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RESEARCH STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: EDUCATING MULTICULTURAL COLLEGE STUDENTS-Ch 1

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Chapter One
African American and Latino First-Generation Students: Implications for Teachers, School Counselors, University Officials, Parents, and Students

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Introduction

In many high schools across the United States, students from various backgrounds and school settings aspire to attend college. Unfortunately, many never achieve this goal. Students of color (e.g., African American and Latino) and those students who come from low-income backgrounds often find themselves in this predicament (Bell, Rowan-Kenyon, and Perna, 2009; Choy, Horn, Nuñez, and Chen, 2000; Ishitani, 2003; Martinez and Klopott, 2005; Noeth and Wimberly, 2002), and, if they are successful in matriculating to college, these students are frequently the first in their families to ever achieve this accomplishment (Cho, Hudley, Lee, Barry, and Kelly, 2008; Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Noeth and Wimberly). Generally speaking, first-generation college students tend to have less access to family, friends, and mentors who are knowledgeable about college and the college-going process. They also frequently attend public schools, where three-quarters of the student population is comprised of ethnic minorities (Horn and Neville, 2006), with very few of these students who are academically prepared to go to college (Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin, and Allen, 2009; Perna et al., 2008; Reid and Moore, 2008).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the percentage of tenth graders across racial and ethnic groups who indicated that they aspired to attain a bachelor's degree or higher doubled from 40 percent in 1980 to 80 percent in 2002 (Roderick, Nagaoka, and Coca, 2009). Nonetheless, despite high

college aspirations and a rise in college enrollment rates, African American and Latino students still lag behind their white counterparts. In 2005, Solórzano, Villalpando, and Oseguera examined the educational pipeline among Latino students and found that, although their college enrollment has increased, attendance at two-year community colleges accounted for the growth. Further, the authors reviewed data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000) and found that, despite Latinos representing the largest ethnic/racial group in the United States, they had the poorest educational transition rates in comparison to African American, Native American, White, and Asian American students. Education researchers have identified the challenges that contribute to the disparities in college enrollment and attendance among first-generation African American and Latino students, such as poor academic preparation, lack of access to college counseling, and inadequate social capital (Engle, 2007; Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin, and Allen, 2009; Perna et al., 2008; Reid and Moore, 2008; Thompson and Joshua-Shearer, 2002; Venezia and Kirst, 2005).

With this in mind, the post-secondary educational process for first-generation students starts long before they enter college. It is essential that efforts are attempted to make information available for students and families early in their academic careers. Therefore, early exposure to college preparatory resources is helpful in increasing the number of first-generation students that enroll and graduate from college (Engle, 2007; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010; Horn and Nuñez, 2000; Wimberly and Noeth, 2004). Because African American and Latino students are more often first-generation students, educators should work to better understand the challenges they face in accessing post-secondary education and develop more effective measures, at both the elementary and secondary levels, to prepare them for college (Reid and Moore, 2008). This chapter focuses on the experiences first-generation African American and Latino students encounter throughout their elementary and secondary educational process that subsequently impact their pursuit and completion of a higher education. Recommendations for educators (e.g., teachers, school counselors, etc.) are also discussed.

Pre-college Factors

Academic Preparation

At the preK-12 education level, it is critical that educators are keenly aware of the need for rigorous academic preparation for African Americans and Latino students. Academic rigor increases the likelihood that these students, as well as any other student demographic group, will obtain a bachelor's degree but reduces the likelihood of students having to complete remedial coursework in college (Harrell and Forney, 2003). In a past study by Horn and Nuñez (2000), they found that first-generation students who completed advanced mathematics courses in high school doubled their chances of enrolling in a four-year college. Nonetheless, they also

reported that first-generation students were less likely to complete eighth grade algebra even when they were academically qualified to take the course. Therefore, it is important that first-generation students are aware of the importance of taking rigorous courses, and they are informed of the implications of taking such courses as early as middle school to avoid being underprepared for college (Smith, 2009).

In 2008, Reid and Moore found that seven of the thirteen first-generation participants felt less prepared for college than their freshman college peers. For example, one student stated, "I feel like I was less prepared than those who attended [suburban] schools because they have different resources. . . . They have ACT/SAT preparation. . . . They knew what to expect once they got to college" (p. 252). Additionally, many of the students in the study thought that they lacked certain academic skills, study skills, and time management skills. The students also suggested that they missed out on opportunities that could have better prepared them for college. Regardless of students' high-achieving status, many of the student interviewees asserted that their urban public high schools did not provide adequate preparation for their postsecondary pursuits. However, several mentioned those teachers who were doing an outstanding job preparing their students for college.

In a past study about college undergraduates' high school educational experiences, Thompson and Joshua-Shearer (2002) found that African American and Latino students wished they had greater access to college preparation courses. Such students significantly increased their chances of attaining a college degree, when they took rigorous courses in high school (Warburton, Bugarin, and Nunez, 2001). To this end, advanced placement (AP) courses afford high school students, including those who are first-generation, the opportunity to prepare for college-level work (Moore and Slate, 2008).

In 2004, Solórzano and Ornelas conducted a study examining the access and availability of AP courses for African American and Latino students. The two researchers discovered three themes, such as (a) African American and Latino students were disproportionately underrepresented in AP enrollment in the schools with the lowest ratio of students to AP courses in California in general and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in particular; (b) schools that served urban, low-income African American and Latino communities had low student enrollment in AP courses; and (c) even when African American and Latino students attended high schools with high numbers of students enrolled in AP courses, they were not proportionately represented in AP enrollment. Based on these findings, it is reasonable to believe that AP courses play a major role in preparing students for college courses and strengthening their qualifications for college admissions applications. AP courses are strong indicators of a high-quality high school curriculum (Solórzano and Ornelas, 2004). Therefore, it is necessary for schools to offer a variety of AP courses to ensure African American and Latino students, especially first-generation students, are ready for the rigor of college-level work.

In 2006, Griffin and Allen examined the college preparatory experiences of high-achieving African American students in a well-resourced, suburban school and an under-resourced, urban high school. Despite the differential access to college

preparation, students in both school settings encountered inhibitory barriers. For instance, Twin Oaks High School, the suburban school, offered 39 AP and 11 honors courses. While the African American students felt that the school had high-quality teachers and strong curricula, they still believed that their race served as a barrier in their academic courses. As an example of this, one African American student expressed how he had to fight for access into more rigorous courses because he was seen as an athlete, not a scholar. Another African American student shared the difficulty of being the only black person in his AP courses. The following quote captured this point:

> Sometimes it's hard when you're in honors or AP classes and there are not very many minorities in it. Cause it, psychologically, it's like you can't afford to be wrong. Cause then everybody's like, he don't know what he's talking about. (p. 485).

The high-achieving students at Bennett High School indicated very few AP classes were offered; however, they felt it was sufficient to prepare them for college. The students also felt they had high-quality teachers who supported their college goals. One student shared, "I feel like the teachers we have teach us about college. They teach us the things about what we need to know about college and then they prepare you for life in general." (p. 485).

Griffin, Allen, Kimura-Walsh, and Yamamura (2007) found comparable results in their study of high-achieving African American and Latino students attending magnet and non-magnet public high schools. The students at both schools reported having supportive and encouraging teachers; however, the students at the magnet school had access to more AP courses and a more rigorous college preparatory environment. School resources are extremely important for first-generation students, without any other access to college information. The school climate may also play a significant role in how students utilize those available resources. Although Twin Oaks offered a large number of AP courses and employed seven school counselors, the students thought that their school counselors had little confidence in them and provided little support. On the contrary, Bennett High School students believed that they received a great deal of support from school personnel. Further, they believed that the support offered by their school counselors and teachers compensated for any resources not available in school. The Latina students, in the study of Kimura-Walsh et al. (2009), also thought their teachers were doing their best, although the school was overcrowded and lacked resources (e.g., textbooks). Nonetheless, these inadequacies in school prevent students from receiving the personalized attention they desperately needed.

Roderick et al. (2009) recommends that teachers provide classroom environments that "deeply engage students in acquiring the skills and knowledge they will need to gain access to and succeed in college" (pp. 202-203). As a way of doing this, school personnel should invest some of their efforts in ensuring that students are offered a strong school curriculum indicative of college. Wiggan

(2008) found that teacher practices, such as high-quality instruction, encouragement of critical thinking, and interactive teaching and learning, had the most significant impact on school success for African American high school students. Unfortunately, many first-generation students—who tend to be from communities of color and working poor or low-income communities (Cho et al., 2008)—report having teachers with low academic expectations and negative perceptions. In their meta-analyses, Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) found that teachers held the highest expectations for Asian American students in comparison to other student demographic groups and held more positive expectations for European American than Latino and African American students.

Based on popular and social science literature, the relationships that students develop with their teachers and school counselors are critical as they transition from high school to college, particularly when students rely solely on these persons to provide them with college information and guidance (Holland, 2010). Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009) emphasize the importance of a college culture within urban school contexts. The researchers define the college culture as an environment saturated with information and resources and on-going formal and informal conversations that help students comprehend the aspects associated with preparing for, enrolling in, and graduating from post-secondary institutions. An important ingredient to a school, which promotes a college culture, is social support. Social support promotes positive and meaningful connections between students and school personnel. With this in mind, it is critical that all public schools—urban, rural, and suburban—provide students with strong college counseling and guidance (Moore, 2006; Moore, Henfield, and Owens, 2008; Moore and Owens, 2008), as well as print and electronic resources that will help develop student academic and social skills to excel in preK-12 school environments and beyond (Holland and Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Moore, 2006).

Generally speaking, public high schools should align their curricula to prepare students for the demands of college. This includes providing equal access to AP classes, as well as the AP examinations that offer students the opportunity to gain college credit, while in high school (Moore and Slate, 2008). Roderick and his colleagues (2009) advocate for a preK-16 education alignment, as a way of improving college readiness and increasing graduation standards. The researchers acknowledged the limitations of increasing graduation standards when many students do not graduate now, but felt they must be supplemented with a data system to track student progress across educational level. A data system will enable educators to monitor students' academic progress and address their needs early in their educational experiences.

College Counseling

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a school counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250 (ASCA, 2008); however, the national average for the 2008-2009 school year was 1:457, nearly double the recommended figure ("Student-to-Counselor Ratios," n.d.). School counselors in many American public schools across the country, particularly urban and rural, are often relegated to clerical duties and consumed with non-counseling responsibilities, which prevents them from providing students with much needed college support, guidance, and information needed for preparing for post-secondary (Martin, 2002; Moore et al., 2008; Perna et al., 2008). In 2008, Farmer-Hinton argued that, unless the dissemination of college information is structured in a way that provides access to all students, African American and Latino students lacking other networks to access this knowledge will continue to fall short of attending college.

Due to their often first-generation status, African American and Latino students frequently lack the needed social capital in their homes to access specific information about college (Reid and Moore, 2008), even when it is consistently offered. According to the research literature, a social capital framework is often used to understand first-generation students' pathways to college (Holland, 2010; Pérez and McDonough, 2008; Strayhorn, 2010). It refers to relationships that "have the potential to advance an individual's goals" (Holland 2010, pp. 112-113). In public schools around the country, these relationships are often absent for African American and Latino students or reserved for the brightest students among them (Kimura-Walsh et al., 2009), which often puts first-generation students at a further disadvantage. First-generation students require access and will benefit greatly from social networks that prepare them for college in the absence of familial college knowledge.

Kimura-Walsh et al. (2009) examined the college preparation experiences of Latina high and non-high achieving students attending an urban, public school. They found that Latina students relied almost exclusively on school-based resources to access college information. Due to their family's often lack of experiences with higher education, they did not obtain specific advice in preparation for college. Therefore, these students depended heavily on information received from school personnel to make decisions about the college selection process. Kimura-Walsh et al. found that 33 percent of the Latina students indicated that they used teachers and 27 percent used school counselors as their primary resource in attaining college information. Generally speaking, the students described their school counselors as helpful. For instance, one student shared, "my counselor, every time I needed something, I needed a recommendation letter or anything. . . I go to her and I ask her about it and she always gives me a straight answer." (p. 308). However, other students, such as this Latina student, shared the mistakes their school counselors made with the follow quote: "My counselor has been great to me, he guided me throughout high school. . . . But there's been times when they give you the wrong

information [and] you get the consequences, not them" (p. 308). Many of the Latino participants believed that their school counselors served as useful resources in navigating their high school experiences and the college preparation process; however, some believed that their school counselors gave inaccurate information to their own personal detriment.

The latter finding is consistent with previous studies highlighting the lack of academic and college preparation available to first-generation students at the secondary level (Chen, 2005; Perna et al., 2008; Reid and Moore, 2008; Vega, 2011; Warburton, Bugarin, and Nuñez, 2001). For example, Chen (2005) found that 55 percent of first-generation students enrolled in remedial courses compared to only 27 percent of students whose parents held college degrees. The researcher also found that first-generation students performed poorly compared to their peers as early as their first year in college and were more likely to withdraw or repeat courses. In 2011, Vega found that many first-generation students in her qualitative study did not feel that their teachers were adequately preparing them for college and that their school counselors did not have enough time to offer necessary individualized support. For example, Lisa, a participant in the study, explained, "They [school counselors] don't do anything. . . . That's another thing that I hate because we miss out on a lot of opportunities, a lot of programs, a lot of things to do because of the counselors."

Chen (2005) found that such students struggled academically in college, due to the lack of vital information offered in high school. Kimura-Walsh et al. (2009) discovered that the school counselor-student ratio at Radcliffe High School was 1:725. Further, the high school had a college corner or a college counseling center on its campus, which only served the top 10 percent of students. These students benefitted from individualized and specialized college guidance, such as academic workshops, scholarship information, and college representative visits. Yet, the remaining 90 percent of the students were denied access to this resource. It is reasonable to believe that those students—who were not able to partake in these comprehensive services—were mostly African American and Latino. They more than likely would have been the first in their families to matriculate in college. Further, it is quite likely that the students not afforded the opportunities to access the college corner would be greatly penalized.

Stated differently, first-generation college students need information about the college application process that neither their parents nor their school could provide (Kimura-Walsh et al., 2009). Programs like the college corner at Radcliffe High School are excellent ways to expose first-generation college students to the college process. Pre-college outreach programs, such as Upward Bound, are also an effective approach. Strayhorn (2010) found that participation in outreach programs was associated with higher grades in college for African American and Latino males. In a past study of Kimura-Walsh et al. (2009), they found that high-achieving students tend to participate in these outreach programs. Their findings suggest that students who were not high-achievers did not readily access this additional source of college preparation information.

Further, in their examination of high-achieving, African American students attending urban and suburban schools, Griffin and Allen (2006) found stark differences in the availability of college preparatory resources. Twin Oaks, the suburban and well-resourced school, employed eight school counselors to assist students with the college decision-making process. Students reported that the school emphasized college attendance early in their high school careers, as early as freshman year. One student stated:

> So, going to this school, I know the first day, freshman year, [you] set up an appointment with your counselor and from then on, I've had a plan to go to college. I've known classes I need to take. I know what I have to do for my path. And that's one thing I think about this school is really good (p. 486).

However, this was not the consensus among the students. Some reported that their school counselors had low expectations and encouraged them to apply to community colleges, even when they were academically capable students. Students at Bennett High School, the low-resourced school with only three school counselors, reported being less satisfied with access to college information than students at Twin Oaks. Nevertheless, the students shared that they appreciated the school counselors' efforts to help them navigate the college preparation process. Consistent with this sentiment, one student shared "it may not be all those that other schools have, but they're here" (p. 488). Griffin et al. (2007) also found that students attending a magnet high school had more access to school counselors' knowledge about the college application process, college/university representatives, and opportunities to explore career options in the form of summer internships. On the contrary, students at the non-magnet high school felt their school counselors lacked the college preparation information they needed. Regardless of the reason for these perceptions, it is clear that these disparities in resources can influence the college preparation and success of African American and Latino, first-generation students.

According to the research literature, African American and Latino students may not fully understand the significance of their school counselors (Moore et al., 2008; Moore and Owens, 2008). For example, Moore, Sanders, Bryan, Gallant, and Owens (2009) found that less than half of the African American male participants in their study reported visiting the school counselor at least once for college preparation, career and personal, social, and emotional services. Most of the participants visited the school counselor to receive academic services; however, over half admitted being unaware of the availability of non-academic services (i.e., career, personal, social, and emotional services). Without a systematic process in place to provide college and career guidance, many students lose out on much needed information. Unfortunately, African Americans and Latinos—who will potentially be the first in their families to go to college—often are the students who lose out on these resources and opportunities. Aligned with this notion, Perna et al. (2008) found that students who do not take the initiative to contact their school

counselors and/or attend a school without a college culture are less likely to receive sufficient college counseling. Thus, those students with the greatest need for support face the most barriers to receiving such counseling.

Familial, Peer, and Personal Factors

Research documents the importance of parental involvement in the academic success of youth. However, it is widely understood that first-generation students from African American and Latino communities require more support because their families frequently do not possess the needed social capital and personal experiences to help their children navigate the college-going process (Ceja, 2006; Holland, 2010; Kimura-Walsh et al., 2009). On another note, parents—who have attended college or graduated from college—are often better equipped to offer support in completion of admissions applications, financial aid forms, scholarship applications, as well as registering for classes (Harrell and Forney, 2003). First-generation students require access to specific information about college, so that they are not left behind and caught off guard. It is also important that students feel that they are being supported and encouraged throughout their schooling.

Research has documented the importance of support and encouragement from parents, regardless of their educational attainment and socioeconomic status (Griffin and Allen, 2006; Holland, 2010; Moore, 2006; Vega, 2011). Kimura-Walsh et al. (2009) found that Latina students endorsed their families as strong sources of emotional support for their educational goals. For instance, one Latina stated, "When my dad was in Mexico, he said it was hard because . . . they were poor . . . . So he said it was hard and I have the chance here . . . that I have . . . everything and to take advantage of it." In a past study, Ceja (2006) explored the role of parents in the college choice process of first-generation Chicana students and found similar results. The Chicana students explained that their parents lacked an understanding of the college selection process; however, they did indicate that their parents provided emotional and financial support. This support demonstrated to the students that their parents strongly valued a college education. Another student in the study indicated that her father attended college workshops to obtain information about college, but his limited understanding of English restricted his full comprehension. In other words, language barriers can prevent parents from becoming more involved in the college choice process.

In a past study focused on African American students, Holland (2010) examined the manner in which the college-bound accessed post-secondary information while in high school. Based on the findings, some students reported that their family and friends greatly influenced their decision to attend college, while others reported their families expected them to go to college. The majority of the African American participants identified their families as their primary source of inspiration and encouragement as they pursued their post-secondary educational plans. Such support helped them stay focused and motivated to

succeed. In addition to emotional support, some students indicated their family provided assistance with academic assignments and financial support. The students, in the study, also indicated that their peers were inspirational and helpful in staying on track with their post-secondary plans. Griffin and Allen discovered that students' close peers held similar educational goals, which helped them to persist in the face of challenges. For example, one student shared:

> All my friends are going to college. . . . We all, we help each other out with, with the college process on those applications and scholarships. We do what we have to do so that all of us will have a better life and future (p. 489).

For Latino students in general, Pérez and McDonough (2008) found that they received strong support from their parents, relatives, and friends. A unique finding was the large degree to which these students relied on members of their extended family for college information. As an example of this, one student reported utilizing his cousin, a college graduate, as a resource for college planning. For African American males in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, Moore (2006) found similar results.

Over the years, most research demonstrates the positive forms of support parents and relatives supply to first-generation students. On the contrary, Pérez and McDonough (2008) found that family members sometimes provided negative advice about the college selection process. For instance, a Latina interviewee shared that her older brother told her to stay in California because going out-of-state would be more expensive and that she would be away from her family. Another interviewee reported feeling conflicted by her brother's suggestion to go away to college, and her mother's advice to stay close to home. Although this advice may have been well-intended, it can cause students to make choices they do not want to make. This information underscores the need for schools and families to increase their communication about the college process and the opportunities and benefits of attending colleges that match students' need, regardless of their distance from home.

In Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) seminal study on "acting White," the two researchers documented how African American students are negatively affected by peer relationships. To this end, they asserted, "that *one major reason* black students do poorly in school is that they experience inordinate ambivalence and affective dissonance in regard to academic effort and success" (p. 177). Low-income, students of color, as well as those who are the first in their families to attend college, were often rejected or ostracized by their high school peers because of their high academic aspirations. Thus, they coped with the burden of "acting White" by forgoing their racial identity to achieve success. Fordham and Ogbu described the strategies utilized by students at Capital High. In essence, the strategies were used to resolve the tension between the desire to do well and conform to their peer group's collective identity. African American students participated in athletics and group activities, camouflaged their academic effort by clowning around, associated

with bullies, and chose not to brag about their success or bring attention to themselves. In a later study, Fordham (1988) posited that high-achieving African American students developed a "raceless" persona to be academically successful. Her study demonstrated that high-achieving African American students possessed an inability to maintain a strong racial identity and achieve success simultaneously; a pyrrhic victory occurred in that their success came at the expense of a collective identity. The raceless persona developed, due to the tensions experienced by Black students as they tried to define their dual relationship to their racial group and the individualistic culture of school and society. The incompatibility of the two identities—racial and academic—led to a raceless persona. Nonetheless, researchers, over the years, have found that the responses to accusations of acting white vary among African American and Latino students. Horvat and Lewis (2003) found that supportive peer groups were associated with the pursuit of academic goals among African American students. Accordingly, all students, even African American and Latino first-generation students, are able to better adjust to college, if they perceive their high school peers to support high academic achievement and aspirations (Hudley, Moschetti, Gonzalez, Cho, Barry, and Kelly, 2009).

Steele's (1997) stereotype threat theory posits that out of fear of confirming negative racial stereotypes related to intellectual ability, African American students do not perform well academically. As a result, they identify and engage less with academics. This disengagement from school alleviates the anxiety by removing the student from the anxiety-provoking situation. Therefore, academically identified students of color are at a significant risk of dropping out or disidentifying from school due to stereotype threat (Osborne and Walker, 2006). Additionally, Majors and Billson (1992) argue that African American males adopt a "cool pose" or the attitudes and behaviors that position African American males as calm, emotionless, and tough. This permits them to cope in an environment of social oppression and racism, such as what many students of color experience in today's public schools. Although academic withdrawal—due to stereotype threat and adopting a cool pose—may protect the self-concept of students of color by preventing the development of negative feelings and barring the negative effects of racial discrimination, these coping mechanisms are often counterproductive to academic outcomes. In closing, these strategies often weaken students' motivational attitudes and behaviors that lead to academic success.

College Persistence

Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini (2004) found that parental level of education influenced the type of post-secondary institution students attended, the experiences students had in college, and their outcomes. In spite of high academic credentials and motivation identical to that of students whose parents attained a college degree, first-generation students were at a greater risk of being left behind academically, socially, and economically. Further, first-generation students were

more likely to attend less selective post-secondary institutions, complete fewer credit hours in three years, and work more hours per week than their non-first-generation peers. They also were less likely to live on campus, enroll part-time, and be less academically and socially integrated in the campus community (Pascarella et al., 2004).

First-generation students benefit more from academic and social interactions with faculty and their peers. Yet, due to the limited time they often spend on campus, these students do not always access these resources enough. Additionally, first-generation students drop out of college at rates twice that of their non-first-generation counterparts over the course of their first three years (Hudley et al., 2009). The lack of academic and social integration puts these students at a greater risk for early departure from college (Tinto, 1993). The findings from Cho et al.'s (2008) study suggested that psychosocial factors, such as perceived safety, positive social climate, and having friends present on campus as important components when choosing a college for first-generation students. Further, for African American and Latino first-generation students, the ethnic composition of the campus and community were also important variables for their college choice process. It quite possible that social connections with other students of color in college may ease the transition and isolation felt by providing a sense of belonging for African American and Latino first-generation students. Student participation is related to positive academic and social benefits. Thus, the following section explores how African American and Latino first-generation students persist in college, in spite of barriers.

Familial Support, Peer Encouragement, and Student Resiliency

Throughout the secondary education literature on first-generation students, the benefits of emotional support from parents, relatives, and peers have been documented as discussed earlier in this chapter. The encouragement that these persons offer, after first-generation students enroll in college, often remains strong and has lasting benefits. A study by Dennis, Phinney, and Chuateco (2005) also demonstrated that personal characteristics, such as self-efficacy, can lead to positive outcomes in college.

In their examination of motivational characteristics and social supports, Dennis et al. (2005) found that the need for peer and family support was correlated with college adjustment. However, peer support was found to be a stronger predictor of college grades and adjustment than family support. This finding suggests that, while families can provide emotional support to first-generation students, they feel their peers were more equipped to provide the support needed to perform well in college. In terms of self-efficacy, the researchers also found that motivation to attend college on the basis of personal interest, intellectual curiosity, and the desire to attain a fulfilling career predicted college adjustment among African American and Latino first-generation college students. Both personal and career motivation variables

predicted their commitment to attend college. Similarly, Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin, and Castro (2010) found that African American, Latino, and Native American men were motivated to attend college because it provided them with a means to social mobility. Further, a post-secondary education would afford them the opportunity to obtain high-paying jobs. In the study, the male participants identified earning respect, being a role model, earning academic credentials, and overcoming negative life experiences as motivators for attending college. The researchers also reported that the males did not allow negative stereotypes to discourage them from pursuing their educational and career goals.

Moore, Madison-Colmore, and Smith (2003) investigated the persistence of African American males in an engineering school at a predominantly white institution (PWI). These students encountered discrimination as the males in Gardenhire-Crooks et al. (2010) study did. Their personality characteristics aided them in persevering in college. The prove-them-wrong syndrome was used as an emerging framework to explain how these students persisted in engineering. In essence, the African American males in the study coped with adversity by working hard to prove others wrong and show that they were capable of academic success. As an example of this, one participant explained, "You have to deal with stereotypes . . . you push harder. There is always the feeling that you have to perform better than anybody else" (p. 69). Another student shared:

> Basically, you're working twice as hard not only to overcome what they [White engineering professors, students, and administrators] think of you but to eventually to rise to what you know you can do . . . work twice as hard proving someone wrong as opposed to proving someone right (p. 67).

The African American males in the study developed personality traits that represented the prove-them-wrong syndrome. Despite facing discrimination and stereotypes, the students remained determined and committed to achieving academic success and attaining their goals.

Mentoring and Outreach Programs

Positive relationships between first-generation students and teachers play an important part in building the social capital these students oftentimes lack because their parents did not attend college. Morales (2009) explored the effects of mentoring relationships on the academic progress of male, Latino, first-generation college students. In this study, the students reported that their mentors provided them with inside information concerning academic and professional matters, such as developing critical thinking skills, taking effective notes in class, applying to graduate school, finding internships, and securing scholarship funding. The students also felt their mentors supported their future educational and career goals.

In regard to student-faculty relationships, Guiffrida (2005) found that that black faculty provided high-achieving African American students with comprehensive

academic, career, and personal support. Although they expressed that the African American faculty advocated for them and believed in their ability to achieve, many of the students also expressed positive relationships with white faculty; however, the nature of the relationships differed from the African American faculty. The African American students in the study felt white faculty members were less willing to go above and beyond to guide them towards success. Based on the findings, it seemed that these students desired strong academic guidance and personal advice. The African American students, in the study, perceived their black faculty members as more willing to take on this mentorship role in comparison to their white faculty. On another note, Guiffrida and Douthit (2010) suggested that participation in African American student organizations offer many advantages in the form of locating Black mentors and students who have dealt with similar feelings of transitioning to a new environment and networking with African American professionals on campus and in the community. Similarly, Strayhorn (2010) found that African American males gained academic and social benefits through their involvement in college activities such as student government and volunteer opportunities.

Grant-Vallone, Reid, Umali, and Pohlert (2003-2004) surveyed first-generation college students participating in college support programs, such as Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Academic Support Program for Intellectual Rewards and Enhancement (A.S.P.I.R.E.), and Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP) to understand how these programs influenced their academic and social integration, self-esteem, and commitment to college. The results indicated that students who utilized these programs the most were more likely to report higher levels of social adjustment. Stated differently, students' involvement with these campus programs facilitates positive adjustment to college life. More programs, such as those mentioned, should be created on college campuses to help first-generation college students reap the benefits of the college experience.

Recommendations

While many African American and Latino first-generation students aspire to attend college, a small number are successful in attending and graduating from college. These students' first-generation status often challenges their ability to access the information necessary to compete with their non-first generation peers. The common goal should be to provide these first-generation students the opportunities they deserve to prepare for college and persist in college, while being competitive with their non-first-generation college peers. Thus, the following recommendations provide teachers, school counselors, university personnel, parents, and first-generation students with tips to create positive learning experiences throughout their schooling.

Recommendations for Teachers

1. Teachers should provide first-generation African American and Latino students with the experiences, resources, and knowledge that allow them to compete with non-first generation African American, Latino, and White students. Therefore, it is important that these students have ongoing access to rigorous curricula throughout their preK-12 education (Harrell and Forney, 2003; Smith, 2009).
2. Teachers should work to develop positive, encouraging relationships with African American and Latino first-generation students that are supportive, encouraging, and validating (Hudley et al., 2009. This type of trusting relationship enables these students, as well as any other demographic group, to feel comfortable talking to their teachers about their college-going goals and asking for academic assistance (Harrell and Forney, 2003).
3. It is important for teachers to hold high expectations for their students and deliver high-quality instruction (Moore, 2006; Moore and Owens, 2008). The development of a college culture demonstrates to African American and Latino first-generation students that their schools are committed to their academic success and helping them go to college (Perna and Thomas, 2009).
4. Teachers should create and sustain personal connections with parents (Fann, Jarsky, and McDonough, 2009) and assume parents want their children to persist academically. They should also work closely with students' parents to ensure that African American and Latino first-generation students stay on track for college (Smith, 2009).

Recommendations for School Counselors

1. School counselors should find ways to equitably disseminate college preparation information (Farmer-Hinton 2008), including courses students should enroll in (e.g., AP and honors courses), college application resources, financial aid resources, and college placement exams. Such information truly makes a difference in the college preparation process for first-generation African American and Latino students.
2. School counselors should inform all students of their post-secondary educational and career options rather than discouraging them from applying to college. Therefore, school counselors should work aggressively to establish rapport with their students.
3. School counselors should offer special seminars and workshops for parents to increase their familiarity with the college-planning process. Such practices can help families enhance their knowledge base on the college process and be able to provide their children with concrete and specific assistance.
4. School counselors should translate, when necessary, their materials and handouts in multiple languages. With the increase of Spanish-speaking Latino

and other immigrant families in America's prek-12 schools, there is a strong need for these kinds of materials.

5. When planning college-related activities and workshops, school counselors should be sensitive to the schedules of parents of first-generation students. Oftentimes, these parents of students work multiple jobs or are employed in positions that are not always flexible with their hours.
6. School counselors should consider establishing parent volunteer programs, where parents can serve as ambassadors for the school counseling office. In these kinds of programs, parent volunteers can help with reaching "hard to reach" parents, as well as assist with coordinating and delivering workshops that focus on the college-going process (Downs et al., 2008; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010).

Recommendations for University Administrators, Faculty, and Staff

1. Mentors and role models in the form of faculty and staff support are significant for first-generation students to facilitate their academic and social integration into the campus community, as well as completion of their degree (Harrell and Forney, 2003; Morales, 2005). These relationships can help first-generation students locate resources on campus, such as math labs, writing centers, and the counseling center (Reid and Moore, 2008).
2. First-generation African American and Latino college students in their junior and senior years may have experienced difficulty fitting in at the start of their college careers due to their generational status and race/ethnicity. Therefore, they are equipped to help first-generation African American and Latino freshmen acclimate to college, both socially and academically. For that reason, connecting first-generation African American and Latino freshmen with upper-class first-generation to African American and Latino students as mentors can be beneficial in helping these students navigate the resources in their new environment (Reid and Moore, 2008).
3. Bridge programs that facilitate the transition from high school to college should be extended to African American and Latino first-generation students (Saunders and Serna, 2004). Such programs can assist students with getting familiar with the campus and meeting important university administrators, faculty, and staff who can help them navigate the campus.
3. Professional development should be offered to faculty and administrators to gain a deep understanding of the isolation first-generation students of color often experience in college. To this end, professional development can provide college personnel with the opportunity to develop strategies for helping students adjust to college (Guiffrida and Douthit, 2010).

Recommendations for Parents

1. At an early age, parents should instill in their children the notion that they have the ability to attend and succeed in college. Continued support and encouragement throughout their children's educational careers is vital to their development. Throughout the research literature, first-generation students, including African American and Latino, have acknowledged the significant role that parents play in their education.
2. Parents should get to know their children's teachers and school counselors to become informed about required courses, activities to prepare their children for college, and college applications and admissions policies. Such relationships have been found to be beneficial for students.
3. Research demonstrates the strong value first-generation African American and Latino students place on emotional support received from their parents (Ceja, 2006; Griffin and Allen, 2006; Holland, 2010; Kimura-Walsh et al., 2009; Moore, 2006; Vega, 2011). Therefore, parents can continue to influence their children's motivation through discussions concerning their future educational and career goals.
4. Holland (2010) discussed the importance of a college culture in preparing underrepresented students for college enrollment and persistence. This type of school environment communicates to students the schools' investment and dedication in helping them acquire the knowledge and skills needed for the demands of college. Therefore, parents should seek out schools that are dedicated to academic excellence and have a strong college culture.

Recommendations for African American and Latino First-generation Students

1. In middle and high school, first-generation students need to be aware of the courses that best prepare them for the rigor of college. Therefore, it is important that these students are self-regulated and able to comfortably ask questions, when they do not know the answers.
2. They should also learn how to maximize the benefits of their formal and informal networks, including with their teachers, school counselors, and peers, to become college ready (Holland, 2010). Such relationships have been found to play a major role in students' academic journeys throughout the educational pipeline (i.e., elementary, secondary, and post-secondary).
3. First-generation college students should seek out academic and social networking resources on their college campuses to increase their chances of persistence. Many first-generation students are not integrated on their college campuses because they enroll part-time, work full-time, and only come to campus for classes. This disconnection between the student and the college culture oftentimes leads these students to depart college early (Tinto, 1993). If

students are involved with organizations and support groups on their campuses, their chances of leaving college early are likely to decrease.

Conclusion

First-generation students of color face many barriers throughout their educational careers that affect their ability to attend and succeed in college, including poor academic instruction, lack of access to college counseling, and a lack of knowledge about navigating their education. These students require access to the social capital that will allow them to achieve post-secondary and career success. Schools play a large role in providing students with necessary information to reach their educational goals of enrolling in and graduating from college. However, poor educational experiences make it difficult for first-generation students to do so. First-generation college students feel they lack critical thinking skills, study skills, time management, and adequate academic preparation compared to their peers (Reid and Moore, 2008).

Pre-college outreach programs are successful in preparing students for college; however, these programs are not accessible to all students (Kimura-Walsh et al., 2009). Familial and peer support provide first-generation youth with encouragement and motivation; nonetheless, they also need concrete and specific college preparation guidance. Thus, school personnel—teachers and school counselors—must address the knowledge gap by creating school environments that embrace a college culture, high-expectations, positive relationships, high-quality instruction, access to a rigorous curriculum, college counseling, and outreach to parents. Once these first-generation students enter college, their academic and social integration is vital to their post-secondary success. Support from family, peers, faculty, in addition to participation in outreach programs and student organizations, influences these students' chances of developing a college identity and commitment to persisting at their academic institutions.

Limitations in the current research concerning first-generation college students include an examination of their experiences by racial and ethnic identity as well as gender. Less is known about the differences between first-generation college students from various backgrounds. Although every group is heterogeneous, this information is a helpful starting point in expanding the discussion about African American and Latino first-generation students. To this end, there is a strong need for more research examining first-generation college students' perspectives of how their high school experiences prepared them for college. Such studies should examine how African American and Latino first-generation students succeed, despite facing challenges in their educational experiences.

Extant literature falls short of closely examining the experiences of undocumented Latino students. This type of investigation is needed and is likely aid parents and educational professionals, at both the preK-12 and post-secondary levels, in helping these students be successful.

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