

The Impact of Campus Residency on Retention of First-Generation African American College Students at Predominantly White Institutions

Pernell H. Goodwin

Jackson State University, Jackson, MS 39217

Felix A. Okojie

Jackson State University, Jackson, MS 39217

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of campus residency on the retention of first-generation, African American college student at PWIs. A sample of 20, full-time freshmen students participated in the study. The researchers used in-depth interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the impact campus residency is having on student retention. All information was self-reported by the participants. Limited research has been conducted on first-generation African American college students at Predominantly White Institutions. Study findings supported previous research in relation to on-campus housing and a sense of belonging. Study showed that campus residency had impacts on student's retention as a result of their accessibility to academic support systems, extracurricular activities, importance of faculty and staff relationships, peer interactions, and a sense of belonging.

Keywords: African American, campus residency, first-generation, retention, predominantly white institutions (PWIs)

INTRODUCTION

Many African American students enroll in colleges because they consider a college degree as a portal to economic empowerment (Lee, 2019). Many students share this belief as they enter colleges and universities each year. Unfortunately, many students drop out before receiving a degree. Although degree completion rates are discouraging for students of all races (57.6 %), the low completion rate for African American students (42%) is more disheartening (Education Digest, 2018). Statistics from the U. S. Department of Education (2019) reveal that African American students received only 14% of the bachelor degrees awarded in the United States. These, along with other statistics about the enrollment and retention of African American students, drive the need for a better understanding of factors influencing the retention rates of African Americans and other college students.

Low postsecondary retention rates for African American students have persisted over the decades despite the desire for an education and increased studies to understand low attrition rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Other measures are required to understand African American student retention better and increase the likelihood of college completion. This study was designed to expand the knowledge of retention of African American students by examining

the impact of campus residency on first-generation African American students at predominantly white institutions (PWI). Most retention studies are quantitative, focusing little on the student perspectives and campus residency (Daykin, 2018). Many quantitative studies have evaluated the probability of retention based on precollege factors, such as ACT, GPA, family educational attainment, goal and institution commitment, and family income (Adelman, 1997; Astin, 1982; Sedlacek, 1996; Tinto, 1975; Westbrook & Sedlacek, 1991). Such studies provide valuable statistical and predictive insight into college student retention and address additional research needs.

Despite evidence of a positive relationship between campus residency and collegiate outcomes, prior research has not established a verifiable link. Utilizing propensity score matching and national longitudinal data, Lauren Schudde (2011) investigated whether living in university-owned housing impacts retention. Results suggested that the impact of living on campus is not negligible; the probability of remaining enrolled in the second year of college was slightly over three percent higher for on-campus residents than off-campus residents. Based on these findings, better understanding of the impact of campus housing programs on academic outcomes is needed to inform important housing policy decisions. Housing and residence life administrators at colleges across the country had promotional materials, claiming that living in university owned facilities improved student academic outcomes. Empirical research has provided little evidence to support these claims. If living on campus increases student retention, students who do not live on campus may be disadvantaged. Studies show that students who live on campus tend to complete more credit hours and have higher grade point averages (Oregon Tech, 2022). Residential students tend to become more involved with the campus community, show more significant gains in student development and interpersonal self-esteem, and persist and graduate more frequently (Grodman, 2021). They have easier access to campus resources such as the library, labs, support services, and mental health counseling (Brown, 2022), one reason students who reside on campus during their first year of college have better grades. The University of Northern Iowa (2010) statistics on the Department of Residence page showed residential students had higher GPAs at all classification levels. Students living on campus were almost twice as likely to be on the Dean List and had higher graduation rates. Students residing on campus for two years were 25% more likely to graduate than students who only lived on campus during the first year.

This research examined the perceived impact of campus residency on extracurricular activity involvement, academic success, and retention of first-generation African American students. The study used a qualitative approach to assess the student's perspective on collegiate experiences. The research was designed to provide insight into factors related to student retention decisions and campus residency.

Study Purpose/Research Questions

This qualitative study assessed and provided a deeper understanding of the impact of campus residency on retention at predominantly white institutions. The Tinto's Retention Theoretical framework guided this study. The research was guided by the following questions (1) How does campus residency impact academic performance toward the retention of African American students at PWIs? (2) How does campus residency impact faculty and staff interactions toward the retention of African American students at PWIs? (3) How does campus residency impact extracurricular activities toward the retention of African American students at PWIs? (4) How

does campus residency impact peer-group interactions toward the retention of African American students at PWIs?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK/LITERATURE REVIEW

Vincent Tinto (1993) identified three primary sources of student departure: academic difficulties, the inability of individuals to resolve their educational and occupational goals, and their failure to become or remain incorporated into the intellectual and social life of the institution. The Tinto Student Retention Theory Model of Institutional Departure argues that to be retained, students need integration into formal (academic performance) and informal (faculty/staff interactions) educational systems. This retention includes formal (extracurricular activities) and informal (peer-group interactions) social systems. Researchers have tried determining which factors are essential to the enrollment-retention dilemma for decades. The need for student retention studies became evident as early as 1938, when it was noted that an alarming number of students were not completing degree requirements (Cope & Hannah, 1975). McNeeley (1938) study found that more than 42% of first-year students in 25 universities in 1931 did not complete the degree requirements. A review of 35 studies from 1913 to 1962, Summer skills (1962) found that colleges had only a 40%-degree attainment rate overall. Additionally, Iffert (1958) found a 25% attrition rate among first-year students. As studies continued to predict college attrition rates, Pantages and Creedon (1978) forecasted that approximately 40% of college students would drop out and never return.

After African American students began enrolling at PWIs, researchers started to conduct studies on their retention and attrition rates at PWIs and found that their attrition is much higher than the attrition rate of Caucasian students (Astin, 1975, 1978, 1982; Porter, 1990; Sedlacek & Pelham, 1976). An analysis of students who entered college in 1980 revealed that Caucasian students had a dropout rate of 41.5% and African Americans had a dropout rate of 63.3% (Porter, 1990).

Although many of the previously all-white colleges began including minority students through recruitment of “the cream” of the minority students (academically and athletically gifted students) to attend their institutions, many of those recruited did not have positive campus experiences (Banks & Dohy, 2019). Even though many of these students were ambitious, competitive, and seeking positive experiences on PWI campuses, many did not find supportive environments to assist them in achieving their goals. One issue is the lack of Black faculty members across the country. Forty-one percent of white males are employed as faculty at institutions of higher learning and 35% are white females. In contrast, only 3% are Black males and 3% are Black females (Banks & Dohy, 2019). Those unsupportive environments found at PWIs resulted in many African American students dropping out of college or, in some cases, transferring to other schools, which included historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). African American students attending HBCUs expected, and in many cases found, supportive learning environments (Henry, 2021). Although enrollment of African Americans at HBCUs continued to fluctuate (an increase of approximately 1% from 1994 to 1995 and a decrease of 1.9% from 1995 to 1996), the percentage of bachelor’s degrees earned by African American students (28%) at these historically black institutions remain stable (Henry, 2021). The goal of student housing at universities across the country has changed in recent years. The goal is no longer for student housing to simply be a dormitory providing students a place to live while attending college but to take an active part in the learning on campus. This is a reality

that was predicted in the early 1980s by Ostroth. Ostroth (1981) stated that residence halls must do more than provide students with basic needs and that they need to “provide an educational environment as an integral part of the central teaching function of the college” (Ostroth, 1981, p. 78). Blimling (1993) pointed out in a literature review that many studies note the positive influences of living on-campus rather than commuting to college. He went on to say that this living environment creates a social-psychological environment that is very different from home environments. Students who live on campus have a maximum opportunity for increased involvement on campus. Pascarella et al. (1994) noted the many advantages of living on campus in their literature synthesis. They explained that living in the residence halls seemed to influence academic performance, including persistence and graduation rates, positively influenced personal growth and development, values and attitudes, and may have a role in students’ cognitive growth. They concluded, as in a prior synthesis, that living on campus rather than commuting is likely the “single most consistent within-college determinant of impact” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

More recently, Samura (2021) noted residence halls as one of the places where students learn, it was pointed out the importance of students’ residences and hallmates in their learning. Despite these findings, in the mid-2000s, it was still not evident how student housing would respond to this highlighted emphasis on learning in the residence halls.

Residential colleges or living-learning programs are one way that student housing professionals have addressed the shift to providing learning in the residence halls. The residential college or living-learning program is not a new idea. Instead, it is a reinvention of the original concept of a living and learning environment introduced at Oxford and Cambridge in England in the 1800s (Ryan, 2015) and the similar programs that followed in the United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s in Harvard and Yale (Alexander, 2018). The early residential colleges in the U.S. achieved success at first. This residential college system did not gain widespread acceptance as they could not “re-create the British system in which colleges were autonomous units of instruction” (Ryan, 2015, p. 93#). However, there were several instances of using the living-learning idea across the country in the early 1900s (Alexander, 2018). In the original Oxford/Cambridge model of residential colleges, students and faculty they have lived together in the college. Still, this concept did not last in the U.S. as the German model emphasizing research became popular (Winston & Fitch, 2013). The downfall of the residential college was increased as many colleges found that faculty and students living together were not working, and residence halls became more popular than living in colleges (Upcraft, 2012). The current residential college or living-learning program design is based on the early models; however, the significant difference is that faculty do not live in the halls with the students.

A dominant theme for retention research is that retention and attrition decisions are linked to interactions between students and persons within institutional settings (Park, Kim & Salazar, 2020). Researchers have acknowledged the significance of meaningful contact between students, faculty, and staff members to increase retention rates by meeting the student’s needs. Research conducted by Neumann and Finaly-Neumann (2019) on the persistence of juniors and seniors revealed that students’ perceptions of the quality of the learning experience, academic involvement, and contact with faculty predicted their retention one semester later. Additionally, researchers have found that increased faculty-student interactions not only

provide students with opportunities to obtain additional academically-related information, but the interactions also have an impact on students' general ways of thinking, methods of problem-solving, and interests in various careers and life goals (Tinto, 1993).

Park and Kim (2022) posit those various types and frequencies of student-faculty interactions impact three educational outcomes during the first year: (1) grade point average, (2) intellectual development, and (3) personal development. In an earlier study, Park & Kim (2022) found that high interactors (students who frequently interacted with faculty and staff members) withdrew at a lower rate (14%), and common interactors withdrew at a 27% rate. Research by Bean (1985) and Brawer (1996) supports the hypothesis that formal faculty and peer interactions enhance students' persistence.

Lamport (2013) reported that questions related to student-faculty interaction are transitioning from causes and the quantity of the exchanges to effects and the quality of the interactions. This idea supports Park, Kim, and Salazar (2022) claim that there is a strong correlation between quality student-faculty interactions focusing on intellectual and career concerns and student claims that faculty members had a positive influence on their academic and personal development. Newman and Newman (2018) supported this claim by reporting that the primary agents of influence for college students are college faculty members and some administrative personnel.

The influence of student-peer interactions is relevant to both the academic and social interaction of students and, by its nature, impacts retention decisions. Researchers offer evidence that supports the claim that the interactions also influence a wide range of college outcomes that include career choice, critical thinking, political orientation, social activism, self-confidence, openness to diversity, appreciation for cultural and social differences, problem-solving skills, and choice of major (Rasco, Day, & Denton, 2023).

A study by Venegas-Muggli (2021) found that students' peer interactions impact both in and out-of-class experiences. The interactions also influence the cognitive development of students. The study also found that peer interactions through Greek organization affiliation for African American students enhanced feelings of friendship and belonging. The students often found that the Greek organizations provided a place for them to find friendships, study partners, a place to hang out, and a place for them to feel less alienation and isolated (Renn, 2022).

To further examine and explore student retention and dropout rates, Tinto (1975) developed a longitudinal, predictive model (that explained the process that students go through before dropping out (Eimers & Pike, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983). His student attrition model was designed to expand the ideas and concepts of Durkheim and Spady. Instead of focusing primarily on social integration, Tinto's model focuses on the premise that retention in college is a function of both academic and social integration. Tinto defined academic integration as the full range of individual experiences which occur in the formal and informal domain of the educational systems of the university. Social integration is the formal and informal social interactions students experience at the university. Tinto postulated that academic and social integration are the key factors in dropout and retention decisions (Lenning, Beal, & Sauer, 1980; Tinto, 1975). Academic integration is defined by Tinto (1993) as "the full range of individual experiences which occur in the formal and informal domains of . . . the academic systems of the

university,” (p. 39). Tinto describes social integration as the formal and informal social interactions students experience at the university. The idea that integration is essential was further supported in studies by Tinto (1993) and Pascarella and Terenzini (1977), which reported that the lack of integration or isolation of students within institutions is an essential factor in attrition. Another postulate of Tinto’s (1975) model is that students enter colleges with various pre-college experiences or attributes and background characteristics that help to determine their initial commitments and expectations related to college. Those initial institutional goals or commitments change during matriculating through college as students integrate into the academic and social environments of the institution.

Tinto posits that the following are critical factors in student retention and persistence: (a) grades, (b) parents’ education, (c) encouragement, (d) academic integration, (e) social integration, and (f) institutional/goal commitments (Tinto, 1975, 1983). Students integrate into colleges and universities academic and social systems through formal and informal peer-group and student-faculty interactions. Tinto (1993) postulated that the degree to which students integrate into the social and academic systems determines their final commitment and the likelihood they will continue at the university. Subsequently, the level of a student’s absolute commitment to an institution and its goals determines the dropout decision.

METHOD

A qualitative approach was used to analyze the impact of campus residency on the retention of first-generation African American students at two PWIs. Qualitative research has proven to be an appropriate approach because it provides an in-depth understanding of how people understand, act, and manage day-to-day situations in a particular setting. The researchers used interviews to explore the undergraduate experiences of first-generation African American students to determine specific characteristics, challenges, and motivations that may impact their retention. Creswell (2018) described qualitative research as a way to explore and deepen understanding of the meanings in complex situations. The researchers sought to understand first-generation African American student lived experiences, with the knowledge that every student experience is different.

According to Creswell (2018), qualitative methodology is appropriate when there is a current need to explore and describe phenomena. Though measured most often quantitatively, this study provided narrative data to explore campus residency to see if that increased or decreased the potential for first-generation African American to be retained at colleges. Creswell also posited that qualitative design is appropriate for studies with minimal previous research (Creswell, 2018). There is a void in the studies that examines the impact of campus residency on first-generation African American retention at PWIs. Qualitative research is effective in studying a small number of subjects to identify the core of experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2018) and to produce patterns and identify relationships of meaning that build new knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Through using the qualitative interview process in this study, the researchers developed an understanding of the participant personal experiences as first-generation African American students.

Site Selection

College A and College B were selected as study sites. College A is a local public, predominantly white institution. It offers a high-quality education in a supportive environment with a 16:1

student-to-faculty ratio. The University enrolls over 23,000 students from across the world. The site was selected because of its demographic makeup. Seventy-Four percent (74%) of the student population identify as White, twelve percent (12%) identify as African American, and thirteen percent (13%) identify as other minorities. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the faculty and staff are white and about six percent (6%) being African American. This site was deemed suitable because of its location and accessibility while still providing privacy for participants. College A enrolled its first African American student in 1962, and over 88% of the University population is retained for four years.

College B was selected as the second study site. College B was founded in 1826 and is one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in the south. College B is a private, co-educational, Christian university of liberal arts and sciences serving nearly 5,000 students worldwide. College B offers a dynamic education with a 15:1 student-to-faculty ratio, where they pride themselves on being the second-oldest Baptist-affiliated college or university in the United States. Located in a Metro-Area, College B is situated in a large market for jobs, entertainment, and more. College B is home to over 80 undergraduate areas of study, over 50 graduate programs ranging from Business to Medical Sciences, and a Law School. More than 3,200 students reside in on-campus housing. The site was selected because of its demographic makeup. Sixty-five percent (65%) of the student population identify as White, twenty-two percent (22%) identify as African American, and thirteen percent (13%) identify as other minorities. Only eleven percent (11%) of the faculty and staff are African American. This site was deemed suitable because of its location and accessibility while providing privacy for participants.

Sample Selection

Qualitative research often utilizes purposeful sampling to identify and study cases related to a specific phenomenon (Campbell, 2020). Purposeful sampling was used to identify study participants. Purposeful sampling refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques in which units are selected because they have characteristics needed in the sample. Participants were chosen from students active in college-level courses with one or more years of study and who were on-campus residents. Students included in the study findings were first-generation African American students who reside on campus. The sample consisted of twenty (20) students total, ten (10) study participants from College A and ten (10) study participants from College B.

Once approved to proceed with the study from the two Institutional Review Boards (IRB), the Dean of Students and student leaders served as gatekeepers. Their responsibilities were to provide support in identifying study participants. The invitation flyer described the focus of the study. Once participants were identified, a letter was emailed to each respondent explaining the objective of the study. During the initial participant contact more information was provided about study expectations. Identified students were sent an email requesting telephone contact information. Before beginning the interview, a number was assigned to each respondent. Each purposefully selected participant was invited to participate in the study. Participants were identified as first-generation students by the use of college admissions applications. Also, study participants self-identified as first generation when asked by the researchers during the in-depth interviews. The researchers informed each participant that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any point in the study. The researchers also informed the

participants that data collection for the study would be kept confidential and that each participant would be assigned a pseudonym identifier in place of names to ensure confidentiality.

Data Collection

Data collection was done by in-person interviews in the privacy of on-campus offices at the two sites. Interview questions were open-ended to capture consistent and accurate results that were in-depth explanations of the study being investigated. Using open-ended questions during the interviews allowed the participants to share as much information as possible. The interviews ranged from a period of 60 minutes to 90 minutes. With permission of participants, each one-on-one in-person interview was recorded on a recording device to facilitate data collection. The researchers took notes to supplement the recorded data. The audio recordings were transcribed then coded for data analysis. Data was stored on a secured database to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the data and participants.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis procedures consisted of a five-step process: 1) prepare and organize the data, 2) review and explore the data, 3) create initial codes, 4) review those codes and revise or combine them into themes, and 5) cohesively present themes. The researchers prepared and organized the data by utilizing interview transcripts for succeeding phases of the data analysis. Transcripts, audio recordings, and interview notes were cross referenced to ensure accurate cataloging of participant experiences. The researchers familiarized themselves with the data through reading and re-reading interview transcripts. Data was then transcribed and reviewed for coding.

Creating codes was aimed to ensure that concepts stayed as close to research participants' words or use their terms because they capture a crucial element of what was described. Assigning codes to words and phrases in each response helped capture the answer, which, in turn, helped in the analysis of the data.

Initial codes were created by naming each word, line, or segment of data, followed by a focused, selective phase that used the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize the large amounts of data. In this initial pass, the researchers broke down the qualitative data into discrete excerpts and created codes to label them. The codes were reviewed and combined into themes. The themes were analyzed and presented in the findings.

FINDINGS

Description of Participants and Sample

Twenty (20) currently enrolled African American, first-generation undergraduate freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior students who reside in on campus housing were included in the study. Ten (10) participants were selected from the public Predominately White Institution and ten (10) participants were selected from the private Predominately White Institution. Participants were chosen from students active in college-level courses with one or more years of study and who were on-campus residents. Table 1 reflects the study demographics of the study sample participants:

Table 1: Demographics of study participants

Name	Gender	Age	Major	Classification	College
Lacy	F	19	Political science	Freshman	A
Norman	M	23	Elementary Education	Senior	B
Nelly	F	21	Social Work	Junior	A
Donald	M	22	English	Senior	B
Tamia	F	20	Sociology	Sophomore	A
Terri	F	19	Biology	Sophomore	B
Alicia	F	22	Engineering	Senior	A
Lindsey	F	19	Psychology	Freshman	B
Jason	M	21	Engineering	Junior	B
Renee	F	22	Business Ad.	Senior	A
Andrew	M	19	Graphic Design	Freshman	B
Hope	F	20	Health Administration	Sophomore	A
Elliot	M	20	Art	Junior	B
Mike	M	20	General Studies	Sophomore	A
Bobby	M	20	English	Sophomore	B
Tom	M	20	Psychology	Sophomore	A
James	M	19	Accounting	Freshman	B
Patrick	M	18	Health	Freshman	A
John	M	21	Business	Junior	B
Cory	M	20	Criminal Justice	Junior	A

Qualitative Analysis

To understand how participants described academic, social, and institutional experiences as first generation, African American students, the researchers included excerpts from interviews to capture vivid experiences at the institutions. The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of campus residency on the retention of first generation, African American students at predominantly white institutions. The study used the Tinto 1993 Student Retention Theory: Model of Institutional Departure framework to guide the study. Research Question 1 was How does campus residency impact academic performance towards the retention of African American students at PWIs? The purpose of this research question was to understand the impact campus residency had on the academic performance and retention of the selected students of each institution. Three themes emerged through the narrative analysis process: Academic Support Systems, Learning Community, and Student Success. These themes described campus residency impact on academic performance and retention of African American students at PWIs. Themes were developed by closely examining participant responses to interview questions.

Research Question 1: How Does Campus Residency Impact Academic Performance Towards the Retention of African American Students at PWIs?

Theme 1: Academic Support Systems:

There was agreement among most study participants that living in campus residency provided access to academic support and resources that impacted academic performance and improved retention. The library was seen as a major campus resource. Students were able to access many needed resources to complete class assignments and projects. Lacy said she could at least concentrate on her grades and her studies. She used online tutoring tools, and rarely used

tutoring laboratories besides the library. She preferred working and studying alone. The library was comfortable, quiet, and created an atmosphere conducive for learning and studying. Hope spoke about how receiving help in the Writing Center at the library helped with course work. Assistance from the Writing Center helped to strengthen her writing, creativity, and research skills, which resulted in improved course performance. She received assistance on papers, projects, reports, multi-modal documents, web pages, and other needs across multiple disciplines.

Theme 2: Learning Community:

Participants felt living in campus residency provided a learning community that impacted their academic performance and retention at the institution. A learning community is a group or cohort of students who share common academic goals and work collaboratively. Residing in campus housing provided students the opportunity to live with peers who shared a common academic interest or hobby. Donald felt campus residency provided a nurturing community of peers, common study areas and opportunities for peer engagement which promoted development of close relationships with other students. With available university resources and increased academic engagement he was able to improve his academic performance. Terri resided on the same dormitory floor as her other athletic teammates. She felt being housed together with teammates made her a part of a community of peers with similar interests, passion, and goals. Learning communities provided an opportunity for her to build relationships with peers and promoted improved academic performance. Being surrounded by like-minded peers, she felt motivated to achieve and complete her degree.

Theme 3: Student Success:

Several students spoke about how living on campus helped with student success which impacted retention at the institution. Tom described an institutional early detection system that alerted the student, faculty, and advisors of students who were at risk for failure. Tom said, "My grades are good due to the work of the early detection system that provided me with an opportunity to ensure I reach maximum student success." Participants felt establishing close working relationships with academic advisors helped improve academic success. They indicated advisors help students select classes, identify needs, campus resources, and help in overcoming barriers. The student success center was warm, engaging and welcoming. Hope felt the staff genuinely worked to keep her in school. The Student Success Center staff often came to the residence hall to discuss available resources. Participants indicated that living in a residence hall eliminated barriers such as commuting to class and lack of community. They felt removal of such barriers increased student success.

Research Question 2: How Does Campus Residency Impact Faculty and Staff Interactions Towards the Retention of African American Students at PWIs?

Three themes emerged in response to research question 2. Emergent themes were mentorship, sense of belonging, and cultural differences. Participants felt it was a challenge to connect with faculty and staff at their institutions.

Theme 4: Mentorship:

Study participants indicated lack of mentorship was a major barrier to academic success. Alicia would speak to her professors after class to gain clarity on course materials that was unclear. She wanted faculty guidance and attempted to build a relationship with an instructor in hopes

of identifying some who could serve as a mentor. She felt a mentor would help decrease grade and course related anxiety and improve academic performance. Although, she was advised by her university advisor, she felt a mentor would help her improve academically. She was unable to identify a faculty member willing to provide the needed directions and support, while serving as a mentor. She indicated that most instructors simply taught their classes and were unavailable to provide additional guidance and assistance. Jason also wanted the support of a mentor. He felt support from professors could help improve study discipline. A poor writer, he felt a mentor could help improve his writing skills, build arguments, communicate ideas and improve scholarly conversations. He asked a faculty member to serve as his mentor. However, he was disappointed that the faculty member was often busy conducting research and writing to provide the form of engagement expected.

Theme 5: Sense of Belonging:

There was a consensus that feeling a sense of belonging played a major role in the retention of study participants. Campus residency created a sense of community and belonging. Having faculty and staff that looks like them was important to participants. Andrew believed having more African American professors increased resilience and academic success. It was important to study participants that they felt they were a part of the campus community. They felt the campus climate could decrease institutional inequalities, and decrease the social, economic and academic gaps experienced by students of color. Elliot indicated that one of his favorite faculty members from a general education class during the first semester at the institution was an African American male. He found African American male faculty spent more time mentoring and counseling students than other teachers.

Theme 6: Cultural Differences:

Participants spoke about challenges they experienced was attributed to cultural barriers and staying in campus residency had little impact on improving cultural differences. They felt residing on campus improved relationships with other students. Being forced to live in a space with people from all different cultures led to greater understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. Nelly described segregated experiences in the dormitory. He did not see much engagement across social lines and felt programmatic activities were culturally alienating. He also described a cultural divide between African American students and faculty. He did understand faculty also felt they did not understand him or other African American students and did not feel comfortable seeking assistance from faculty. Some participants experienced anxiety being in living quarters with students of different cultures. Participants felt they were unable to form relationships with faculty or staff because of cultural differences. Lindsey an African American female student from New York described attending school in the south as a "culture shock". She was aware of the differences or conflicts in values and customs between her home culture and the school. She would sometimes feel anxious, confused, homesick, or angry. She stated, "In New York we do things a lot differently than they do them in Mississippi. I haven't met a professor from the east coast yet to ask them how did they adjust to the south. We just have a lot of cultural differences down here, not bad just different."

Research Question 3: How Does Campus Residency Impact Extracurricular Activities Toward the Retention of African American Students at PWIs?

This research question addressed how living in campus residency impacted participants in extracurricular activities on student retention. The emergent themes were student development, experiential learning, and student engagement.

Theme 7: Student Development:

Participants believed living on campus provided opportunities for students to become fully involved in the academic process and increased the development of strong connections to the campus community. The involvement in extracurricular activities was a major part of the college experience. Mike enjoyed attending the activities on campus. He suggested engaging in college events contributed to the development of his personal and professional growth. He enjoyed the varied experiences and felt engaging in social and cultural activities fostered development of interpersonal skills, promoted increased cultural awareness, and expanded individual worldviews. Some participants did not attend many extracurricular activities. They generally attended one or two campus events. Bobby only participated in on campus weekend poetry night. He indicated that the poetry night provided comfort, relieved stress, and provided a period of self-expression. Nelly described how extracurricular activities helped ease the stress of class and studying. She was able to see real world application of class lessons. For example, she learned the importance of non-verbal communication and as a consequence felt better able to communicate with others.

Theme 8: Experiential Learning:

Participants saw experiential learning as vital to academic success. They spoke about how living in campus residency allowed them to attend more events on campus. They described participation in extracurricular activities as an introduction to experiential learning. James believed a student often struggled to grasp concepts when they did not use “real” world applications. With experiential learning, he suggested students were given the opportunity to apply concepts and ideas to real-world situations where they play active roles. Patrick described becoming more culturally aware through participating in extracurricular activities. He felt increased cultural understanding helped break down cultural barriers and build cultural bridges. He argued interactions with individuals of different cultures led to better understanding, also improved ourselves, and reduced cultural conflict. Several participants attended events to have a good time and rest from stressful work weeks. John simply wanted to have fun. However, he found participating in cultural events led to a greater understanding of the importance of teamwork, reinforcement of course content, and understanding the importance of cooperation in attaining goals and objectives.

Theme 9: Student Engagement:

Participants indicated student engagement played a major role in retention. Residing on campus, they felt improved social and academic engagement. Andrew believed participating in campus activities resulted in easing academic stressors and increased engagement with students from other cultures and expanded friendship network. Study participants who regularly attended extracurricular campus activities indicated they had experienced personal growth, improved academic performance and social experiences, and improved concepts of self and self-esteem. They had also become more effective communicators. Terri said, “I am not the same person I was when I first got here. Going to the student engagement events has caused me to get out of my shell and be more open. I really enjoy those events and no pressure to interact, I can just relax and let everything happen naturally.” Participants preferred small

events as they were more conducive to building relationships with instructors and classmates. They were also seen as being more flexible which means programs and activities could often be tailored to better fit the needs of students.

Research Question 4: How Does Campus Residency Impact Peer-Group Interactions Towards the Retention of African American Students at PWIs?

Research question 4 addressed study participants perceptions of how campus residency impact peer interactions and retention. Emergent themes were networking, peer instruction, and social intelligence.

Theme 10: Networking:

Participants believed networking encouraged positive interactions with professors, peers and working professionals. Not all the participants valued networking with peers. Other participants indicated that networking with other students allowed them to apply and communicate information learned in the classroom in a manner simulating real-world, workplace experiences. Cory entered college academically ill prepared. He indicated that he had not been a serious high school student. He enjoyed being involved and meeting new people across the campus. He felt he benefited having valuable college friendships. Benefits included having a better social life, a successful, satisfying education, and career opportunities that were highly desirable after graduation. He spoke about improved networking opportunities, benefits from residing in the dormitory, and a growing circle of friends. Lacy indicated a major goal of college was to make individuals marketable for the workforce as it facilitated greater understanding of workplace expectations. Lacy felt networking experiences should result in meaningful relationships. Lacy appeared to be somewhat disappointed in her ability to interact and benefit from networking experiences. A loner, she generally stayed to herself and did not know many other students. She did not feel she would be able to benefit from them because they were not the “right” people. She believed faculty engagement was more important than peer interaction.

Theme 11: Peer Instruction:

Several study participants believed it was easier to learn the class lessons when participating in a study group. Group study sessions often involved students working together to review and discuss course material, and was believed to often be facilitated by a peer tutor or group member. For example, Terri had a difficult time in a chemistry class because she did not understand the professor. Living in the dorm, helped her connect with individuals who understood chemistry and could expand her concepts and principles. Being a part of a dormitory made it easier to find assistance. She said, “I had a rough time in Chemistry II because the professor was foreign and there was a language barrier. I got with my classmates who are chemistry majors and they really helped me. We started a peer study group and having your peers as an instructor makes it easy to understand the lesson.” Hope was not involved in activities or organizations but participated in a study group on the resident hall floor which helped her meet new people. She felt the resident hall influenced how peers interacted with each other. She described that interacting with other dormitory residents lead to increased involvement. She said, “Talking to the women on my floor has really motivated me to get more involved. Next semester I plan on joining some clubs and getting out there a little more.” Renee described herself as a loner who was uncomfortable interacting with others. While she preferred working alone, a professor often gave group assignments which required engaging

with other students. She said, "My professor is always giving group assignments that force me to talk to people. They aren't that bad but I prefer to work alone. I want to be instructed by the professor, not a classmate. They reading the material for the first time just like me."

Theme 12: Social Intelligence:

Several participants felt social intelligence was a benefit to peer interactions among first-generation, African American students at PWIs. Cory indicated that social intelligence helped in developing social and soft skills. He said, "Those relationships I built helped me from dropping out or transferring. I wasn't big on communication when I came to college but talking to people and understand all African Americans don't communicate the same helped me socialize with people all over the world." Similarly, Jason believed peer interactions improved interactions with peers, prevented conflict, and enabled learning through dialogue which contributed to personal growth and social intelligence. Other study participants saw social intelligence as something they would like to work on but did not have the needed background and experiences to be effective. Bobby felt being a foster child hurt his social development. However, he believed residing in the dormitory improved his social interaction and communication skills.

CONCLUSION

The impact of campus residency on the retention of first-generation, African American college students at Predominantly White Institutions is a delicate issue. This topic scares college administrators but it is important to ensure the success of disadvantaged, minority students. There is limited research and understanding of how campus residency impacts the retention of the specific population of first-generation, African American students.

The researchers selected a qualitative research method for this study and the qualitative method used to conduct this study was phenomenological. There were two site selections for the study as participants were all first-generation, African American students obtained from their respective institutions. The sample consisted of 20 African American students who were active in college level courses and stayed in campus residency. Participants combined knowledge in addition to the rich descriptions of their vivid experiences with being first-generation, African American students. Without being prompted, participants provided vivid responses that created illustrations and descriptions of what it was like to be an African American student attending a predominately white institution.

An additional strength of this study was the diversity in thought represented by the sample of participants. Among the 20 participants, the researchers were able to interview participants that attended public and private PWIs. Based on the institution attended, the participants encountered different experiences with faculty, support staff, and amongst their peers, which could be significant to each student's retention. For example, some participants indicated that their faculty members could not relate to them while others described having a good environment in their department of study. The diversity of thought added unique perspectives and quality to the data collected. One constraint of the study was that it only focused on individuals who are first-generation and did not include African American students whose parents have obtained a college degree. This is a limitation considering that according to the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2017) only 20 percent of first-generation students had earned a bachelor's degree compared to 42 percent of those students who were not the first in their families to attend college. Also, all the participants self-reported their past experiences as

they best remember them. This could be a limitation because they could unconsciously or purposely delete major or minor details in the retelling of their stories.

Surprisingly, living in campus residency is very important to the academic and social integration of a college student. They are already dealing with the pressure of being the first in their family to attend college, the pressure of knowing they cannot live anywhere else, and some come to college to create a new generational path of success. Shown from this study findings, students do see an impact in their academic performance, extracurricular activity, and peer interactions by living on campus which impacts their retention. They did not see an impact when it came to faculty and staff interactions; and some of the students did not see the importance of peer networking. Nevertheless, this study addressed a gap in the literature by providing firsthand information that will inform institutions, departments, and faculty of the ways in which they can invest in first-generation, African American students and their retention.

In closing, this study solidified the belief that the campus residency is still necessary in today's PWI campus. As university administrators, faculty, and staff work to increase successful, timely matriculation of students, the role of the residence hall should not be underestimated. The researchers believe, and the research shows, that campus residency can increase meaningful peer interactions. In addition, it can give greater access to extracurricular activities and academic support systems. Impacting the social and academic integration of first-generation, African American students by extension impacts their retention.

References

Association of College Unions International (1996). Role of the college union. Retrieved from <http://www.acui.org/about/role-of-the-college-union>.

Association of College Unions International (2012). Mission, purpose, values, code of ethics. Retrieved from <http://www.acui.org/about>.

Association of College Unions International (2021). History of ACUI. Retrieved from <http://www.acui.org/about>.

Adelman, C. (1997). Diversity: Walk the walk, and drop the talk. *Change* 29(41). 34-35.

Abes, E.S., Jones, S.R., & Stewart, D.L. (2019), *Rethinking college student development theory using critical frameworks*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing.

Alexander, P. A. (1998). The nature of disciplinary and domain learning: The knowledge, interest, and strategic dimensions of learning from subject-matter text. In C. Hynd (Ed.), *Learning from text across conceptual domains* (pp. 263-287). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Aljohani, O. (2016). A comprehensive review of the major studies and theoretical models of student retention in higher education. *Higher Education Studies*, 6(2), 18. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v6n2p1>

Allen, W. R. (1985). Black students, white campus: Structural, interpersonal and psychological correlates of success. *Journal of Negro Education*. 54(2). 134-147.

Allen, W. R. (1988). The education of black students on white college campuses: What quality the experiences? In M. Nettles (Ed.). *Toward black undergraduate student equality in American higher education* (pp. 57-86). Albany: State University of New York Press.

American Heritage Dictionary. (2nd College ed.). (1991). New York: Houghton Mifflin Publishers.

Astin, A. W. (1975). *Dropouts, stopouts. And persisters: A national profile*. Los Angeles: Laboratory for Research on Higher Education.

Astin, A. W. (1978). *Four critical years*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, Inc.

Astin, A. W. (1982). *Minorities in higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, Inc.

Blimling, G. S. (1993). The influence of college residence halls on students. In J.C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* (Vol. 9, pp. 248-307). Agathon, New York.

Blimling, G. S., & Alschuler, A. S. (1996). Creating a home for the spirit of learning: Contributions of student development educators. *Journal of College Student Development*, 37(2), 203-216.

Campbell S. (2020) Comprehensive service and practice development: City Hospitals Sunderland's experience of patient journeys. *Practice Development in Health Care* 3(1): 15–26.

CB Experts (2020, August 19). The benefits of living on campus. Retrieved May 12, 2021, from <https://www.collegebasics.com/going-to-college/benefits-of-campus-living/>

Colon, A. (1991). Race relations on campus: An administrative perspective. In P. G. Altbach and K. Lomotey (eds.). *The racial crisis in American higher education*, pp 69-88

Cope, R. & Hannah, W. (1975). *Revolving college doors: The causes and consequences of dropping out, stopping out, and transferring*. New York: Wiley and Sons.

Chickering, A., & Kuper, E. (1971). Educational outcomes for commuters and residents. *Educational Record*, 52(3), 255-261.

Chickering, Arthur W.; Reisser, Linda (1993). *Education and Identity* (2 ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. ISBN 978-1-55542-591-3.

Chrysikos, A., Ahmed, E., & Ward, R. (2017). Analysis of Tinto's student integration theory in first-year undergraduate computing students of a UK higher education institution. *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development*, 19(23), 97-121. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCED-10-2016-0019>

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Digest of Education Statistics. (1999). National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education.

Durso, S. O., & Cunha, J. V. (2018). Determinant factors for undergraduate student's dropout in an accounting studies department of a Brazilian public university. *Educação em Revista (EDUR)*, 34, e186332. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0102-4698186332>

Evans, Nancy J; Forney, Deanna S; Guido-DiBrito, Florence (1998). *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice* (1 ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. pp. 36-37. ISBN 978-0-7879-0925-3.

Fassett, K., Fosnacht, K., Gonyea, R., Graham, P. (2021). Predicting the Living Arrangements of Marginalized Students

Fleming, J. (1984). Blacks in college. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishing.

Gabelnick, F., MacGregor, J., Matthews, R., & Smith, B. L. (1990). Learning communities. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gibbs, L. (2019). Children and young people's wellbeing post-disaster: Safety and stability are critical. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 14, 195– 20

Hardy Cox, D. & Strange, C.C. (Eds) (2010). Achieving student success: Effective student services in Canadian higher education. Montreal, PQ: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Harper, S. R., Carini, R. M., Bridges, B. K., and Hayek, J. C. (2019). Gender differences in student engagement among African American undergraduates at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45(3), 271-284.

Harris, V. J. (1992). African-American conceptions of literacy: A historical perspective. *Theory into Practice*: 31T41 pp. 276-285.

Huhn, C. (2006). The 'housing effect' on first year outcomes. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Academic Planning and Analysis.

Hurtado, S. S. (2018). The benefits of living on campus: Do residence halls provide distinctive environments of engagement? *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 55(3), 255-269

Jackson, G. A. (1990). Financial aid, college entry, and affirmative action. *American Journal of Education*. 98. 523-550.

Jacob, P. (1957). Changing values in college: An exploratory study of the impact of college teaching. New York: Harper.

Johnson, W. G., & Cavins, K. M. (1996). Strategies for enhancing student learning in residence halls. *New Directions for Student Services*, 75, 69-82.

Jones, S.R. & Stewart, D.L. (2016). Evolution of student development theory. *New Directions for Student Services*, 154, 17-28. DOI: 10.1002/ss.20172 Student Development Theory, University of Texas, Dallas, last accessed on 30 June 2006

Joubert-Thompson, R. M. (2000). Shattering the barriers: Achieving African American students at a predominantly White research 1 university in the south and their reasons for success. Unpublished dissertation. Louisiana State University.

Lee, W. Y. (2019). Striving toward effective retention: The effects of race on mentoring African American students. *Peabody Journal of Education*. 74(2), 27-43.

Loo, C. M. & Rolison, G. (1986). Alienation of ethnic minority students at a predominantly white university. *Journal of Higher Education*. 57(11). 58-77.

Kuh, G. D. (2009). Understanding campus environments. In McClellan, G. S., & Stringer, J. (Eds.). *The handbook of student affairs administration*: (Sponsored by NASPA, student affairs administrators in higher education) (p. 59). Indianapolis, IN: John Wiley & Sons.

Kuh, G. D. (2009). What student affairs professionals need to know about student engagement. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(6), 683-706.

Kuh, G. D., Douglas, K. B., and Lund, J. P. (1994). Student learning outside the classroom: Transcending artificial boundaries. Washington: ERIC / ASHE.

Kuh, G. D., Hayek, J. C., Carini, R. M., Oimet, J. A., Gonyea, R. M., and Kennedy, J. (2002). National Survey of Student Engagement.

McClusky, T., Weldon, J. & Smallridge, A. (2019). Rebuilding the first-year experience, one block at a time. *Student Success*, 10(1). 1-15. Also, see the archives of the European First Year Experience conferences.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2009a). ELS 2002: Survey design and sample sizes. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved on May 15, 2009 from <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/els2002/surveydesign.asp>.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2009b). About IPEDS. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved on May 15, 2009 from <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/about/>.

Neville, H. A., Heppner, P. P., & Wang, L. (1997). Relations among racial identity attitudes, perceived stressors, and coping styles in African American college students. *Journal of Counseling and Development*. 75. 303-311.

Ostroth, D. D. (1981). Competencies for entry-level professionals: What do employers look for when hiring new staff? *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 22(1), 5-11.

Patton, L. D., Renn, K. A., Guido, F. M., & Quaye, S. J. (2016). Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Pifer, A. (1973). The higher education of blacks in the United States. New York: Carnegie Corporation.

Pike, G. R., Schroeder, C. C., & Berry, T. R. (1997). Enhancing the educational impact of residence halls: The relationship between residential learning communities and first-year college experiences and persistence. *Journal of College Student Development*, 38, 609-621.

Porter, O. F. (1990). Undergraduate completion and persistence at four-year colleges and universities. Washington, D. C.: National Institute of Independent Colleges and Universities.

Roebuck, J. B. & Murty, K. S. (1993). Historically black colleges and universities: their place in American higher education. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Ryan, R. M. (1995). The collegiate way: Historical purposes of residential college. *Talking Stick*, 12(7), 8-16.

Samura, M. (2016, July 01). How Can Residence Hall Spaces Facilitate Student Belonging? Examining Students' Experiences to Inform Campus Planning and Programs. Retrieved September 23, 2020, from <https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-4248776321/how-can-residence-hall-spaces-facilitate-student-belonging>

Sedlacek, W. E. (1996). Employing noncognitive variables in admitting students of color. In *Leveling the playing field: Promoting academic success for students of color*. I. H. Johnson and A. J. Ottens (Eds.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Shapiro, N. S., & Levine, J. H. (1999). Introducing learning communities to your campus. *About Campus*, 4(5), 2-10.

Sidle, M. W., & McReynolds, J. (1999). The freshman year experience: Student retention and student success. *NASPA Journal*. 34(4). 288-300.

Spady, W. G. (1970). Dropouts from higher education: An interdisciplinary review and synthesis. *Interchange*, 1(1), 64-85.

Staff, S. I. (2020, January 6). Here's why a sense of belonging in college matters more than you think. Retrieved from <https://www.studyinternational.com/news/sense-of-belonging/>

Supiano, B. (2020, July 23). How Colleges Can Cultivate Students' Sense of Belonging. Retrieved September 16, 2020, from <https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-colleges-can-cultivate-students-sense-of-belonging/>

Terenzini, P. T & Pascarella, E. T. (1977). Voluntary freshman attrition and patterns of social and academic integration in a university: a test of conceptual model. *Research in Higher Education*. 6111. 109-127.

Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E. T., & Blimling, G. S. (1999). Students' out-of-class experiences and their influence on learning and cognitive development: A literature review. *Journal of College Student Development*. 40(5). 610-623.

Theory - Student Involvement. (n.d.). Retrieved October 07, 2020, from <https://studentinvolvement.weebly.com/theory.html>

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*. 45(1). 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.) Chicago, EL: University of Chicago Press.

Tracey, T. & Sedlacek, W. (1984). Noncognitive variables in predicting academic success by race. *Measurement and Evaluation in Guidance*. 16. 171-178.

Tracey, T. & Sedlacek, W. (1985). The relationship of noncognitive variables to academic success: A longitudinal comparison by race. *Journal of College Student Personnel*. 26. 405-420.

Tracey, T. & Sedlacek, W. (1987). A comparison of white and black student academic success using noncognitive variables: A Lisrel analysis. *Research in Higher Education*. 27. 333-48.

Upcraft, M. L. (1982). *Learning to be a residence assistant: A manual for effective participation in the training program*. First edition. The Jossey-Bass Series in Higher Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Webster, D. W., Sedlacek, W. E., & Miyares, J. (1979). A comparison of problems perceived by minority and white university students. *Journal of College Student Personnel*. 22. 165-170.

Westbrook, F. D. & Sedlacek, W. E. (1991). Forty years of using labels to communicate about nontraditional students: Does it help or hurt? *Journal of Counseling and Development* 70. 20-28.

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1983). Springfield, MA: Merriam Webster Inc.

Whitte, E. J., Edison, M., Pascarella, E. T., Nora, A., & Terenzini, P. T. (1999). Interactions with peers and objective and self-reported cognitive outcomes across 3 years of college. *Journal of College Student Development*. 40(1). 61-77.

Whitte, E. J., & Nuss, E. M. (1994). In C. C. Schroeder, P. Mable and Associates (Eds.). *Realizing the Education Potential of Residence Halls* (pp. 133-164). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Yi, E. (2018, August 17). Themes Don't Just Emerge - Coding the Qualitative Data. Retrieved September 02, 2020, from <https://medium.com/@projectux/themes-dont-just-emerge-coding-the-qualitative-data-95aff874fdce>