The impact of internal and external factors on the academic success of selected African American students

Takeyda Williams

Follow this and additional works at: https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd

Part of the Higher Education Commons

Let us know how access to this document benefits you - share your thoughts on our feedback form.

Recommended Citation
Williams, Takeyda, "The impact of internal and external factors on the academic success of selected African American students" (2010). Theses and Dissertations. 92.
https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/92

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact LibraryTheses@rowan.edu.
THE IMPACT OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS ON THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF SELECTED AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

by

Takeyda C. Williams

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration of The Graduate School at Rowan University
July 30, 2010

Thesis Chair: Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.

© 2010 Takeyda Williams
The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of 208 selected African American students at Rowan University, Glassboro, New Jersey, in March, 2010. The study investigated the impact of internal and external factors such as school preparation, self determination, financing, mentoring, academic advising, and self efficacy, and the impact that these six identified factors had on their grade point average and their academic achievement at Rowan University. Academic achievement was measured by a self reported grade point average of a 3.0 or higher. Data on the attitudes were collected by means of a survey using a 31 Likert-type items on a 5-point scale of 1-Strongly Agree to 5-Strongly Disagree. Data analysis suggests that selected African American students generally enter college prepared academically. It was also reported that self determination and self efficacy played a major part in the academic achievement of selected African American students.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is dedicated to my boss, Tina, who has supported me throughout my college career. Thank you for your words of encouragement and for being there for me in my times of need. Without you, I would not have had the opportunity to pursue a Master’s degree. Working with you has made me a better person and student. Words cannot express my gratitude and appreciation.

Special thanks go to all my friends, in particular Marissa and Tevin. I could not have gotten this study done without them. They are my closest friends and I love them dearly. They have provided me with the motivation needed to get through many troubling times and provided me with the necessary distractions when I felt overwhelmed. They have been there to hear me whine and complain and their help, support, and dedication to me went a long way and are much appreciated. And to my family, Moe and Uncle Tee, who have supported me throughout my undergraduate and graduate years.

Many thanks go to Dr. Burton Sisco, who helped me throughout these past two years. I went to his office on many occasions for help and he never turned me away, his door was always open and he never hesitated to explain things to me more than once. He expected a lot, but never gave me more than I could handle. His compassion, patience, and dedication to me was very appreciated.

Last but not least, a huge thank you to the students that participated in this study. Without their help and willingness to participate, I could not have completed this study.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ii
Appendixes v
List of Tables vi

CHAPTER PAGE

I. Introduction 1
   Statement of the Problem 2
   Purpose of the Study 3
   Significance of the Study 3
   Assumptions and Limitations 3
   Operational Definitions 4
   Research Questions 5
   Overview of the Study 5

II. Review of the Literature 7
   History of Segregation in Education 7
   African American Enrollment in Higher Education 10
   Family Influences on African American Students 12
   Motivational Influences on African American Students 14
   Other Influences on African American Students 15
   Summary of the Literature Review 16
APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter 48
Appendix B: Email Sent Out to Participants/Consent 50
Appendix C: Survey Instrument 52
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Selected Demographics</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Grade Point Average</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Attitudes Toward the Five Identified Factors</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Rowan University Students’ Attitudes Survey</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Correlation Between Academic Achievement and Identified Factors</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

Introduction

The first college to be established in the United States of America was Harvard College; now known as Harvard University (University of Miami, n.d.). When the university first opened its doors in 1636, only nine students attended. Since then, the enrollment rate of Harvard University jumped from nine to more than 18,000 degree candidates, including undergraduates and students in 10 principal academic units (The Harvard Guide, 2007). When American colleges first began, they were principally for white men; women were not allowed to receive an education, especially people of color. However in 1833, when Oberlin College opened its doors, it proposed to admit males, females, and blacks a precedent unheard of in the English speaking world. By the 1880s, the myth that women should or could not be educated faded with over 30% of all American colleges and universities admitting women (Ogden, 2004).

Many stories have been researched about how women and people of color were initially excluded from attending institutions of higher education, thus leaving them behind. Today, both women and African Americans have changed the course of history; however, the lack of academic success among African American students continues to have long term deleterious effects on African American youth and families (Nebbitt, Lomb, LaPoint, & Bryant, 2009).
Although there have been some signs of improvement, research suggests that African Americans have not advanced at comparable rates as their white counterparts. Research is needed to investigate the reasoning why African Americans fail to keep up pace in academic performance and success in higher education.

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to identify the internal and external factors that influenced African American students’ academic success. The education of African Americans and some other minorities lags behind those of other United States ethnic groups (Wikipedia, n.d.). Many African American students come from high schools and communities where very little emphasis is put on education. When they come to college, they are often unprepared and struggle with the school work. While the number of African Americans obtaining a Bachelors degree is on the rise, it is still less that the percentage of whites. In 2007, 72.2% of degrees distributed were earned by white people and 9.6% were earned by black people as compared to 6.5% in 1981 (United States Census Bureau, n.d.).

There are many factors that contribute to the poor academic performance of African American students in higher education. These factors include both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Research suggests that the problem of adjustment to college life for African American students is frequently attributed to extrinsic factors (Vodanovich, Watt, & Piotrowski, 1997). Research is needed to determine what factors such as family relationships, self determination, and self efficacy have the greatest impact on the performance of African American students in higher education.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to look at the factors that influenced African American students’ academic performance in college. Some of the factors that have been identified through previous research include school preparation, self-determination, financing, mentoring, academic advising, and self-efficacy. The study investigated the attitudes of selected African American college students about the impact these factors had on their academic performance at Rowan University and whether these factors had a significant relationship on academic achievement.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it brings to the surface the many different factors that influence African American college students’ academic success. Because the students in this study remained anonymous, they may have spoken more candidly about personal experiences without reservation. By completing this study, college administrators may be able to determine which factors impact academic achievement that could lead to helping African American students’ to succeed in higher education.

Assumptions and Limitations

The participants in this study were chosen randomly out of list of students provided by the Office of Mentoring. The data collected were based exclusively on the African American students attending Rowan University during the Spring 2010 semester. It is assumed that the factors mentioned previously had a significant relationship with academic achievement. It is also assumed that the subjects that choose to participate in the study acknowledged that there are various factors that contributed to their academic achievement. The participants were expected to answer all questions on the survey.
truthfully; however, it was difficult for me as researcher to determine whether all participants provided honest answers. Because I had a relationship and am familiar with the majority of the African American population at Rowan University, some biases may occur. In addition, Rowan University only makes up a small portion of the entire higher education system, so the campus population may not be well representative of other higher education institutions. This is a topic that I feel strongly about which creates the potential for researcher bias.

Operational Definitions

1. Academic Achievement: Term used to describe a students' positive academic performance of maintaining a 3.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale which is above the university’s minimum requirement of 2.5.

2. Administrators: Faculty and staff members currently working on Rowan University’s campus during the Spring 2010 semester. These include faculty, secretaries, directors, and assistant directors.

3. African American: Any person of color who affiliates themselves with the African American community. They can be of Jamaican, Haitian, or African decent. No matter the nationality, they are perceived as being black.


5. Extrinsic Motivation: Factors external to individuals and unrelated to the task they are performing (i.e. money, racism, poor academic advising, etc.).
6. Intrinsic Motivation: Most associated with high educational achievement. Internal desires to perform a particular task because it gives a person pleasure or it develops a particular skill.

7. Self-efficacy: Term used to describe students’ beliefs about their ability to successfully perform a given task such as class work, test, or homework.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the attitudes of selected African American students toward the identified factors of school preparation, self determination, financing, mentoring, academic advising, and self efficacy?

2. Which factor did the students report as having the greatest impact on their academic performance at Rowan University?

3. Is there a significant relationship between academic success and the attitudes of selected African American students toward the identified factors of school preparation, self determination, financing, mentoring, academic advising, and self efficacy?

Overview of the Study

Chapter II provides a brief review of the literature related to this study. This section begins with a brief history of segregation in the school system and why African Americans were not allowed to receive an education and then looks at how higher education evolved from the days of segregation to now.

Chapter III describes how the study was conducted. This includes where the study was conducted, the population and sample selection, the type of data collection
used, and whether the instrumentation was valid and reliable. It also gives insight on the procedures used to gather the data and how the data were analyzed.

Chapter IV provides the findings of the study. It addresses the research questions presented in chapter I arranged in table and narrative form.

Finally, chapter V discusses the major findings in the study. It provides a summary of the study as well as recommendations for practice and further research.
CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

History of Segregation in Education

There was a time when laws were enforced to keep blacks from being equal. Many Christian ministers and theologians taught that Whites were the chosen people, Blacks were cursed to be servants, and God supported racial segregation. They believed that Blacks were innately intellectually and culturally inferior to Whites (Pilgrim, 2000), and that they were lazy and ignorant. Prior to the Civil War, the institution of slavery dictated the United States policy toward black Americans and prescribed the norms and social values which specified “appropriate” and “inappropriate” black behavior (Thomas, 1981). During the course of history in the U.S., African Americans were always discriminated against. Most worked as laborers and did no attend school, especially college. Some southern whites, both educated and non-educated believed that any form of education was injury to the Negro race and that they should only have access to the lowest forms of labor (Foster, Wechsler, Goodchild, & Eisenmann, 1997).

In 1849 in Pennsylvania, African Americans created the first of their own institutions, Avery College, which began secondary studies (Foster, et al., 1997). Just five years later, Presbyterians began collegiate studies for African Americans at Lincoln University and two years after that the Methodists opened Wilberforce University.

The landmark case Plessy vs. Ferguson laid out the law that places could be separate as long as they were equal. In this case, a man named Homer Plessy boarded a
car of the East Louisiana Railroad that was designated by whites for use by white patrons only. Although Plessy was one-eighth black and seven-eighths white, under Louisiana state law he was classified as an African-American, and thus required to sit in the "colored" car. When Plessy refused to leave the white car and move to the colored car, he was arrested and jailed. He argued that the East Louisiana Railroad had denied him his constitutional rights under the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution. This case provided an impetus for further segregation laws.

Although black colleges were established to educate Black people, they were still separate from the rest of society. This was known as "separate but equal," but on the contrary they were not so equal. Black colleges did not receive the same resources as predominantly white institutions received, nor did they receive any state and federal support, and technical assistance (Thomas, 1981). There were numerous legal cases brought against colleges by people claiming that they were being discriminated against when applying for school. One case in particular dates back to 1935 when a student attempted to enter the University of Maryland's segregated school of law and was denied admission. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed suit stating that the University of Maryland was discriminating against the student and violated his Fourteenth Amendment rights (Thomas, 1981). That following year, the court ordered the University of Maryland to admit the student to its law school. Following the ruling, many more cases were filed. It was then that the court's decided that if states did not provide educational facilities for blacks equivalent to those provided for whites, then blacks had to be admitted to white institutions (Thomas, 1981).
Also during this time, black children attended separate schools from white children. It was not until the Supreme Court case of Brown vs. Board of Education, that overruled the Plessy vs. Ferguson case that Blacks were permitted to attend schools with Whites. Brown vs. Board of Education was actually four cases combined into one; Davis vs. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Briggs vs. Elliott, Gebhart vs. Belton, and Bolling vs. Sharpe. All of these cases dealt with the constitutionality of segregation in the public school system. The defendants argued that all the schools were separate, but “equal.” While the separate was carried out, the equal was not. Many schools were under funded and did not receive the same amount of care as white schools. The U. S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal (Wikipedia). Segregation of students in public schools violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution (Brown Foundation, 2004). This victory paved the way for integration and the civil rights movement.

As the years went on, more and more Black people wanted to receive an education. During this time, there were two initiatives that drastically changed the number of participants who attended college, the first was the GI Bill, which enabled thousands of African American veterans to attend college, and the second was the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Freeman, 1998). Because of this act, more African Americans had an increased opportunity to attend Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Nevertheless, even with this act, African Americans still faced many challenges when applying to universities. After many cases, the U. S. Supreme Court in 1973 ruled that states had to dismantle their dual system of higher education for black and whites (Foster et al., 1997).
African American Enrollment in Higher Education

The struggle for African Americans to attend institutions of higher education has been a long battle. Very few African Americans could read or write thus creating a need and a want to educate Black people. As a result, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were created. HBCUs originated out of a social system that condoned slavery until 1865 (Freeman, 1998) and were located mainly in the southern portion of the United States. Until the midpoint of the 20th century, 90% of the African American students enrolled in higher education in this country were educated in HBCUs (Kim & Conrad, 2006). This gave many African Americans the opportunity to obtain a higher education degree. By the 1930s, approximately 19,000 students were enrolled in black colleges and the rate of illiteracy among African Americans was reduced from 60% in 1895 to 25% percent in 1930 (Thomas, 1981). That decrease was astounding and showed how African American people could succeed academically. Today, there are over 100 HBCUs and many are not only located in the south but also located throughout the world. However, with this major decrease in illiteracy, the question still remains, why do African American students tend to have lower levels of academic achievement?

The number of African Americans attending PWIs drastically changed because of the G.I. Bill and the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Freeman, 1998). Although these legislative initiatives opened the doors for many African Americans to attend predominantly white colleges and despite the steadily rising enrollment rates in U.S. postsecondary institutions, weak academic performance and high dropout rates remain persistent problems among Black undergraduates (Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005)
African Americans attending PWIs have the tendency to migrate towards one another thus creating a community that is socially isolated. African Americans who experience a great deal of social isolation, are more likely to be dissatisfied with their school experience, and sadly, are subjected to subtle racism on campus (Johnston, 2006). Kenny and Hinderlie (2002) state that Blacks often experience feelings of alienation, exclusion, and institutional racism, which impacts persistence. Black students have been shown to experience considerable difficulty in making the adjustment to an environment that is culturally different, academically demanding, and socially alienating. As a result, black students often do not experience reasonable levels of academic success and college satisfaction on predominantly white campuses (Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991). Black colleges and universities succeed by providing an environment conducive to personal development without the level of conflict and isolation African Americans sometimes experience at many white institutions (Lucas, 1993).

Fries-Britt and Turner (2001), state that black students are spending energy trying to justify their existence on campus and thus missing out on the opportunity to learn and grow alongside students from various backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. Because much of the focus is on fitting in, trying to prove themselves, and worrying about what others think about them, Black students' grades sometime suffer or they drop out. Black students were most likely to leave college because of serious adjustment difficulties experienced during the transition from a familiar way of life to an unfamiliar environment (Haralson, 1996).

Thomas (1981) states that predominantly white institutions can expect to enroll a growing percentage of African American students in the future but declares that as time
goes on, this increase in enrollment will not happen in the same magnitude as in the past. He also states that as the total student pool becomes smaller and Blacks become a larger share of that pool due to higher birth rates, more and more institutions will look to blacks and other minorities as their "new market." The graduation rate of African American students is much higher at HBCUs than at PWIs. Although the success rate is higher at predominantly black colleges and universities, almost 73% of African American students attend predominantly white universities (Lucas, 1993).

Family Influences on African American Students

Many students entering college today are first-generation college students. Thirty-four percent of the nation’s four year institutions and 53% of students starting at two year college were first-generation students (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004). Because these students are the first to enter college in their family, they have no one to look up to or emulate. They are usually at a disadvantage as compared to those students whose parents graduated from college. According to Pascarella et al., first-generation college students fall into three categories. The first category compares first-generation college students to other college students and compared to their peers, first generation college students have a distinct disadvantage with respect to basic knowledge about postsecondary education such as cost and the application process, level of family income and support, educational degree expectations and plans, and academic preparation in high school. The second category describes the transition from high school to college. First-generation students have a more difficult time confronting all of the anxieties, dislocations, and difficulties of a new college student. Lastly, the third category examines personal persistence in college, degree attainment, and early career
labor market outcomes. Compared to students whose parents are college graduates, first generation students are more likely to leave a four-year institution at the end of the first year, are less likely to remain enrolled in a four year institution, and are less likely to graduate with a bachelor's degree.

Research on parental involvement suggests that families play a key role in students' school success. Family relationships, both economically and personally, are another factor that plays a significant part in students' academically succeeding. Studies suggest that family relationships have a profound impact on student learning (Herndon & Moore III, 2002). Research also shows that socioeconomic class continues to be a powerful predictor of academic success for American children indicating that the higher the socioeconomic status is the more likely a student will finish high school and attend college (Halle, Kurtz-Costes, & Mahoney, 1997). It is reported that parents may be involved in the academic lives of students at three levels: positive involvement, noninvolvement, and negative involvement. Positive involvement suggests that parents are actively engaged in their student's development and takes into account the student's individual interests and goals. Noninvolved parents usually take a hands-off approach to their student's academic goals and have no concerns for their student's future, and do not realize that the student seeks personal support from them. Lastly, those parents that are negatively involved actively participate in the student's academic development but do so based on their own desires and aspirations and not of the individual student (Herndon & Moore III, 2002). Students need positively involved parents because when they receive support for their own goals and interests, they are more likely to succeed. Studies conducted by Walker and Satterwhite (2002) on the effects that family has on students'
academic performance, contradict what Herndon and Moore III stated; they suggest that while family continues to be an a very important factor at the college level, the affect of family involvement on academic achievement is small.

Motivational Influences on African American Students

Students can be both extrinsically motivated and intrinsically motivated. Extrinsic motivation occurs when an individual behaves because of external influences and intrinsic motivation occurs when the person chooses to perform an act and the choice is free of external influences. Both motivations can be related to academic success. Intrinsic academic motivation involves engaging in academic behaviors for one's own sake; learning for the sake of learning. Intrinsic motivation has been linked to positive academic performance because students get more enjoyment out of academic work and have more satisfaction with school. Students who are more extrinsically motivated experience greater anxiety and have a poorer ability to cope with failures.

Arguments presented by McWhorter, an African American scholar, state that African American students do not try as hard as students from other ethnic groups because they believe they are the victims of discrimination (as cited in Cokley, 2003). McWhorter also argues that African American students who excel academically are viewed as trying to be White and distancing themselves from Black people.

Research shows that individuals that think well of themselves are believed to be more motivated to succeed. When individuals see themselves as academically and intellectually capable students, and when this idea is reinforced by teachers and family, it is believed that they are more likely to want to do well in school (Cokley, 2003).
Other Influences on African American Students

College students' come to college having to deal with a multitude of transitions; social, academic, and emotional all playing a significant role in their academic success. Although most college students successfully cope with these transitions and achieve academic success, many are less able to successfully manage these transitions and decide to leave higher education during or at the end of their freshman year (DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004). DeBerard et al. stated that an estimated 40% of college students will leave higher education without getting a degree and 75% leave within their first two years.

Often, the sophomore year is the most crucial year in a student's college career. During this time, students may become disengaged from academic life creating an adverse effect on their grades (Graunke & Woosley, 2005). The sophomore year is a time that most students receive the least amount of support from the university. Once this occurs, students may become disillusioned and start focusing on individual activities, making it is harder to reconnect with them. According to Graunke and Woosley (2005), this occurs because institutions feel as though they have succeeded in retaining students after the first year and attention must be directed to the next incoming cohort.

Financial aid is another influence on African American students' academic success and although the numbers of African American students entering college has increased, the need for financial assistance remains a critical problem. Because of this, many students have to work and are forced to attend colleges that accepted them as part-time students such as community colleges. Freeman (1981) argues that the extent to which financial aid is available to African American students likely influences their
selection of a higher education institution. Students are also forced to consider colleges that are closer to home rather than far away.

Summary of the Literature Review

Since the Brown vs. Board of Education case, schools have been integrated and more and more African Americans are attending Predominantly White Institutions. Issues about the enrollment rate of African Americans are something that many college administrators are addressing today. Some of these issues include, but are not limited to, the lack of support received by the family, not being able to financially afford an education, and the lack of role models at these institutions.

As higher education institutions continue progressing forward, the goal is to supply all students with the opportunity to succeed. Sometimes African American students put so much attention on proving their academic potential, they often have difficulty succeeding. Programs are being instituted to help alleviate some of the problems that African American students are facing. Many programs target high school students to try and teach them about the importance of obtaining a higher education degree. Rowan University's Dr. Harley E. Flack Mentoring Program is one program that is working to address some of these problems. For example, twice a month, this program goes to one of the local high schools and spends two hours talking to and engaging students on different topics about higher education. Some of these students just lack the resources needed or do not know about the proper way of obtaining the necessary information so that they can go to college. Student's are in need of someone to emulate and because many students are first generation students entering college, it is programs like these that offer students something to look up to.
With all of these different influences, more research is needed on African American students and the factors that influence their academic success and whether such factors have an impact on African Americans success in college.
CHAPTER III
Methodology

Context of the Study

The study was conducted at Rowan University. The university has two campuses; one located in Glassboro, New Jersey and one in Camden, New Jersey. For the purpose of this study, only students who attended the Glassboro campus during the 2009/10 academic school year were included. Rowan University is a selective, medium-sized public university located in southern New Jersey between Philadelphia and Atlantic City.

Today, Glassboro is the home of Rowan University with a population of approximately 19,000 residents. In 1923, Glassboro gained recognition when it became home of the New Jersey Normal School, later becoming Glassboro State College, and now Rowan University (The Borough of Glassboro, n.d.). In 1935, the State Board of Education allowed the normal school to begin granting college degrees, but it was not until the first degrees were awarded in 1937 that the school changed its name to New Jersey State Teachers College at Glassboro (Rowan University, n.d.).

Rowan University has an enrollment of approximately 11,000 students from the Mid-Atlantic States and 30 foreign countries (Rowan Fast Facts); 9,665 of them being undergraduate students with 20.2% of these students being minorities. Out of the 11,000 students, roughly 3,540 of them reside on Rowan University’s campus in residence halls and apartment complexes. According to the Office of Institutional Research and
Planning, approximately 1,034 (9.39%) Black students were enrolled as of the fall of 2009. That is an increase from last year’s number of 880.

Population and Sample Selection

The target population for this study was all African American students attending Rowan University during the 2009/10 academic year. The undergraduate student population at Rowan University is 9,665, approximately 835 identified as being African American. Approximately 208 students were randomly selected to participate in the study. These students consisted of freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students enrolled on the Glassboro, NJ campus.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in the study assessed the factors that influenced African American students’ experiences and academic performance at Rowan University. The format of the survey was one that was previously used by me in a previous study but was tailored to fit the current study. Some of the questions came from a study conducted by Walker and Satterwhite (2002). Walker and Satterwhite used an 80-item questionnaire to assess family and demographic variables as well as academic performance.

The survey instrument was changed significantly for this study to better fit the objectives of the research questions. The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of selected African American students about the factors that influenced their experience at Rowan University and what they felt was the greatest impact on their academic achievement.

The survey (Appendix C) consisted of two parts: background information and the relevance that financing, role modeling, campus life, and family involvement had on
African American students' academic performance. The first section collected demographic information such as sex, age, year, enrollment status, cumulative grade point average, and whether the subjects self-identified as being African American. The second section asked subjects to rank 31 statements on a five point Likert scale, by assessing their attitudes on the factors that influenced their academic achievement. A Likert scale is a self-reporting format in which an individual responds to a series of statements by indicating the extent of agreement. The five point scale measured the students' responses based on the following: 5-Strongly Agree, 4-Agree, 3-Neutral/No Opinion, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree. To determine face validity, the researcher had her thesis advisor examine the survey for its readability and efficacy. A reliability analysis was conducted on the 31 Likert scale items to gauge internal consistency; Cronbach's Alpha equaled .517, indicating a moderate level of internal consistency.

Before the study was conducted, approval by the Rowan University Institutional Research Board (IRB) was needed. Once the research method was approved by the university, surveys were prepared for distribution.

Data Collection

After receiving approval from the Rowan University Institutional Review Board (Appendix A) and the supervising professor, I distributed the survey materials to the students via email and hand delivery. The students were also provided with a brief introduction of the study and a description of the instrument. Students were instructed that participation in the survey was completely voluntary and at any time they could opt out of participating. They were also informed that all responses would remain confidential.
Students that decided to participate in this study were African American students currently enrolled at Rowan University during the 2009/10 academic year. Assistance was sought from the staff of the Harley E. Flack Mentoring Program in distributing the surveys to try to obtain a higher return rate. On March 5, 2010, 208 surveys were distributed via email (Appendix B) and hand delivered to the selected African-American population at Rowan University. The email included a brief introduction to the research study, instructions on how to complete the survey, and the survey instrument. I collected the surveys via email and in person. Few surveys were returned to me and after determining that this would not be enough to do a valid computation of the data, a follow-up email was then sent out. I collected an additional 20 surveys for a total response rate of 49%.

Data Analysis

The independent variables in this study included gender, race, whether the student resides on campus, grade point average, current year at Rowan, and enrollment status. Information for these variables was collected in the first part of the survey. The dependent variables were the attitudes and views that the students' had about different factors that may have had an influence on their academic success at Rowan University. Variations in students' attitudes were explored based on each of the independent variables using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) computer software. The impact of the independent variable, years at Rowan and grade point average, on the dependent variables was studied using cross-tabular analysis obtained through SPSS. Correlations (Pearson product-moment calculations) and descriptive statistics (frequency
distribution, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used to examine the data in regard to the research questions.
CHAPTER IV
Findings

Profile of the Sample

The subjects for this study were selected randomly amongst a group of African American students at Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ, in March 2010. Of the 208 surveys distributed, 101 completed surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 49%. There were 60 females (59.4%) and 41 males (40.6%). The subjects were a variety of college students ranging from freshman to graduate level, with the majority being seniors (27%), followed by juniors (25.7), freshman (23.8), and sophomore (20.8). More than half of the subjects (95%) were enrolled as full-time students at the time of the study. Almost half of the respondents (61%) were freshman and seniors at the University (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>( f )</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selected Demographics \((N=101)\)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Housing</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>73</th>
<th>72.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment Status</th>
<th>Full-Time</th>
<th>95</th>
<th>94.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Classification</th>
<th>Freshman</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>23.8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cumulative GPA</th>
<th>Below 2.0</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>3.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.01-2.9</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.0-3.6</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.7-4.0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The target population was African American students and because the majority of students that participate in this program are African American, all respondents, except for
eight, reported having self-identified as being black. Table 4.2 describes the ethnic composition of the subjects surveyed.

Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>N=101, M=1.22, SD=.820</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White/Non-Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 contains information on the grade point average of the subjects. Of the 101 respondents, 60 (59.4%) reported having a grade point average of 3.0 or higher with 16 (15.8%) reported having a G.P.A. between 3.7-4.0.

Table 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Point Average (N=101)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G.P.A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below a 2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.01-2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25
Analysis of the Data

Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of selected African American students toward the identified factors of school preparation, self determination, financing, mentoring, academic advising, and self efficacy?

An overall look at the attitudes students had toward the five identified factors indicates that African American students are generally prepared for college. Table 4.4 provides data on the participant’s attitudes towards school preparation, self determination, financing, mentoring, academic advising, and self efficacy in regards to their academic performance. Each survey statement is listed separately along with the mean, standard deviation, frequency (f) and percentage (%). The participants were given the option to respond by answering: "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral/No Opinion," "Disagree," or "Strongly Disagree."

One of the highest strongly agreed or agreed response was 74% to the statement “My parents expected me to attend college.” Seventy-three percent strongly agreed or agreed to the statement “I have a close relationship with my parents.” Fifty-eight percent of participants strongly agreed or agreed that their academic courses in high school prepared them for college prior to attending Rowan University and 47% stated that their high school hosted college preparatory workshops and information sessions on a regular basis. Almost half of the subjects reported that they have to work to support their college
education (49%). With respect to self-determination and self-efficacy, a majority of the participants reported working hard to do well in school. Seventy-four percent either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I work hard so that I can do well in school,” followed by 56% stating that they always put their school work first. Forty-five percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “I need someone to motivate me to go to class or to do my class work,” while 25% of the respondents remained neutral and 23% strongly disagreed with the statement “I always put my school work first.”

Lastly, in responding to their perception about academic advising at Rowan University from the Educational Opportunity Fund/Maximizing Academic Potential Office, students for the most part were neutral or had no opinion on the topic (43%), while 41% agreed that the advising they received from EOF/MAP was helpful.

Table 4.4

**Attitudes Toward the Five Identified Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral/ No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$f$</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$f$</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$f$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My subjects in high school prepared me for college.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n = 99$, $M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.417$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have to work to support my college education.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n = 100$, $M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.383$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 2: Which factor did the students report as having the greatest impact on their academic achievement at Rowan University?

Table 4.5 provides information regarding what the students reported as having the greatest impact on academic achievement at Rowan University. The table shows, in
order by highest level of agreement, what each student reported in each category. Each
survey statement is listed individually along with the mean, standard deviation, frequency
(f) and percentage (%). The participants were given the option to respond by answering:
Students reported family relationships as having the greatest impact on their academic
achievement.

Table 4.5

Rowan University Students’ Attitudes Survey
Strongly Agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral/no opinion=3, Disagree=2, Strongly Disagree=1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral No Opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have no problem interacting with students from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds.  
\(n=99, M=4.29, SD=.884\)

| 50  | 49.5 | 34   | 33.7 | 10  | 9.9 | 4   | 4.0 | 1   | 1.0 |

My parents expected me to attend college.  
\(n=99, M=4.10, SD=1.027\)

| 50  | 49.5 | 25   | 24.8 | 15  | 14.9| 8   | 7.9 | 1   | 1.0 |

I work hard so that I can do well in school.  
\(n=99, M=4.07, SD=.824\)

| 34  | 33.7 | 41   | 40.6 | 21  | 20.8| 3   | 3.0 | -   | -   |

I have a close relationship with my family.  
\(n=100, M=4.0, SD=1.110\)

| 42  | 41.6 | 32   | 31.7 | 13  | 12.9| 10  | 9.9 | 3   | 3.0 |
Student services and resources are available to all students regardless of race. 
\( n=98, M=4.29, SD=3.086 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>33</th>
<th>32.7</th>
<th>41</th>
<th>40.6</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>12.9</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>8.9</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I feel that there are mentors at Rowan who support me. 
\( n=99, M=3.85, SD=.813 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>22</th>
<th>21.8</th>
<th>44</th>
<th>43.6</th>
<th>29</th>
<th>28.7</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4.0</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

There are faculty and staff that I can relate to at Rowan University. 
\( n=98, M=3.80, SD=.908 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>21</th>
<th>20.8</th>
<th>45</th>
<th>44.6</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>24.8</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>5.0</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Rowan University is a caring community. 
\( n=99, M=3.78, SD=.722 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>15</th>
<th>14.9</th>
<th>49</th>
<th>48.5</th>
<th>33</th>
<th>32.7</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2.0</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

My experiences with faculty indicate that they are unaffected by my skin color. 
\( n=100, M=3.83, SD=1.055 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>29</th>
<th>28.7</th>
<th>39</th>
<th>38.6</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>22.8</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4.0</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>5.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

My academic subjects in high school prepared me for college. 
\( n=99, M=3.51, SD=1.417 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>17</th>
<th>16.8</th>
<th>42</th>
<th>41.6</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>11.9</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>9.8</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>6.9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I am confident in Rowan’s ability to respond effectively to incidents of racial and ethnic harassment against Black students. 
\( n=99, M=3.68, SD=.806 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>15</th>
<th>14.9</th>
<th>43</th>
<th>42.6</th>
<th>35</th>
<th>34.7</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5.9</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Limitations are not imposed upon me because of my race. 
\( n=97, M=3.90, SD=3.193 \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>23</th>
<th>22.8</th>
<th>34</th>
<th>33.7</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>19.8</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>14.9</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

30
I always put my school work first.  
\[ n=99, \, M=3.59, \, SD=1.107 \]

The lack of diversity in the cafeteria does not bother me when I eat.  
\[ n=98, \, M=3.43, \, SD=1.10 \]

I have to work to support my college education.  
\[ n=100, \, M=3.13, \, SD=1.383 \]

My high school often hosted college prep workshops and information fairs.  
\[ n=97, \, M=3.81, \, SD=5.380 \]

I spend most of my time with students from a different ethnicity than my own.  
\[ n=98, \, M=3.74, \, SD=5.34 \]

I often get side tracked in class.  
\[ n=99, \, M=3.22, \, SD=1.16 \]

As a Black student I do not feel socially isolated on campus.  
\[ n=97, \, M=3.78, \, SD=3.12 \]

The presence of EOF/MAP brings me social and academic comfort.  
\[ n=98, \, M=3.47, \, SD=.987 \]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not need mentors to succeed academically.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student services and resources are available based on my ethnicity.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOF/MAP advising is helpful.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need someone to motivate me to go to class or do my class work.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that sometimes negative remarks about Blacks occur in class.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not feel connected to the campus.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If negative remarks about Blacks are made by students in class, they go unchallenged by most course instructors.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My place of residence on campus is uncomfortable.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations are imposed upon me because of my race.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=99, M=3.28, SD=1.021

 Student services and resources are available based on my ethnicity.
 n=99, M=3.37, SD=.864

 EOF/MAP advising is helpful.
 n=98, M=3.41, SD=.972

 I need someone to motivate me to go to class or do my class work.
 n=99, M=2.80, SD=1.125

 I feel that sometimes negative remarks about Blacks occur in class.
 n=100, M=2.95, SD=2.231

 I do not feel connected to the campus.
 n=98, M=2.73, SD=2.29

 If negative remarks about Blacks are made by students in class, they go unchallenged by most course instructors.
 n=99, M=3.03, SD=1.00

 My place of residence on campus is uncomfortable.
 n=97, M=2.55, SD=1.216

 Limitations are imposed upon me because of my race.
 n=99, M=2.64, SD=1.120
My experiences with faculty indicate that they are affected by my skin color. 
\( n=98, M=2.84, SD=4.352 \)

As a Black student I feel socially isolated on campus. 
\( n=98, M=2.71, SD=.995 \)

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between academic success and the attitudes of selected African American students toward the identified factors of school preparation, self-determination, financing, mentoring, academic advising, and self-efficacy?

A Pearson product moment was calculated to see if there were any significant relationships between students’ grade point average and the six identified factors that influenced their academic success. Table 4.6 represents the Pearson correlations of the selected factors in relation to academic achievement. Several survey statements showed a significant correlation. Students who reported having a grade point average of 3.0 or higher reported having to work hard to do well in school. There was no significant correlation between grade point average and family relationships. The relationship between academic achievement and the statement “I work hard so that I can do well in school” is direct and moderate (Pearson \( r = .338 \)). All the variables listed in Table 4.6, according to the Pearson \( r \) correlation coefficient, have a positive low level of strength of association in relation to one another.
Table 4.6

*Correlation Between Academic Achievement and Identified Factors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>( f )</th>
<th>( r )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I work hard so that I can do well in school.</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>.338**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are faculty and staff that I can relate to at Rowan.</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>.214*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always put my schoolwork first.</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>.298**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic subjects in high school prepared me for college.</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>.241*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*
CHAPTER V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

This study investigated the attitudes of selected African American students at Rowan University and the factors that influenced their academic achievement. The subjects in this study were Black, college aged students (freshman, sophomore, juniors, seniors, and graduate students) ages 18 and older attending Rowan University in the Spring 2010 semester. The factors investigated included family relationships, personal motivation, comfort on campus, and college preparation.

A two-part survey, consisting of consent message and Likert-scale statements, were distributed to 208 students. The first part of the survey collected demographic data such as ethnicity, college classification, and grade point average. The second part was comprised of 31 Likert-scale items regarding the attitudes of the students toward the factors that influenced their academic achievement. Two hundred and eight surveys were prepared for distribution with 101 students completing the survey, yielding a return rate of 49%.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data from the completed surveys. Differences in the students' attitudes toward the factors that influenced their academic success were investigated using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software. SPSS was used to calculate Pearson product-moment correlations and descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, percentages, and standard
deviations. Of all the respondents, 74% reported that they had a close relationship with their family. Forty percent needed to work to support their college education. Fifty-nine percent believed that their high school academic subjects prepared them for college.

Discussion of the Findings

Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of selected African American students toward the identified factors of school preparation, self determination, financing, mentoring, academic advising, and self efficacy?

After reviewing data from the surveys, I found that students overall had positive attitudes toward school preparation, self determination, financing, mentoring, academic advising, and self efficacy.

Seventy-four percent of the students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I work hard so that I can do well in school.” Furthermore, 74% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “My parents expected me to attend college.” Seventy-three percent strongly agreed or agreed to the statement “I have a close relationship with my parents.” In addition, 58% agreed or strongly agreed that their academic courses in high school prepared them for college and 47% stated that their high school hosted college preparatory workshops and information sessions on a regular basis. Almost half of the subjects reported that they had to work to support their college education (49%). Research illustrates that all of these factors are present at colleges and universities. Zajacova et al. states that academic self-efficacy has been consistently shown to predict persistence in college and that it is positively associated with grades in college (2005). When students believe that they have the ability to effectively perform the assigned task they are more likely to do well in school. According to Pajares (2001), self efficacy has
been demonstrated to influence the academic persistence necessary to maintain high academic achievement. Students who believe they are capable of performing academic tasks persist longer than students who doubt their learning capabilities.

With increased self efficacy comes enhanced intrinsic motivation. A student’s motivation can either be intrinsic; whether they do it for personal reasons such as interest or enjoyment, or extrinsic; as a means to an end, to get the qualification, or to be admired. Self determination theory suggests that the absence of either one results in lack of motivation to learn (Guiffrida, 2006).

Research Question 2: Which factor did the students report as having the greatest impact on their academic achievement at Rowan University?

According to the data, respondents who reported having a grade point average of 3.0 or higher reported family support (74%), college preparation (57%) and financing (50%) as having the greatest impact on their academic achievement. Studies suggest that family relationships have a profound effect on student learning (Herndon & Moore III, 2002). Research also shows that socioeconomic class continues to be a powerful predictor of academic success for American children showing that the higher the socioeconomic status the more likely they will finish high school and attend college (Halle, Kurtz-Costes, & Mahoney, 1997). Students that come from families with low socioeconomic statuses will more than likely have to work to support their college education which can be the source of added stress in addition to the pressure of their school work.

Student development theorist Arthur Chickering in his seven vectors of student development suggests that a student’s development in the college setting can have an
affect emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually (as cited in De Larrosa, 2000). Chickering’s seven vectors include developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. According to The University of Texas at Dallas (n.d.), Chickering’s theory states that progress through the first three vectors simultaneously occur during the freshman and sophomore year. Students go through vector four during their sophomore and junior years and during their junior and senior years students progress simultaneously through vectors five, six, and seven. Students in this study who reported family support or relationships as having the greatest impact on their academic achievement maybe stuck in Chickering’s third vector “moving through autonomy toward interdependence.” Autonomy is dependence on others, while interdependence is dependence on one’s self. According to De Larrosa (2000), the transition from autonomy toward interdependence requires emotional and instrumental interdependence. Emotional interdependence occurs when there is separation from support groups such as one’s parents. In order for students to strive for their own goals and express their own opinions they must, of their own free will, accept to lose the support groups. Although the students in this study may possibly be in this vector, it does not necessarily mean that the students that reported family support or relationships as important are in their freshman or sophomore year because Chickering’s theory allows retreat backwards, revisiting previous vectors, and working through and changing them again.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between academic success and the attitudes of selected African American students toward the identified
factors of school preparation, self determination, financing, mentoring, academic advising, and self efficacy?

The relationship between academic achievement and the attitudes of selected participants toward the identified factors of school preparation, self determination, financing, mentoring, academic advising, and self efficacy was significant. The participants reported having a close relationship with their family. These findings support previous studies conducted separately by Johnston (2006) and Herndon and Moore III (2002) when they stated that family relationships have profound impact on student learning. Herndon and Moore III (2002) also state that students need positively involved parents because when they receive support for their own goals and interests, they are more likely to succeed since it is something that they want to do.

Studies also show that Black students are in need of a person to turn too for advice and guidance (Sedlacek, 1999). Contrary to what Sedlacek stated about the importance of advice and guidance toward the academic success of students, many participants reported not needing mentors to succeed in college. Research question three was analyzed using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to determine if there was a significant relationship between the responses of the survey items regarding the attitudes of the selected participant's and the selected variables.

This study found a moderate correlation between academic achievement and the attitudes of participants on self determination ($r = .338$). This confirms the research that intrinsic motivation is linked to positive academic performance. Because intrinsic motivation comes from within, students are usually determined to succeed for their own sake. This study also found a significant moderate correlation between school
preparation and grade point average \((r = .241)\), and self-efficacy and academic achievement \((r = .298)\). These findings support research conducted by Cokley (2003) that individuals who think well of themselves are more likely to want to do well in school.

Conclusions

The results of this study generally confirmed some of the findings of previous related studies in that family relationships do play a significant role in students' academic achievement. Overall, the selected students reported that they work hard to maintain their grade point average and those they are comfortable on the campus of Rowan University. An institution's capacity to reach out and integrate students into college academic and social life is critical to student retention and dropout prevention. On-campus support, including relationships with classmates and faculty, self determination and self efficacy, contributes to academic success, social satisfaction, and college completion. According to the data there were significant relationships between academic achievement (self-reported grade point average of 3.0 or higher) and self determination and self efficacy. Prior research (Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991; Herndon & Moore III, 2002; Johnston, 2006; Kenny & Hinderlie, 2002), suggest that there are numerous factors that contribute to academic achievement of African American students at colleges and universities. Although family support does not affect academic achievement directly, the presence of the family on the college level is significant, similar to what was previously discussed by Walker and Satterwhite (2002). This implies that African-American students view family support as very significant to their college career at Rowan University. It can be concluded that no one factor has more of an influence than the other.
The findings suggest that all the factors, school preparation, self determination, financing, mentoring, academic advising, and self efficacy, all play a part in the students’ academic achievement at Rowan University.

Recommendations for Practice

Based upon the findings and conclusions of the study, the following suggestions are presented:

1. Students should be encouraged to seek out mentoring when entering college for assistance in helping them academically succeed.

2. Have programs at Rowan University that encourage family involvement because studies show that family relationships have profound impact on student learning.

3. Faculty and administrators should take a more active role in African American students learning and be more encouraging.

4. Rowan University should offer more opportunities for scholarships to help the students that are financially struggling.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based upon the findings and conclusions of the study, the following suggestions are presented:

1. Further studies should be conducted with larger populations to confirm the findings in this study.

2. An additional study should be conducted to replicate this study, but expand the scope to include more information concerning family involvement, financial stability, and the importance of mentors during the undergraduate years.
3. A study could be conducted interviewing students to go more in-depth on various issues such as family relationships and how this influences their academic achievement. Also, go more in-depth about a student’s personal motivation to achieve.

4. A study could be conducted including both Black and White students to see if there are any similarities amongst the groups on how factors influence their academic achievement.

5. A longitudinal study should be conducted to follow the students over a period of time to distinguish whether there is a significant change in the factors or influences that impact African American students throughout their college career.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter
Takeyda Williams
201 Mullica Hill Road
Box 1200, Student Center
Rowan University
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Dear Takeyda Williams:

In accordance with the University’s IRB policies and 45 CFR 46, the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to inform you that the Rowan University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your project:

IRB application number: 2010-110

Project Title: The Impact of Internal and External Factors on the Academic Success of Selected African American Students

In accordance with federal law, this approval is effective for one calendar year from the date of this letter. If your research project extends beyond that date or if you need to make significant modifications to your study, you must notify the IRB immediately. Please reference the above-cited IRB application number in any future communications with our office regarding this research.

Please retain copies of consent forms for this research for three years after completion of the research.

If, during your research, you encounter any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects, you must report this immediately to Dr. Harriet Hartman (hartman@rowan.edu or call 856-256-4500, ext. 3787) or contact Dr. Gautam Pillay, Associate Provost for Research (pillay@rowan.edu or call 856-256-5150).

If you have any administrative questions, please contact Karen Heiser (heiser@rowan.edu or 856-256-5150).

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Harriet Hartman, Ph.D.
Chair, Rowan University IRB

c: Burton Sisco, Educational Leadership, Education Hall

Rowan University
January 27, 2010
APPENDIX B

Email Sent Out to Participants/Consent
Dear Student:

I am asking you to help me by taking part in a study that tries to understand the internal and external factors that influence students' academic achievement. The survey is ANONYMOUS. Please be assured that I am not interested in linking answers to a person's identity or that I am targeting you specifically to participate in this research project. You have been randomly chosen out of convenience. In order to maintain anonymity, we are not asking you to reveal any identifying information such as your name.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete if you decide to participate. Attached is the survey (there are two pages, approx. 30 questions) simply highlight your answer. I hope that you decide to complete as it is a requirement in order for me to graduate. Thank you again for your time.
APPENDIX C

Survey Instrument
ROWAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTION SURVEY

While your participation in this survey is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the question herein, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate, please understand that all responses are strictly anonymous and no personally identifiable information is being requested. Your completion of this survey constitutes informed consent and your willingness to participate. If you are younger than 18 years of age, please disregard this survey. Any questions please contact Tatyana Williams at (609) 706-8540 or willia27@students.rowan.edu or my advisor, Dr. Burton Sisco at (856) 256-4500, ext. 3717 or Sisco@rowan.edu.

1. SEX
   ( ) Male
   ( ) Female

2. RACE
   ( ) African American
   ( ) American Indian
   ( ) Asian or Pacific Islander
   ( ) White, Non-Hispanic
   ( ) Hispanic
   ( ) Other

3. DO YOU RESIDE ON CAMPUS
   ( ) Yes
   ( ) No

4. STUDENT ENROLLMENT STATUS
   ( ) Full-time
   ( ) Part-time

5. WHAT YEAR ARE YOU
   ( ) Freshman
   ( ) Sophomore
   ( ) Junior
   ( ) Senior
   ( ) Graduate Student

6. What is your cumulative GPA
   ( ) Below a 2.0
   ( ) 2.01-2.9
   ( ) 3.0-3.6
   ( ) 3.7-4.0
### ROWAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTION SURVEY

For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits your judgment of whether you agree or not for each question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description/Identification of Survey Item</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. My academic subjects in high school prepared me college.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have to work to support my college education.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My parents expected me to attend college.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have a close relationship with my family.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rowan University is a caring community.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I do not need mentors to succeed academically.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My experiences with faculty indicate that they are unaffected by my skin color.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel that sometimes negative remarks about Blacks occur in class.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My high school often hosted college prep workshops and information fairs.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am confident in the Rowan’s ability to respond effectively to incidents of racial and ethnic harassment against Black students.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Student services and resources are available based on my ethnicity.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Limitations are imposed upon me because of my race.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My place of residence on campus is uncomfortable.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I do not feel connected to the campus.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Student services and resources are available to all students regardless of race.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. As a Black student I feel socially isolated on campus.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I spend most of my time with students from a different ethnicity than my own.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The lack of diversity in the cafeteria does not bother me when I eat.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. My experiences with faculty indicate that they are affected by my skin color.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Limitations are not imposed upon me because of my race.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. EOF/MAP advising is helpful.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. The presence of EOF/MAP brings me social and academic comfort.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description/Identification of Survey Item</td>
<td>Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I always put my school work first.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I feel that there are mentors at Rowan who support me.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. As a Black student I do not feel socially isolated on campus.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. There are faculty and staff that I can relate to at Rowan University.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. If negative remarks about Blacks are made by students in class, they go unchallenged by most course instructors.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I have no problem interacting with students from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I often get side tracked in class.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. I need someone to motivate me to go to class or do my classwork.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. I work hard so that I can do well in school.</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>