view the campus as not a place to connect but another location to receive a service. However, Xu and Webber (2018) suggested that students of color have a better chance of persisting when they participate in activities hosted by fraternities, sororities and residence halls or are engaged by their own ethnic group.

With additional hurdles to success, nontraditional students can better be looked at through the lens of Bean and Metzner's nonconceptual model of undergraduate student attrition. This study is a good framework that houses most of the characteristics and issues that lead to nontraditional students choosing to persist or depart. While Tinto's

student engagement theory is strong it is not the right fit for this study, which is focused on first-year Black male students at a commuter community college. Xu and Webber (2018) reported that Tinto's model has been criticized because the model failed to address finances, demographics, educational differences, and other external factor that play a key role in retention. These additional factors are a major part of nontraditional student's lives and alters their college experience.

Black/African Americans in Higher Education

Blacks in American history have had a complicated situation of systemic issues that progressive individuals have been working hard to untangle and reform. The first Black male admitted into college was John Chavis in 1799 but the first to receive an American bachelor's degree was Alexander Lucius Twilight in 1823. In 1868, Black slaves were finally freed under the 14th Amendment, in 1870, the 15th Amendment allowed Blacks to vote but Jim Crow laws slowed the progressive momentum of these Amendments (Brown v. Board, 1954). Black Americans faced issues in being admitted to colleges, like being allowed to partake in equal activities such as eating lunch, where the student sat, their books and what schools had to admit them versus those who had an option depending on the location of the nearest Black college (Brown v. Board, 1954). Variations and combinations of inequalities course through the education pipeline for Black Americans from primary through post-secondary education (Brown v. Board, 1954; Freemark, 2020; History of HBCUs, n.d.).

Organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Color People (NAACP) were formed by Black Americans to assist with fighting American inequalities

like separate, but equal (Brown vs Board, 1954) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities were formed to provide educational opportunities for Black students because they were unwelcomed at existing colleges and universities (Freemark, 2020; History of HBCUs, n.d.). Systemic issues from the past have been investigated as possible factors contributing to the lack of educational success of Black Americans and have been reported as problems that show themselves in the psyche of Black students in the form of: micro/macro aggressions from both peers and faculty, oppression, lack of post-secondary readiness, interpersonal forms of racism, as well as a lack of support emotionally, spiritually and financially (Dualeh et al., 2018; Goings & Goings, 2016; Grier-Reed et al., 2016). Black students are reported to have lower retention rates than most students, do not know how to apply, have fewer financial resources, and tend to know less about the academia environment (Xu & Webber, 2018).

Literature from the past shows that Black Americans lacked educational opportunities and current literature implies that more support is needed to adapt to such a unique population of people with a troubled history and a rough start to gaining equal access to public education.

Black Males in Higher Education

Historically Black Colleges and Universities were the first to admit students of color in America to provide an opportunity at higher education and equal access to this public good (History of HBCUs, n.d.). Currently, Black males still suffer from an evident higher education achievement gap compared to other ethnicities. The Great Schools Partnership (2013) glossary of education reform stated that the term achievement gap

refers to “any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students” (p. 1). The American Psychological Association (2017) stated that achievement issues, race, and ethnicity are intertwined with low socioeconomic status. Low socioeconomic communities have a slew of problems and are considered at risk for educational attainment (The American Psychological Association, 2017). When compared to non-Latinos, Whites and Asians, the African American population’s poverty level is more than doubled and within the United States, 39% of African Americans are living in poverty (The American Psychological Association, 2017), making low socioeconomic Blacks, a high risk for low achievements. Degree seekers from low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to be less prepared for the rigor of postsecondary education (The American Psychological Association, 2017) and therefore attrit or spend more time than others obtaining a degree. Funston (2018) reported that 44% of Black male students in community college are in the 27+ age category, that more than half attend part-time on top of working 26+ hours per week. Efforts have been made to increase access to college, to increase undergraduate degrees and to increase student retention; however, statistics continue to reveal low achievement rates by Black male students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015; U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education Student Service, 2016). While Black male students in higher education have increased, studies have shown that they are more prone to dropout (Watson & Chen, 2019).

SWCC has a low enrollment number for their first-year Black male students and lose a large percentage of that cohort within one year. SWCC’s institutional data reports

that Black male students are not retained enough to positively contribute to the student group's academic success rates institutionally or nationally. The Lumina Foundation (2018) reported that academically talented students from lower income situations are being graduated at a lower rate than their low academically performing students who come from wealth (Lumina Foundation, 2018). An achievement gap is evident but for students to succeed with a degree, they first must be retained!

The retention issue of Black male students in higher education has a domino effect. This marginalized and oppressed population of students struggled in higher education from the start of Black education history, and the struggle continues 221 years later. There was a twenty-4-year gap between the first Black male being admitted into college and the first Black male student receiving a degree (Freemark, 2020; History of HBCUs, n. d.). Black male students in higher education need to be retained at a higher rate to break a negative cycle of habits and statistics that can aid them out of the low socioeconomic characteristics that define most of them. Institutions like SWCC cannot afford to lose such a large population of a student group over the course of one-year when the enrollment rates of this group are already so fragile.

Brief History of Retention Models/Frameworks

Retention in higher education is a new issue that was not spotlighted until the 1960s and 1970s after an influx in enrollment occurred and the focus and goals of higher education transitioned from building competencies in a few skillsets to a shift of focus on student graduation and retention (Aljohani, 2016; Burke, 2019). Following World War II,

the demand to attend college grew exponentially and higher education's retention faults became widely known (Aljohani, 2016; Burke, 2019).

Aljohani (2016) and Burke (2019) reported that theories prior to the 1970s were focused primarily on characteristics of individual students instead of their interaction with the college environment. Burke (2019) stated that research before the 1990s focused on socioeconomic status, gender, and race with little focus on student interactions until the late 60s early 70s. The pre-60s and 70s attempts at studying retention issues were known as student attrition theories that were grounded in psychology and not sociology (Aljohani, 2016). Aljohani (2016) stated that authors like Tinto (1993) argued that retention theories grounded in psychology focuses the retention problem on the student's weaknesses/downfalls without taking into perspective the institutional and social contexts. According to Aljohani (2016), the foundation for student retention studies and theories was Durkheim's "Suicide" that linked suicide attributes to having a relationship with social and intellectual integration issues in life and society. While models have been formed some have received more use and attention.

The six most cited student retention theoretical models are: Spady's undergraduate dropout process model (1970, 1971), Tinto's (1975, 1993) institutional departure model, Bean's (1980, 1982) student attrition model, the student-faculty informal contact model created by Pascarella (1983), Bean and Metzner's nontraditional student attrition model (1985) and Cabrera et al., (1993) student retention integrated model. From these models, academic, nonacademic, and socio-economic factors were identified as common themes that contribute to student retention (Manyanga et al., 2017).

When the conceptual models are analyzed, (Manyanga et al., 2017) explained that they fall into two distinct categories. Category one, Student Integration Models (SIM) focuses on the degree of influence from academic factors (grades values, roles, motivation) and social integration (peer/faculty interactions, friendship/ connections). And category two, Student Attrition Models (SAM) focuses on the events that shape the beliefs that shape the attitudes of a student before deciding to exit the college.

The most cited retention researchers and their models are Tinto, Bean, and Spady, who's research theories were inspired by the work of Durkheim's sociology-based suicide theory; Van Gennep's social anthropology-based study on the rites of passage in tribal societies, and human resource's concept of labor turnover (Aljohani, 2016). Van Gennep's study analyzed three key factors, separation, transition, and incorporation as phases of transmission of relationships between succeeding groups that influenced Tinto's later work (Aljohani, 2016). Turn-over in the workplace was later studied by Price (1971) and by Price and Mueller (1981). Components of Price and Mueller's models was heavily adopted by Bean in 1980 that resulted in a more comprehensive model with Metzner in 1985 (Aljohani, 2016). Bean's take on Price's (1971) work created the third category in which student retention is studied, organization. Organizational variables play heavily in retention and according to Bean, share similarities as to the reason why students exit an institution, just the same as a disgruntled employee chooses to leave their place of employment due to their perceived satisfaction of their organizational environment (Aljohani, 2016).

Students choose to drop out for a multitude of reasons, but some students are doing so at a higher rate than others. Institutional and government efforts are needed to fix this issue so that two-year colleges can survive to provide educational opportunities for those who traditionally could not have afforded a college education.

Government Efforts for Retention

In the mid-1960s, the federal government introduced three programs aimed at improving educational access and achievement for degree seekers (U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education Student Service, 2016). These programs were given the name, TRIO programs. The third TRIO program, Special Services for Disadvantaged Students, was modified to include students who were from low socioeconomic backgrounds and is known as student support services (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Student support services are academic tutoring, advice, assistance with enrolling in courses, financial counseling/assistance, post-degree counseling for careers, academic information, and any additional aid such as campus housing and campus programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The degree attainment for Black Americans increased significantly due to governmental and college efforts, but statistically, this influx is due to Black women (U.S Census Bureau, 2016, 2017; McFarland et al., 2017) while Black male student retention and achievement lags significantly behind (Aljohani, 2016; U.S Census Bureau, 2016, 2017; McFarland et al., 2017). The government understands the importance of retention and despite its efforts mitigate the issue with research and reports from the last 75 years, the dropout rates continue to be high in the United States.

Funding Higher Education

The cost to attend college has become a stumbling block for families with the responsibility of the cost of attendance becoming more of the family's responsibility with state contributions declining (Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2016; Kelchen, 2015). President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Higher Education Act in 1965 to lift the financial barriers that kept qualifying students from attending college (Dozier, 2017). The aim was to reduce class stratification and provide opportunities for low-income families and thus the Pell grant was formed as an additional support for the Higher Education Act of 1965. With these efforts in place, SWCC and other college's nationwide are still seeing students who qualify for these programs drop out after year-one and not obtain a degree within 4-years (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2016). Due to retention issues and a decline in state funding, two-year colleges rely heavily on their tuition revenue to operate (Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Mulhern et al., 2015) and need additional information to formulate new plans to retain its students, especially Black male students. The net price of colleges amounts up to 84 percent of the household income for families that qualify for financial aid (Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Britt et al., (2017) reported that financial aid has increased for students in the past, but the cost of tuition outpaced the funding increase.

Kelchen (2015) reported that the cost of tuition and fees and risen about twice as fast as inflation since the 80s and the tuition and fees only accounts for less than 40% of the total cost of attendance for a 4-year institution and just a quarter of the cost for a community college attendee. Tuition and fees are just the tip of the iceberg when funding higher education. Additional fees associated with books, living expenses and other

expenses are left out of the picture as indirect costs for students to attend college (Kelchen, 2015). Cochrane and Szabo-Kubitz (2016) reported that 13% of community college students are homeless, that half of community college students struggled with food insecurities, or have anxiety about the availability of food, and that 22% had gone hungry. Their findings continued to report that working more than 15 hours per week had a negative impact on completing one's education and that community college students were twice as likely to reduce their course load to increase their work hours. With additional external pressures, nontraditional students cannot focus solely on their education as some traditional students would.

The Lumina Foundation (2018) reported that students have financial barriers when accessing education and that traditional financial aid is no longer enough to cover the cost to attend college. According to the Lumina Foundation (2018) while aid is important, traditional forms of aid are not helpful when 1/3 of the undergraduates qualify as low income, struggle to meet day-to-day needs like food, housing, transportation and childcare and struggle financially. Cochrane and Szabo-Kubitz (2016) reported that studies found that with an increase of $3,000 in grant aid, 76% of financial aid recipients would perform more school related academic activities, and that an increase of $1,000 in grant aid in a low-income student's first year has been tied to a 2- to 4-percent point increase in retention. Increasing funds and assuring accessibility to funds can prove to beneficial for specific student types. The data reported provides some positive insights, but like the other research that has been conducted, these studies lack in data for Black

male students who traditionally fall under the category of low socioeconomic and nontraditional, making them a high risk for dropping out of college.

Financial Aid and Awards

The purpose of federal financial aid is to reduce the cost of attending college for those who traditionally could not afford attend (Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Still, 11% of Pell recipients attrit and 80% do not event obtain a college degree within 4-year window (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2016). The Pell grant has stayed consistent in its funding while the budget to attend college has increased substantially.

There have been some studies conducted to evaluate the impact of financial aid, but reports vary and conflict. Three decades of empirical data suggests that aid has a relationship with student persistence and achievement, but additional studies are still needed in the community college sector (Coria & Hoffman, 2016). A study reported by Herzog (2018) showed that the Pell grant had a positive impact on persistence for low-income student while Farmer and Hope (2015) reported that financial aid did not yield a significant contribution to retention from the student population at the 4-year institution in which their study was conducted. While these studies conflict, what is known, is that grants, public and private scholarship programs, and student loans are all important tools for low-income students (Lumina Foundation, 2018; Raju & Schumacker, 2015).

Whalen et al. (2009) reported that students with more significant aid amounts in year-one were more likely to be retained. On average, their student discovered a 5.8% reduction in retention for students with an additional $1000 in need. They also stated an 8.9% increase in retention per every extra $1000 in received aid for students. This

research data suggested that increased assistance for the students improved their retention from year-one to year-two. Additionally, Wine (2011) stated a significant positive retention predictor when dollar amounts of federal Pell and Stafford were studied. In support of Whalen et al., (2009), Wine (2011) noted that higher unmet need negatively impacted student retention.

In slight contrast to Whalen et al. (2009), Herzog (2018) reported that loan aid negatively impacted a student's ability to be retained, especially for low-income, Pell-eligible students. This negative impact went beyond just receiving the assistance but held for those who exhausted the loan aid offered to them, specifically, the subsidized option. Whalen et al., (2009) and Herzog's (2018) research did not report on aid options, they did extract a component of the aid options and suggested that eligible loans within the aid package negatively impacted retention. The conclusion reported by Whalen et al., and Herzog (2018) varied from an earlier study conducted by Chen and Hossler (2017) that stated that Pell grant, Subsidized and Unsubsidized loans proved effective in reducing dropout risks.

Tinto (1993) reported that evidence does exist that suggests that financial aid for underrepresented groups of students is important. Tinto reported a study conducted with Chicano students, an underrepresented group in college, and found that their persistence relied heavily on financial resources. Tinto continued to report that financial aid and resources played a large role in retention than these student's secondary grades. Student of color, especially Chicano student study could be applied to them. Tinto concluded that while findings were positive for Chicano students that without untangling the various

levels of low-income one could not apply the results to all community college students and their economic conditions.

Merit Aid

Gross et al., (2015) reported that institutional merit-aid tends to float to the top, assisting higher income households and negatively impacts students of color with lower income. Gross et al.'s (2015) study showed that students with merit-based assistance were less likely to depart from the institution. An increase of $1K in need-based aid reduced departure by 5%. Van Duser and Tanabe (2018) conducted a study with a pilot program that awarded $5000 to students during their sophomore and senior years only. The reported findings showed that students who did not receive the extra funding were two times more likely to drop out of college (Van Duser & Tanabe, 2018) and that institutional investment also had a positive outcome on retention. Multiyear scholarship recipients were retained at a higher rate, but when additional factors like scholarships, waivers, unmet need, and admissions scores were included in the analysis, the positive outcome did not hold strong. However, this study does support that scholarships can assist with retention efforts for colleges.

Student Loans

Regarding student loans, Herzog (2018) reported that while their research could not find a significant impact of loans on retention, another researcher showed a positive effect on community college students from year-one to year-two, but, that this relationship soured in year-three. Herzog (2018) also reported Jackson and Reynolds' (2013) study that showed the positive impact of loans on Black students. This same study

also showed that Black students borrowed more in loans than their White counterparts. Mulhern et al. (2015) conducted a study showing that loans had a small negative affect on first-year retention and that loans could improve retention for low-socioeconomic students. Additionally, reported studies from Herzog (2018) contrast some positive loan data and show that low-income students exhibited negative relationships with persistence with loan use, but that this negative data became less impactful indicating that the perception of loan burden has come influence on student retention/persistence. Gross et al., (2015) reported that more research is needed on financial aid at individual campuses to learn how financial aid affects the institution's student population.

History shows that retention in education has continued to be an issue in the Black community, but research does indicate that strategic funding allocations could be the answer to improving retention rates. Bean and Metzner's (1985) model continued to prove its importance to this study by including both internal and external factors that contribute to students deciding to exit university. Unlike other models of its time, Bean and Metzner identified the factors that affect nontraditional students, and other facets of the model align with the characteristics of the student population that is being studied at SWCC. Studies have shown a causal relationship between aid and retention, but the studies lack Black male students and are mostly at 4-year institutions and for the studies conducted at community colleges, Black male students made up such a small portion of the student body that they were categorized as "other" among other students of color. First-year Black male students were extracted and focused on for this study to discover if

a significant relationship exists between financial aid/awards and retention for first-year Black male students in higher education.

Summary and Conclusions

Research and literature show that there is a continued issue with Black male students in higher education, spanning back to when Blacks were first able to attend higher education institutions. What is known stems from lots of research at the 4-year institutions and less commonly, community colleges. The research from 4-year colleges with traditional students shows that engagement increases student retention, that higher test scores can be predictive factors of retention, and that scholarship/aid increase student retention in most cases. Studies have not identified how these factors vary/work for Black male students in their first year who tend to be low socioeconomic and first-generation students at community colleges. Community colleges are different than 4-year ones when it comes to access, resources, on-campus engagement, and student intent. There is more research data about what works at traditional 4-year colleges, but further research is needed to continue pinpointing additional factors that lead to increased retention for first-year Black male students at the community college level where more Black men tend to enroll. Using logistic regression analysis, and Bean and Metzner's conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition, this study aimed to find answers to aid SWCC and add to what is known about Black male student retention.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between the amount of financial aid received and retention of first-year Black male students at SWCC. More specifically, I investigated whether the amount of financial aid received (independent variable) was a statistically significant predictor for retention (dependent variable) of first-year Black male students. The amount of financial aid received was the total of funds a student had received in the form of Pell Grants, subsidized and unsubsidized loans, in-state tuition discounts, residential tuition discounts, work-study funds, and institutional as well as outside scholarship opportunities (both merit and non-merit). Retention of first-year Black male students was operationalized as yes/no for first-year full-time Black male students depending on whether they returned to SWCC full-time the following fall. This chapter provides a description of the research design and method used to examine the relationship between amount of financial aid received and retention of first-year Black male students to predict first-year student retention. Furthermore, I explain why a nonexperimental correlational design was used to answer the research question.

Research Design and Rationale

Correlation studies that rely only on bivariate or Pearson *r* statistics do not typically identify independent and dependent variables. Conversely, correlation studies that use regression analysis must identify independent (theorized predictor) and dependent (predicted) variables (Gelman et al., 2021). Gelman et al. (2021) stated that regression models are good for predictors or estimating relationships while accounting

for background variables. This quantitative logistic regression design was used to determine the extent to which financial aid (independent variable) predicted first-to-second-year Black male student retention (dependent variable) at SWCC.

A logistic regression analysis best fit this study because the dependent variable was dichotomous with either not retained (no = 0) or retained (yes = 1) (W. E. Wagner, 2017). Researchers have used logistic regression to study retention with varying financial factors as the independent variable (Britt et al., 2017; Brooks, 2016; Gillespie & Noble, 1992; Joo et al., 2008; Olbrecht et al., 2016; Wine, 2011). These studies, however, were mostly at 4-year institutions or with student populations that did not have a large Black male student population, making the current study of SWCC unique and necessary.

Correlational researchers measure two variables to determine whether there is a relationship between them without additional influencers or manipulation. This research design paired with logistic regression analysis was appropriate to examine whether a relationship existed between the amount of financial aid received and retention of first-year Black male students and to what extent the former predicted the latter at SWCC. I employed secondary archived data that the institution provided, so the only foreseen constraint was time collecting, analyzing, coding, entering, and verifying the data in IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Methodology

Population Selection

The target population was full-time first-year Black male students at SWCC who attended between 2014 and 2018. An appropriate sample of Black male first-year student

files was selected for this study, and the files deemed eligible were the ones used to represent the population of Black male students attending SWCC.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

A convenient sample of students was selected from a population of 336 students provided by SWCC's Institute of Research Effectiveness. The five criteria for inclusion in the data analysis were that the student was (a) full-time, (b) first-year, (c) United States citizen, (d) Black male, and (e) enrolled at SWCC between 2014 and 2018. Once I received access to the 336 student files, I analyzed the files and removed those that did not satisfy the inclusion criteria. An a-priori power analysis using G*Power indicated the need for at least 102 cases with power set to .80. The probability was estimated at .9 for H_a and .6 for H_o. R^2 was estimated at .81, and α was set to .05 (see Faul et al., 2009).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

A member of SWCC's Institute of Research Effectiveness assisted me with providing the archived data. Two-hundred and forty-two Black male student files from SWCC's financial aid database and Year 1 to Year 2 retention status information from the registrar's office were provided for me, from which the final sample was drawn. An IRB application was submitted and approved by both Walden University (11-02-21-0528569) and SWCC to access these data. An email was sent to a member of the Institute of Research Effectiveness at SWCC once the IRB approvals were obtained. The person who agreed to assist moved forward with pulling student files, providing access to Black male student files within the 2014–2018-time frame.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

Archived student files were the source of data for this correlational quantitative study. The amount of financial aid received was operationalized as the total of funds a student had received from Pell Grant, subsidized/unsubsidized loan options, in-state tuition discounts, residential tuition discounts, work-study funds, and institutional as well as outside scholarships opportunities (both merit and non-merit). Retention of first-year Black male students was categorized dichotomously as yes = 1 or no = 0 depending on whether they returned to SWCC to continue their studies full-time the following fall.

Data Analysis Plan

SPSS was used to carry out the logistic regression analysis. After the variables were defined and data were entered into SPSS, I conducted a cleaning and screening process to identify variables that may have had errors. Statistical assumptions were evaluated for the statistical test used. Visually, a histogram was selected as the visual output, and normality plots with the test option were selected to check for normalities (see Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2015). The data were checked for missing data, range accuracy, skewness, and kurtosis to provide descriptions of normality (see W. E. Wagner, 2017). Within the tests of normality, a stricter alpha level of .05 was used to increase the validity and trustworthiness of the results (see Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2015; W. E. Wagner, 2017).

The data were subjected to a logistic regression analysis. The use of a logistic regression analysis for this study was in alignment with other studies with binary dependent variables. Logistic regression analysis is appropriate when more than one

independent variable is continuous. In the current study, logistic regression analysis was the best fit for testing the hypotheses due to its ability to describe the predictive value of amount of financial aid (a continuous variable) for student retention (a categorical dichotomous variable).

Gillespie and Noble (1992) used a linear and logistic regression model to develop separate prediction models on persistence at five institutions (N = 5,950 students). To predict accurate estimates of high-risk students, Gillespie and Noble used a logistic regressions analysis. This study confirmed that a logistic regression analysis is the best fit when dealing with dichotomous dependent variables. Also, Gillespie and Noble stated that the curvilinear assumption that logistic regression models have increases the chance that the influential outcome is shown in the mode if any curvilinearity is present. For the current study, the logistic regression model included the most vital variables associated with predicting student persistence.

In 2011, Wine completed a study to examine the relationship that financial aid had with student retention. This study focused on the relationship between student financial aid, unmet need, and fall-to-spring student retention at a small public community college. Wine employed a logistic regression analysis to determine whether a significant relationship existed between financial aid types. Wine reported a significant relationship between loan awards and student retention and loans and federal Pell grant monies and found a significant negative relationship between unmet need and student retention.

A similar study was conducted to see how money retained students at a liberal arts college (Olbrecht et al., 2016). First-time, full-time student data were collected from 5 consecutive years. This study was building on Hochstein and Butler's (1983) study, and Olbrecht et al. (2016) looked at various types of student aid and their effect on retention. Olbrecht et al. used a logistic regression model to identify the relationship that various financial factors had on student retention. The results indicated a relationship between the amount of institutional aid given and retention. Olbrecht et al. were also able to find a relationship between some aid and retention but also found a positive relationship between increased unmet need and retention. Based on the methods used in these studies, a logistic regression analysis is the best fit for the current study. This test would yield pertinent results on whether a significant relationship between the variables existed (see Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2015).

Threats to Validity

I aimed to determine whether a significant relationship existed between amount of student financial aid received and retention of first-year Black male students. Student retention is a complicated matter, and no one factor can be identified as the sole reason for retention or attrition. The results of the current study may contribute to future studies to identify the factors that influence the retention of Black male first-year students. History was one known threat to the current study. Over the course of the student's first year in college, additional factors could be at play that may influence their decision to return or stay.

Maturation was another threat to this study. This threat exists for all living matter, especially people who can change over time. The validity of this study was strengthened due to existing research at 4-year institutions or at institutions where the population of students of color was so small that they were combined into small categories coded as "other."

Because the current study addressed human behavior to stay in college or attrit, there were threats to construct validity. As described in Bean and Metzner's (1985) conceptual model of student attrition, internal and external factors influence the student's decision to continue college or exit. Some of these factors are socioeconomic status, commuter status, and age. Student intent could not be explained in the current study. Although the student file may have contained the correct information on their financial aid and retention, student intention at the community college level varies from that of students attending a 4-year institution. Although I aimed to determine whether a relationship existed between financial aid and retention, outliers may have existed for students whose intention may not have been to obtain a degree or certificate. The external validity that exists for this study was related to the setting of SWCC. The results of this study could be different at a different community college in a different area with other differentiators such as economic status of the school's area, the population it serves, and more.

Ethical Procedures

I did not use human participants but employed de-identified archived student files consisting of two variable measures: the amount of financial aid received and whether the

student returned for the second year of school. Final institutional approvals were given once the IRB for Walden and SWCC were completed along with written permission to access the files needed. Because I used archival data, I proceeded in good faith that all records were correct and that all files that were given to me were all that existed and that none were overlooked.

I assigned a code to each student file and redacted any information pertaining to the student identities. All SPSS data were coded so that student identities would not be an issue. All eligible student files were securely stored on a password-protected external hard drive. The hard drive containing student file information did not leave the safety of my possession and was stored in a fire- and waterproof safe when not in use at my home. The data were accessed only by me for the purpose of this study, and the data will be saved for a minimum of 3 years.

Summary

This chapter included an explanation of the research design that was chosen to answer the research question and test the hypothesis by using logistic regression analysis. I explained why the chosen design was the best fit for this study and explained why Bean and Metzner's conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition aligned with this design. The sampling method, data collection, data type, and operationalization were also explained in alignment with the design choice to examine whether a significant relationship existed between the amount of financial aid received and retention of first-year Black male students at SWCC. Because the design and method aligned with the

framework, I had a holistic vision to answer the research questions and test the hypothesis for this study. In Chapter 4, I present the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between the amount of financial aid received and retention of first-year Black male students at a community college. In this study, the following research question was addressed: To what extent does the amount of financial aid received predict retention of first-year Black male students at SWCC? The null hypothesis of this study stated that the amount of financial aid received was not a statistically significant predictor of retention for first-year Black male students at SWCC. The alternative hypothesis stated that the amount of financial aid received was a statistically significant predictor of retention for first-year Black male students at SWCC. This chapter includes a description of the data collection process and study results and ends with a summary.

Data Collection

The data retrieval process took about a month and occurred differently than I had anticipated. I communicated with the research liaison by email and Zoom due to us being a state apart and in different time zones. After I worked with the research site to define what was needed, the liaison at the research site sent the data that I needed within a week.

The liaison sent the data with student identification numbers already coded, the student's retention status from Year 1 to Year 2 and Year 2 to Year 3, the student's age, the student's ethnicity, the sum of the student's award package, and only United States citizens. This resulted in receiving information on 242 students who qualified for the study. The data were given to me via a secure email to my Walden student account and were in an Excel spreadsheet.

The discrepancies between the actual data collection and the proposed data collection were that I did not code the student files and the data were not collected from the registrar's office but from the Institute of Research Effectiveness. As a result, I did not have to go through the process of scrubbing student files to exclude noneligible student data. This resulted in 72% of possible files being used while 38% of student files were not included in the data transfer. The coding key provided by SWCC was (a) ENR = enrolled at SWCC; (b) GONE = institutional research could not locate the student as being enrolled at SWCC, graduated, or transferred to another institution that participates in National Student Clearinghouse, these students may have transferred to a school that does not participate in National Student Clearinghouse, joined the miliary or are incarcerated; (c) TRAN 2 YR = transferred to a 2-year institution without graduating from SWCC; (d) TRAN 4 YR = transferred to a 4-year institution without graduating from SWCC; and (e) GRAD = graduated from SWCC with an AA/AS/AAS/AAT certificate.

In the end, all 242 cases were used to carry out the logistic regression analysis for this study. All 242 cases were Black male students whose status was first time in college United States citizens. Additional information, such as whether they were United States citizens was not needed because all of the cases provided were Black male students who were United States citizens. Students' retention status from Year 2 to Year 3 was also not used because this studied focused on Year 1 to Year 2 retention status for Black male students at SWCC, which ensured that the cases provided were a good representation of the Black male student population at SWCC.

Results

The six statistical assumptions for a logistic regression analysis were tested before moving forward with the study. The binary dependent variable for the study was first-year retention (no = 0, yes = 1). A preliminary analysis showed that no multicollinearity was detected (vif = 1). The inspection of the standardized residual values showed no outliers for the selected cases used. The Hosmer and Lemeshow test showed an insignificant value $x^2(8, N = 234) = 12.4$, $p > .05$ with $p = .135$. The model showed statistical significance, $x^2(1, N = 234) = 3.84$, $p = .049$ suggesting that the test could predict students who were retained and those who were not. The model explained between 1.6% (Cox & Snell R^2) and 2.3% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in the dependent variable and correctly classified 65.8% of the cases. A power analysis using G*Power indicated the need for a 102 cases at minimum with power set to .80. The probability was estimated at .9 for H_a and .6 for H_o. R^2 was estimated at .81, and α was set to .05 (see Faul et al., 2009). This showed that enough cases existed to conduct the logistic regression analysis.

The ages of the students ranged from 17 to 52 with most being 18, or 54% of the cases used ($M = 20.64$, $SD = 5.98$). Students who were not retained made up 65% of the cases ($n = 158$). The percentage of transfer students included in 158 cases was 15% ($n = 36$) with 8% ($n = 20$) transferring to another 2-year institution and 7% ($n = 16$) transferring to a 4-year college. Students who were graduated equaled 1% ($n = 3$), and 33% ($n = 81$) reenrolled from Year 1 to Year 2. All cases that SWCC coded as graduated

were coded as (1 = yes) retained. Students who transferred to a 2- or 4-year institution were coded as (0 = no) not retained.

Due to a low beta output, I went back and divided all dollar amounts by 1,000 to reduce the dollar amounts that SPSS had to account for. This resulted in a clearer beta coefficient output of .072 and not .000 as the first run with the full dollar amounts had yielded. As shown in Table 2, sum of financial aid received was not a significant predictor of Black male student retention at SWCC. These results are consistent with the null hypothesis.

Table 2

Logistic Regression Predicting First-Year College Black Male Student Retention

Sum of Financial aid	B	*SE*	Wald	*df*	Sig	Exp (B)	95% CI for Exp (B) Lower	95% CI for Exp (B) Upper
	0.072	0.037	3.789	1	0.052	1	1	1

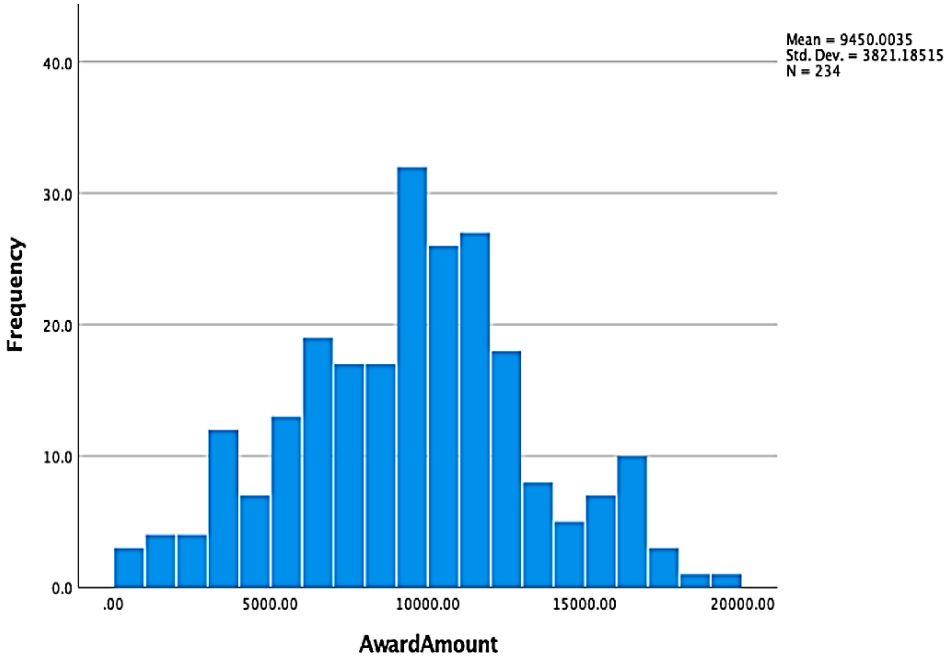
A binary logistic regression analysis was used to determine whether the amount of financial aid received was a significant predictor for retention of first year in college Black male students. $N = 242$ cases were received. The dummy variable 0 represented not retained while 1 meant retained. Very few of the students (3.3%) received 0 dollars in financial aid while the remaining 96.7% received financial aid ranging from $7 to $19,632.00.

For all cases with data ($n = 242$, the minimum amount of financial aid awarded was $7.17, and the maximum was $19,632, ($M = \$9,450$, $SD = \$3,821.19$, see Figure 1).

In the retained student population (n = 81), the minimum amount of financial aid awarded was $1,674, and the maximum was $19,632 ($M$ = $10,122.11, SD = $3,724.40). For students not retained (n = 153), the minimum amount of financial aid awarded was $7.17, and the maximum was $18,227 ($M$ = $9,094, SD = $3,835.84).

Figure 1

Distribution of Sums of Financial Aid Awards for Black Male Students at SWCC



Summary

The results indicated that the relationship between amount of financial aid received, and student retention was not strong enough to reject the null hypothesis. Although the model could accurately predict 65.8% of the cases, the amount of financial aid received was not statistically significant (p = .052). The relationship needs more exploring at other institutions or with more student cases from SWCC.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between the amount of financial aid received and retention of first-year Black male students at a community college. Bean and Metzner's (1985) conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition was employed to ground the study. The characteristics of this model paired well with the student population at SWCC who are considered nontraditional students due to the college's characteristics. The findings of the study indicated that there was no significant relationship between amount of financial aid received and retention of Black male students at SWCC. However, the difference between being statistically significant and not was by .03 in the *p* value, resulting in the no significance of .052. The beta coefficient was .072, showing that although there was no linear relationship, the relationship was not negative in nature. Additionally, the model was able to predict 65.8% of the cases accurately.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study aligned with the null hypothesis that there is no significant linear relationship between amount of financial aid received and student retention. The sum of financial aid received was well spread among the Black male student population, but the model was unable to find a statistically significant correlation between the independent and dependent variable. This is consistent with findings from Farmer and Hope (2015), who conducted a similar study at a 4-year institution but yielded a *p* value of .70. This was vastly different from the *p* value I found in my analyses (see Table 2).

Although the logistic regression analysis for the sum of financial aid received and student retention yielded a nonsignificant result, the difference was .03 from being statistically significant ($p = .052$). The regression model, although not significant, was able to predict 65.8% of the cases and their relationship with student retention, suggesting that more research with a larger sample is needed. What can be assumed from this study is that the statistical significance of studies conducted by Wine (2011) and Whalen et al. (2009) could be due to the number of cases each study was able to employ. Wine's study included 1,178 students who were eligible for financial aid, and the study completed by Whalen et al. had 1,905. Respectively, that's 936 more cases in Wine's study and 1,236 more cases in Whalen et al.'s study when compared to the number of cases that were used from SWCC.

The nonlinear relationship indicates that some relationship exists but that the β was small at .072, but $\beta \neq 0$ was also not negative. Whalen et al. (2009) reported that first-year financial aid had a significant relationship with student retention ($p = .000$) and ($\beta = .085$) with ($N = 1,905$). Wine (2011) reported positive relationships between student retention and grants, and student loans. Wine reported $p < 0$ but $\beta = .000343$ for financial aid grants and $\beta = .000236$ for student loans. An addition of eligible student cases for SWCC's study could change the p and β values to be more significant.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study were that the data were from one college and included only first-year Black male first-year students who were United States citizens. This limited the type of Black male student cases used for the study and this population

represented only those who were United States citizens. Another limitation of this study was student intent to depart. With the data relying solely on quantitative measurements, other psychological factors were excluded. This study is mostly relevant to SWCC and could have benefited from a larger sample size, qualitative data, and a comparison with another community college with characteristics similar to SWCC. The threat to validity for this study was within the data collection process. I did not play a significant role in whittling down the cases to the ones that were eligible for this study.

Recommendations

Although retention continues to be an issue in higher education, researchers should consider how important it is at the community college level. Future research could benefit from a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative data with qualitative data to gain better insight into why some students choose to return and others to leave. Researchers could also benefit from getting a breakdown of each student's financial aid package. Visibility into the type of award (loans, reductions, scholarships) and which ones required actions items (GPA requirement, community service) may be helpful.

Finally, a new model on student attrition could be helpful, including dropout, retention, and persistence factors. Additional research could benefit from combining Bean and Metzner's (1985) model (see Figure 2) with one identical or similar to Braxton et al.'s (2004) theory (see Figure 3) for departure in commuter colleges and universities.

Figure 2

Bean and Metzner's (1985) Model of Nontraditional Undergraduate Student Attrition

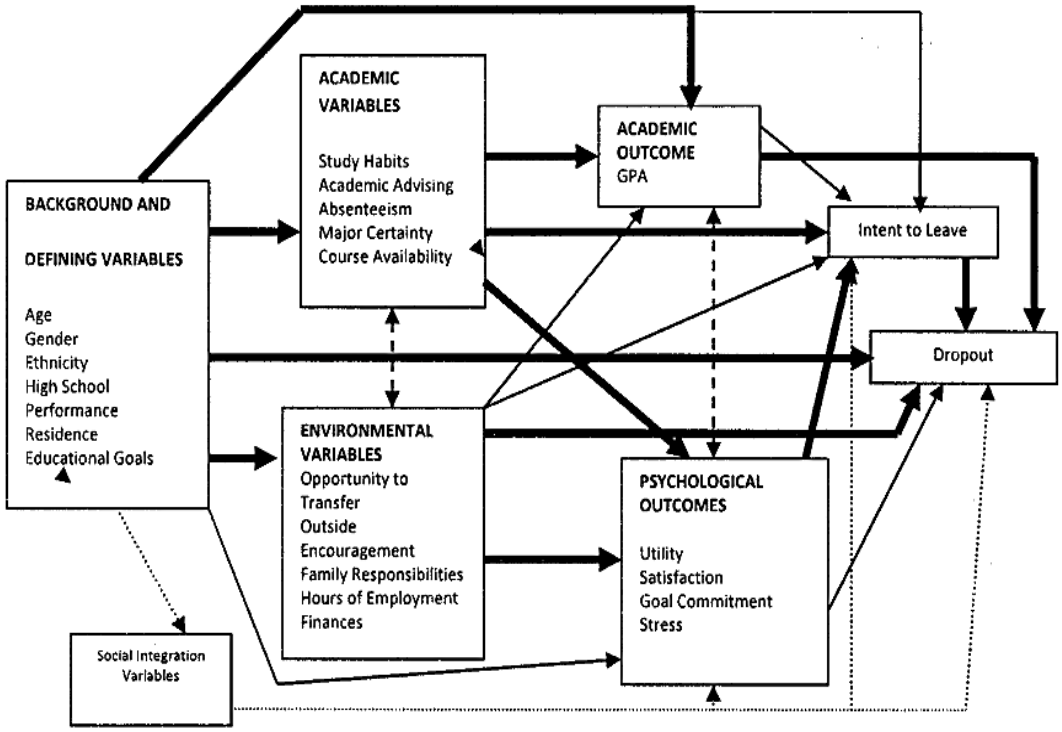
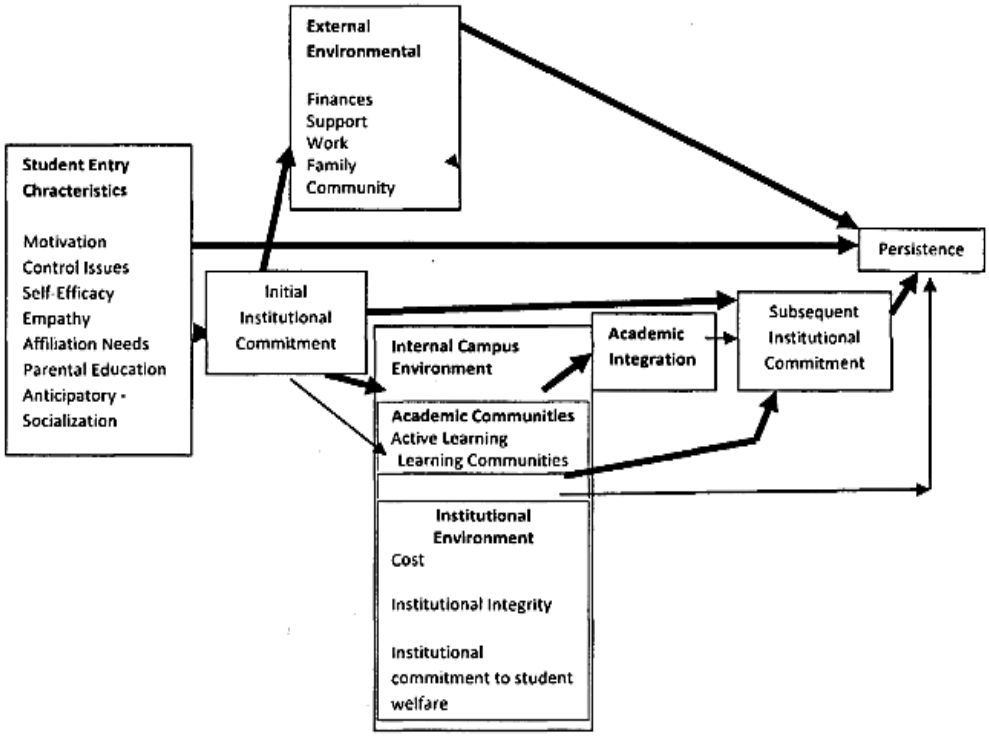


Figure 3

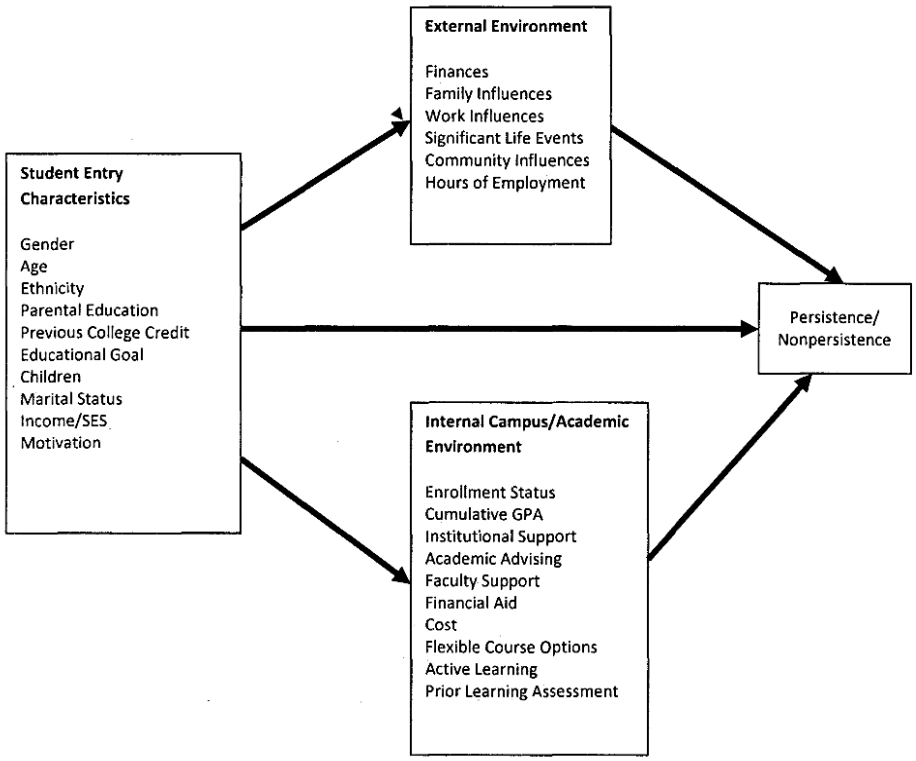
Braxton et al.'s (2004) Adapted Theory of Student Departure in Commuter Colleges and Universities



Bergman et al. (2014) combined the two and was able to report that financial aid increased persistence by 40% when controlling for other variables. Bergman et al.'s hybrid model (see Figure 4) leaves out a few variable boxes such as social integration, institutional commitment, and background characteristics. The model seems to condense the large number of variables that were characterized by Bean and Metzner's (1985) and Braxton et al.'s (2004) models.

Figure 4

Bergman et al.'s (2014) Proposed Hybrid Model Based on Bean and Metzner (1985) and Braxton et al. (2004) Models



As scholars move to conduct research that encourages policy change, it would be beneficial for the academic community and governing bodies to not see persistence as an issue and penalize institutions financially and rank wise. Braxton et al.'s (2004) model seemed to move toward this by changing the outcome to persistence, which was exchanged for the term retention for their study. Bean and Metzner's (1985) model ended with intent to leave, but all paths from there led to dropping out and not persisting to another college. Including persistence with retention and dropout will give a better understanding of how institutions are faring in the competitive higher education market,

especially because community colleges are modeled and operate in a manner that is different from their 4-year counterparts. Retention in this model would mean returned to the same institution the following year, persistence would encompass students who continued their education the following year at a new college, and dropout would mean the student did not continue their education elsewhere. Student intent is a major factor; while colleges aim to retain, students wish to persist (Tinto, 2017).

Implications

This study contributes to future studies that are working toward reforming how community colleges are assessed for funding at the state and federal level. The goal is to close the achievement gap that Black students have been struggling with for years. Reform of funding policies for 2-year college sectors that are access points for racial minority students would be important for Black students and their families. Continuing studies such as the current one would provide insights that promote positive social change by reducing the Black male student education gap, influencing policy and funding changes that support Black male students, shifting community college funding criteria, and increasing upward mobility in the Black community. A funding shift for 2-year colleges would aim to have more financial resources that support programs and scholarship initiatives intended to improve the continued education of low socioeconomic students.

Based on the findings from the current study, the concern of whether there was enough funding for Black male students was not reconciled, and additional research is needed. Some students with high financial aid packages still dropped out. Therefore,

increased funding is not suggested; rather, putting into place processes to gain a better understanding of the students' intent and why they decided to depart SWCC is recommended. The suggestion is for future studies to include a factor of continuing a student's education elsewhere and data being recognized and used by state and federal funding. Another suggestion would be to research the mental health implications for Black male students, as well as how their basic needs and insecurities may factor into their decision to depart from SWCC. These findings could assist in the push for funding policy changes for community colleges and building better mental health support services for the racial minority student. Financial insecurities for community colleges can negatively impact the community and the students it serves; these students tend to be of low socioeconomic status, oppressed, and marginalized students in need (Broton et al., 2022).

Conclusion

Statistics continue to show issues on Black student retention, specifically for Black male students. This information could be misleading because it is not clear whether Black male college student retention is truly an issue. It is also unclear whether community colleges should be held to the same funding criteria as 4-year institutions when their purpose is different. Community colleges may not be failing Black men but may be providing the access Black men need to better higher education opportunities as intended. Federal funding criteria based on retention for 2-year institutions still need to be evaluated for potential policy shifts that can better serve their financial needs and initiatives. Community colleges provide access to education and allow students to grow

as learners and move on to a 4-year institution that they may not have otherwise been prepared to encounter academically and financially. With funding currently tied to retention and student success outcomes (Grubbs, 2020; Olbrecht et al., 2016; Raju & Schumacker, 2015), a change in college success criteria needs to be considered for the community college sector.

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