'The Context, Actions, and Outcomes (CAO) Model of Institutional Responsibility' and 'Using the CAO Model to Guide Institutional Responsibility Research on Black Men'

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Chapter 4

The Context, Actions, and Outcomes (CAO) Model of Institutional Responsibility

*Every system is perfectly designed to achieve the results it gets.*

(attributed to W. Edward Deming and to Paul Batalden)

In 1975, Vincent Tinto’s article “Dropouts from higher education: A synthesis of recent research” was published in the *Review of Educational Research*. This article, as well as similar arguments in his subsequent works (see Tinto, 1987; 1988; 1993) has served as foundational sociological explanations for student attrition and retention in college. As briefly discussed in Chapter 3, Tinto has suggested that student success should be viewed from a longitudinal lens. For him, student persistence was a result of interactions between the student and the social and academic systems of the college or university they attend. According to Tinto, as students transition into a college, they become acquainted with and enveloped in the academic and social milieu of college. As a result of their interactions, students assert and evaluate their core commitment to the institution. Continuous interactions serve to shape students’ academic paths and goals. Tinto postulated that students with greater levels of integration into the campus academic and social systems will experience greater degrees of commitment to the institution, and increase their likelihood of persistence and completion. This theory has been widely used in research on Black men to articulate the importance of these students becoming integrated into the campus milieu (Flowers, 2006; Hagedorn, Maxwell & Hampton, 2001–2002; Ray, Carly, & Brown, 2009). In fact, in our own work, we have drawn explicitly or implicitly from this framework (Palmer et al., 2011; Palmer, Davis, & Thompson, 2010; Wood, 2012a–c). The theory is also regularly pointed to by academic and student affairs leaders to justify co-curricular activities, extracurricular activities, leadership development, and academic programming that provide avenues for increased integration into a college environment.

In the past two decades, scholars have become increasingly critical of this framework for several reasons. First, some have noted that the theory is imbedded
THE CAO MODEL OF INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

with an expectation that students should and must ‘break away’ from their families and their communities to be successful in college (Guiffria, 2006; Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Palmer et al., 2011). In this light, Tinto stated “in order to become fully incorporated in the life of the college, [students] have to physically as well as socially dissociate themselves from the communities of the past” (Tinto, 1993, p. 96). These scholars have suggested that disconnection from one’s community, especially for historically disadvantaged students, fosters disconnection and isolation, not collegiate success. Second, other scholars have critiqued Tinto’s work, suggesting that the focus of his analysis is on the student and how the student integrates into the institution (Johnson, Soldner, Leonard, Alvarez, Inkelas, Rowan-Kenyon, & Longerbeam, 2007; Tierney, 1992). For instance, Tinto (1987) stated “the problems associated with separation and transition to college are conditions that, though stressful, need not in themselves lead to departure. It is the individual’s response to those conditions that finally determines staying or leaving” (p. 98). As a result, scholars have charged that this theory places the onus for student success on the student themselves, not the institutions that serve them (Johnson et al., 2007). As noted by Rendon, Jalomo, and Nara (2000), Tinto’s theory propagates the notion that “individuals, not the system, are responsible for departure” (p. 144).

The latter critique, while evident in Tinto’s work, is also apparent in concepts by subsequent works focused on quality of student effort and student engagement. For instance, Pace (1980; 1984; 1985; 1990) is credited with establishing the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ). The theoretical undergirding of this instrument is his concept of ‘quality of effort,’ which postulated that students who invested greater levels of time, focus, and energy into their studies and interacting with others (e.g., student, faculty) were more likely to succeed. This notion is the antecedent of the contemporary concept of engagement, which according to Kuh (2003) is “used to represent constructs such as quality of effort and involvement in productive learning activities” (p. 6). Hereeto, the focus of analysis is on what the student does to succeed in college, irrespective of the college’s responsibility for educating the student. This perspective on student (not institutional) responsibility also intersects with Astin’s (1993) theory of student involvement, a point we will revisit later in this chapter.

In departing from this line of inquiry, we sought to provide a framework in this chapter that would allow scholars and practitioners to focus on institutional responsibility for Black male success in college. Like the numerous constructs (background, societal, academic, social, environmental) traditionally espoused in research as affecting student success (e.g., persistence, achievement, attainment) from the students’ locus of control, we sought to provide a comprehensive (though likely not exhaustive) account of the myriad of institutional domains affecting student success from the institutions’ locus of control. We refer to these considerations as the eight key domains of institutional responsibility. The elements of these domains are in line with the increasing trajectory of research focused on the role of institutions in supporting student success (Bush & Bush, 2010; Harper, 2009). With respect to Black male achievement in college, Bush (2004) uses the biblical metaphor of the fig tree to connote this more progressive ideology. Bush sees students as akin to the fruit borne by a fig tree while the institution represents the tree itself. He suggests that if a tree produced bad fruit, the blame would be on the tree itself, not on the fruit. In like manner, when institutions produce poor student outcomes, it is illogical to suggest that the student outcomes are the sole responsibility of the student themselves. Rather, the institutions (fig trees) producing those student outcomes are viewed as having responsibility for their student outcomes (fruit). The next section discusses the philosophical perspective undergirding institutional responsibility praxis.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY: BENSIMON’S COGNITIVE FRAMES

Institutional responsibility shifts the onus of student success from the student to the organization itself. To aid in understanding this philosophical shift, Bensimon (2005) articulates three primary cognitive frames that are employed around the notion of institutional responsibility for underserved student outcomes. She notes that cognitive frames are lenses or ‘interpretive frameworks’ by which individuals make meaning of phenomena. In the context of institutional responsibility, these frames include the deficit, diversity, and equity cognitive frames. The deficit cognitive framework has a focus on blaming students, their families, and their communities for inadequate student outcomes. The discourse for this frame centers on students’ lack of preparedness, self-determination, and academic habits. This lens is oriented around stereotypical notions of poverty, race, and the ‘culture of disadvantage.’ As a result of this lens, the focus of educational programming is to remediate and fix the student. For example, the deficit cognitive frame suggests that the reason students are not doing well is because they come from schools and communities that do not value education nor have academic rigor. As a result, they are not ready for college and therefore must be remediated to fix what their high schools and parents should have done.

The second frame is the diversity cognitive frame. This frame is oriented around antiquated discourse on representational diversity among students. In this lens, student diversity is viewed as an important attribute of the institution, as exposure to diversity is a compelling interest to better educate majority students for a global marketplace. As such, educational programming centers on cultural sensitivity training and providing opportunities for majority students to engage students of color. As such, in this frame, Black men are provided access to college due to the inherent benefit they can provide for other students, not necessarily for the benefits they will personally derive. While the deficit and diversity
cognitive frames predominate postsecondary education philosophy and educational practice, they lack true responsibility and accountability for underserved student outcomes. Instead, Bensimon (2005) argues that colleges and universities should employ equity cognitive frames.

Equity frames are oriented around a commitment to institutional programs, policies, and practices that foster disparate outcomes for historically underrepresented and underserved student communities. This frame takes a critical orientation, focusing on areas where disparities are evident and targeting resources in these areas to produce equitable outcomes. In this frame, educational programming is not focused on remediating students or exposing majority students to compositional diversity, but rather on changing the inherent organizational structures that limit student success. This involves assuming responsibility for student outcomes, challenging the deficit and diversity cognitive frames, and developing systems to monitor outcomes. In this frame, college professionals take responsibility for the discourse on underserved student success, including “institutional responsibility for student outcomes, the manifestation of institutionalized racism, color-conscious[ness], awareness of racialized practices and their differential consequences, and awareness of white privilege” (Bensimon, 2005, p. 103). Guided by these notions of responsibility, the next section presents key domains of action within the locus of control of postsecondary institutions.

MODEL OVERVIEW: CONTEXT, ACTIONS, AND OUTCOMES

Postsecondary institutions are often told that they must assume responsibility for student success. However, many college leaders are unclear as to what ‘responsibility’ or ‘accountability’ actually means. Some fear these words, believing they solely connote encroaching state and federal oversight despite declining resource trends. Others perceive recommendations for institutional responsibility as theoretically justifiable, but impractical given the numerous programs and students served. For these college leaders, institutional responsibility may be ‘code’ for increasing institutional resources to single sub-groups (e.g., Black men) who may represent a small proportion of their student bodies. Moreover, arguably the most common viewpoint expressed is one of external responsibility. Practitioners will often point to the role of factors in student environments (e.g., family responsibilities, work, stressful life events, transportation), noting that there is little (if anything) that institutions can do to mitigate the effect of these considerations on student success. We believe that when conversations on student success begin with the student, they shift the focus and onus of responsibility on students, their families, and the (PreK-12) schools they come from. When this occurs, discourse on institutional responsibility thereafter becomes the counter-argument, the antithesis, and the alternative argument. Instead, it is essential that practitioners and researchers alike begin discussions on Black male success by focusing on what the institution is, and is not doing, to support them. As noted by Harris, Bensimon, and Bishop (2010):

it is futile to dwell on students’ past experiences. It is also harmful if inequalities are rationalized as beyond the control of practitioners. [Instead] we must focus on what is within the control of educators in terms of changing their own practices to meet the needs and circumstances of men of color.

(p. 280)

Bearing this in mind, we present the Context, Actions, and Outcomes (CAO) model. The CAO model focuses intently on the institutional responsibility for student success. The model takes into account the contextual aspects of the institution, the institution’s actions and ethos to support student success, as well as the outcomes derived from those efforts. The model is juxtaposed to the student responsibility model espoused by Astin (1993). Like work from his contemporaries (e.g., Tinto, Kuh), we believe Astin’s model erroneously places the onus of student success on the student. Specifically, Astin’s IEO model contends that students enter into an institution of higher education with previous inputs (e.g., personal attributes, prior school experiences). Then, students engage in the campus ‘environment’ through involvement in academic and social matters and educational programming. This involvement then shapes the outcomes experienced by the student. Instead of focusing on students’ inputs, the CAO model honed in on the institution’s inputs (referred to as contextual factors). These contextual factors include the institutional history, revenue streams, location, size, and institutional type (e.g., community college, HBCU, PWI). All of these factors are foundational to the institution’s mode of operation. In particular, institutional type is an essential consideration as core differences in mission (e.g., serving Black communities, serving local communities, serving state research interests), functions (e.g., remediation, certificates, degrees, transfer), and student populations served differ across institutional types.

The crux of the CAO model is the Actions—what Astin refers to as the ‘environment.’ Astin’s (1993) work assumes that some students are more inclined to participate in certain experiences than others. In contrast, we assume that the institutional actions and ethos shape experiential realities within the institution. While students enter postsecondary education with differing backgrounds and experiences, the institution must respond to them ‘where they are at.’ In other words, we do not believe it is solely the students’ responsibility to ‘change’ for their environment, but rather that the ‘environment’ should evolve to serve them. As a result, Actions encompass eight key domains of institutional responsibility for student success (discussed extensively in the next section). These
domains foster student affective development and academic performance outcomes (e.g., persistence, achievement, attainment). The responsibility for these outcomes falls within the domain of institutional responsibility, not the student inputs or student-pursued experiences in the environment. The central focus of the model is on the Actions of the institution. The next section describes the action proffered in this model, which we have termed the eight domains of institutional responsibility.

ACTION: THE EIGHT DOMAINS OF INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Conversations on institutional responsibility have addressed a number of key areas of concern (e.g., resources, data, messaging) (Bush & Bush, 2010; Edwards, Cangemi, & Kowalski, 1990; Harbour & Nagy, 2005; Wood & Hilton, 2012). Much of the work done in this area has focused on organizational learning as a strategy for increasing institutional capacity to serve historically underrepresented and underserved students (e.g., Bensimon, 2005; Kezar, 2005a). Within this literature base, our conceptualization of institutional responsibility is chiefly informed by the scholarship of Estella Bensimon (particularly her foundational work on the equity scorecard) and Shaun Harper (and his critical inquiry surrounding institutional responsibility for Black male success). Based on a synthesis of their findings, as well as other emergent research on institutional responsibility and accountability, organizational learning, college student success, and Black male achievement, we have identified eight key domains of institutional responsibility for Black male success. These eight interrelated domains of action include: programs, policies, practices, resources, structures, climates, partnerships, and inquiry. These domains, as well as selected sub-domains and by-products (or results) are depicted in Table 4.1.

Each domain of institutional responsibility is intended to lead to the ultimate outcome, student success. Our perspective on institutional responsibility begins with the notion that institutions of postsecondary learning (e.g., community college, liberal arts college, HBCU, four-year university) assume responsibility for the students that are enrolled in their institutions. That is, once the student is enrolled, the college or university takes ownership of the student’s affective development, cognitive development, and academic performance outcomes (e.g., persistence, achievement, attainment). Affective development refers to the emotional and dispositional growth of the student. The notion encapsulates their temperament, self-esteem, self-concept, and psychological well-being (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). Affective development is predicated on an academic and social learning environment that is affirming, supportive, and nurturing. These key elements provide a fertile environment where students can engage in discourse and experiences that allow them to learn more about themselves and others.
Cognitive development “accounts for the ways an individual develops critical thinking and reasoning processes” (Barr & Desler, 2000, p. 236). Cognitive development is a function of the formal and informal learning environment. In the classroom, students encounter new concepts, ideas, philosophies, and other content that challenges and extends their previous knowledge. However, as noted by Barr and Desler (2000), cognitive development also connotes the development of critical thinking and other higher order reasoning (e.g., evaluation, synthesis), that is the mark of a learned individual. As with a student’s affective development, affirmation, support, and nurture are necessary conditions for cognitive development. Institutions must take accountability for outcomes experienced by underserved student communities (Bensimon, 2005), particularly for Black males (Harper, 2009; Harper & Kuykendall, 2012). To be clear, colleges and universities are responsible for equitable outcomes (Bensimon, 2005) that close achievement gaps between Black men and their racial/ethnic and gender counterparts (Harper, 2006). Each of the eight domains portrays elements necessary to foster outcome parity.

Programs are the first key domain of institutional responsibility. Colleges and universities are responsible for providing high impact academic and co-curricular programming for all students, including Black men. Note here, that we emphasize academic and co-curricular programming as opposed to purely social programming. As noted by Harper and Kuykendall (2012) many colleges “focus almost entirely on providing entertainment and opportunities for social interaction among Black students” (p. 26). While purely social programming can have its place in postsecondary education, it does not always have a positive effect on student success for Black male collegians (see Wood, 2012a), nor is it necessarily a core responsibility of the institution. Rather, academic and co-curricular programs that provide Black men with opportunities to engage in research experiences, academically-oriented clubs and organizations (Harper, 2010), study abroad, community service (Harris et al., 2010), and learning communities (Wood & Hilton, 2012) should be readily available and must target involvement among Black men. This programming is essential to Black male success, as it allows them to engage in educationally purposive activities that reframe and extend upon classroom learning and personal development. Moreover, high-impact practices disproportionately benefit historically underrepresented and underserved students, particularly men of color (Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), 2014). Moreover, such programming can also provide students with greater access to networks (social capital) and understanding of the spoken and unspoken structures of academe (cultural capital). Given this, institutional leaders are responsible for ensuring that Black men are represented in high-impact programs, not just those serving remedial needs. This is the litmus test for efficacious practice; not simply having programming in place, but actual use of these programs by Black men.

Table 4.1 Eight Key Domains of Institutional Responsibility

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key domains</th>
<th>Select sub-domains</th>
<th>Key responsibilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>• Academic</td>
<td>• Engagement</td>
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<td>• Co-curricular</td>
<td>• Socio-cultural capital</td>
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<td>Policies</td>
<td>• Institutional</td>
<td>• Racial parity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Inter-institutional</td>
<td>• Resource equity</td>
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<td>• Regional/statewide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>• Student services</td>
<td>• Intrusive</td>
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<td>• Teaching and learning</td>
<td>• Culturally relevant</td>
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<td>• Strategic planning</td>
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<td>• Hiring, retention, advancement</td>
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<td>• Professional growth</td>
<td>• Equitable</td>
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<td>Resources</td>
<td>• Students</td>
<td>• Building capacity</td>
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<td>• Programs and services</td>
<td>• Sustaining advancements</td>
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<td>Structures</td>
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<td>• Compositional structure</td>
<td>• Access</td>
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<td>• Organizational psyche</td>
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<td>Partnerships</td>
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<td>• College preparedness</td>
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<td>• Postsecondary education</td>
<td>• Fluid transitions</td>
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<td>• Industry</td>
<td>• Professional opportunities</td>
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<td>Inquiry</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• College personnel</td>
<td>• Culture of critical analysis</td>
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<td>• Programs and services</td>
<td>• Onus for outcomes</td>
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The second domain of institutional responsibility is policy. Policy is an essential element of consideration given that it often serves as the backbone of institutional practices, functions, and activities. Much of the policy focus relevant to meeting the needs of Black men are academic policies (e.g., add/drop, withdrawal, filing deadlines) and services (e.g., work study, institutional aid) that seem to have an adverse impact on these men. As such, colleges and universities have a responsibility to enact institutional policies that foster student success, not inhibit it. From a CRT perspective, policies (e.g., rules, regulations, codes) are created by the powerful to maintain and extend their power. Therefore, extant policy often results in injustice and inequity (Solórzano & Ornelas, 2002; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). For example, an institution seeking to increase their rankings will often revise their admission policies to require higher levels
of precollege academic preparation (e.g., GPA, SAT scores, ACT scores, AP coursework). Undoubtedly, such policies will benefit students and families who have greater access to resources (e.g., SAT preparation courses, private tutors), attend more affluent schools, and understand how to access advanced coursework (e.g., International Baccalaureate, AP, dual college credit).

Typically, such policies will then disadvantage historically underrepresented and underserved communities, particularly Black communities. As a result, college leaders are responsible for establishing institutional policies that produce racial parity and resource equity. The term, resource equity, is used intentionally here to refer to policies that institutionalize the critical distribution (and redistribution) of resources to programs (e.g., TRIO, summer bridge, first year experience, learning communities) serving the most disadvantaged students. Institutional leaders also have a responsibility for policy advocacy at the inter-institutional, regional/statewide, and federal levels that bolster racial parity and resource equity but also extend accountability for student outcomes. For instance, college leaders must advocate state and federal policies that enhance resources to institutions, specifically for programming geared towards underserved students (Wood & Hilton, 2012).

Practice is another central domain of institutional responsibility. Practice involves both the formal and informal operations on campus, relevant to student services, teaching and learning, strategic planning, hiring, retention and advancement of personnel, and professional growth (among others). Student services (e.g., academic advising, career counseling, tutoring, financial aid) are needed that mitigate external environmental pressures and support learning. Given that men of color may be reluctant to engage with services due to avoidance of help-seeking behaviors (Harris & Harper, 2008; Palmer et al., 2009), intrusive advising and counseling (bolstered by early alert systems) must be enacted and used (Wood & Hilton, 2012). Moreover, research on Black men in college suggests that intrusivity in the classroom is also needed; where faculty members are authentically friendly and caring from the onset, proactively monitor student progress, are attentive to student concerns, and provide regular validation (Wood & Turner, 2011). These are particularly important actions for Black men, as they are typically apprehensive about engaging in the classroom due to their awareness of stigmatized views of them as being academically inferior and unintelligent (Wood, 2014). In addition to classroom intrusivity, the teaching and learning enterprise must also be undergirded by engaging pedagogical practices (Harper, 2010) via culturally relevant pedagogy (Bush, 2004; Pope, 2006). Culturally relevant pedagogy is needed in order to aid students in making real-world connections with course content that has applicability to their socio-cultural realities.

In terms of the meta-level direction of the institutional practice, strategic planning is necessary to provide a framework for continuous improvement. As such, strategic planning is integral to enhancing Black male success in college (Harper, 2006). Most institutions of higher education have strategic plans. Strategic planning processes should target outcomes for historically underrepresented students and serve as an institutional guidepost for achieving stated outcomes. Institutions are responsible for ensuring that elements of this plan are then imbedded in services, programs, initiatives, and processes to ensure the success of Black men. Strategic plans to improve Black male success (like all strategic plans) should be constructed collaboratively through genuine dialogue (Harper, 2009), key in on knowledge sharing (Kezar, 2005a; 2005b), and make allowance for informed experimentation of practices (Garvin, 1994). Inevitably, diversification of campus personnel should be one component of any strategic plan for long-term support of Black men. Information derived from organizational learning processes should be used to inform new hiring and orientation procedures to ensure that new and diverse personnel are brought into the organization that can support the strategic plan. In doing so, equity will emerge in hiring, retention, and advancement processes as a key responsibility for institutional leaders. Moreover, a core practice consideration for improving Black male success is professional development (Wood & Hilton, 2012). Institutions are responsible for ensuring that professional development activities are in place and used by campus personnel. To improve outcomes for underserved students, professional development must focus on awareness of racialized practices and differential consequences (i.e., in the application of policy and practice) for people of color (Bensimon, 2005). Specific to Black men, professional development must focus on illuminating differential outcomes, highlighting institutional responsibility for inequities, and creating awareness of practices that foster inequity (e.g., micro-aggressions, stereotypes of Black men, messages regarding men and masculinities).

Resources is the next key domain of institutional responsibility. Resources refer to the financial, intellectual, and human capital assets at the disposal of the institution. All domains examined within this chapter have intersections with resource responsibilities. There are numerous sub-domains where resource responsibilities are evident; these include resources for students (e.g., institutional aid, work study, conference attendance), programs and services, and key initiatives. College leaders should strategically allocate resources to these sub-domains to enhance outcomes for all students, including Black men. Leaders concerned with outcomes for men of color should ensure that resources allocated build institutional capacity (Harris et al., 2010). A true marker on institutional commitment in a given area is the degree to which that area is resourced. In reality, many initiatives designed to improve outcomes for Black men are chronically under-resourced and therefore cannot impact student success. Improving outcomes for any underserved student population should be a core responsibility for all college personnel, not simply another ‘task’ for one or two
individuals. Sustainability is essential, as many efforts to improve outcomes for men of color are not sustainable since they rely upon one-time funds, intermittent funding, and staff with responsibilities in multiple areas (Wood, 2011). While capacity is building, institutions are also responsible for sustaining advancements as supported by institutionalization of dedicated resources. Resources should also be allocated to ensure that appropriate assessment and inquiry are occurring throughout the institution (Dowd, Pak, & Bensimon, 2013). This will increase the likelihood that already limited resources are maximized and being effectively used to redress critical areas of concern.

Institutions also have accountability for their structures—both their physical structure and their compositional structure. The physical structure refers to the physical characteristics of institutions, such as their class sizes, office locations, and images. Compositional structures refer to the composition and distribution of their administration, faculty, staff, and students. In terms of the prior—physical structures—colleges and universities should be designed in a manner that fosters interactions among faculty, staff, and students. For instance, the location of faculty office and key resources (e.g., multicultural center, financial aid, advising, tutoring) should encourage interactions for all students. Further, though not specific to Black men, one of the most salient critiques of the physical structure of an institution for students of color comes from Turner (1994) in her article, “Guests in someone else’s house.” Her research, based on interviews with students of color attending a predominantly White research institution, found that they felt like unwelcomed guests at their own institution. She stated,

Like students of color in the university climate, guests have no history in the house they occupy. There are no photographs on the wall that reflect their image. Their paraphernalia, paintings, scents, and sounds do not appear in the house. There are many barriers for students who constantly occupy a guest status that keep them from doing their best work.

(p. 356)

In total, she noted that institutions with these physical structures (as well as isolation social structures) prevented students from establishing a sense of belonging, and therefore solidified their isolated status as the ‘other’ or the ‘guest.’ As with the students in Turner’s research, Black men often occupy a guest status on college and university campuses. Too often, their histories, art, and culture are not represented through images (e.g., pictures, paintings, statutes), thereby constraining them from developing a sense of belonging. Given this, institutional leaders are accountable for ensuring that the physical structures of their institutions are attuned to the diverse needs of the study body.

With respect to the compositional structure of colleges and universities, leaders are responsible for ensuring that access to the institution for students is equitable (Harris et al., 2010) and proportionally reflective of the communities, regions, and states served. For Black men, Harper (2006) sets a higher standard for proportional representation for Black men. Proportional representation is the relative percentage comparison between students, faculty, staff, and administration in comparison to a reference population (Wood, 2008). Harper (2006) contends that an adequate reference population for Black men is athletic teams. Typically, while Black men are underrepresented throughout colleges and universities, they are overrepresented in revenue generating sports (e.g., basketball, football). Therefore, he suggests that the percentage of Black men in college should be proportional to the percentage of these men in sports. Four-year colleges and universities expend extensive resources to ensure that high-quality Black male athletes attend their institutions; the same level of intensity should be directed to recruiting and retaining high-achieving athletic and non-athletic Black men. Beyond the student body, colleges are also responsible for ensuring that proportionality is achieved with personnel who are intellectually (Kezar, 2005b) and ethnically diverse.

Colleges should be committed to hiring, retaining, and advancing Black male personnel (e.g., faculty, staff, administration) (Harper, 2006). For example, prior research has shown that diverse faculty benefit students of color by serving as role models and mentors to them and creating an affirming campus climate (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). This is a particularly important point given that research on Black men has suggested that they are more likely to be engaged by grounds keepers, maintenance technicians, and food service workers, who they report as the primary group of campus personnel from whom they receive encouragement and validation. In contrast, they noted that they have fewer interactions with faculty members, as faculty avoid interactions with them. The key difference between these campus personnel is that the prior group (e.g., grounds keepers, maintenance crew, service workers) were more likely to reflect their same race or racial/gender background than faculty members (Wood, 2010; 2014). However, colleges should not hire personnel of color simply for their ethnic backgrounds. The compositional structure of the college should be replete with personnel and potential hires from all racial/ethnic and gender groups that illustrate a high degree of cultural competency and prior success with diverse students. In other words, colleges should be wary of hiring a faculty member who responds to questions about their ability to teach ethnically diverse populations by stating that “I treat everyone the same, regardless of their background.” Instead, individuals who are attentive to differential socio-cultural experiences based on student characteristics are needed to advance outcomes for all students. Ultimately, the compositional structure of the institution should be a tool to foster belonging and affirmation.

Arguably the most core aspect of institutional responsibility is the campus climate. The campus climate refers to the day-to-day dispositions (e.g., affective
response, self-concept), thinking, and self-perceptions held within the college or university. We see the climate as being manifested in four primary sub-domains, including the organizational psyche as well as normative communications, beliefs, and actions. The organizational psyche refers to the general assumptions and mores held throughout the institution. To improve outcomes for underserved students (as a whole) critical consciousness is needed within the institution (Dowd et al., 2013). That is, organizations should be conscious of their typical practices and beliefs, and be critical about how the ‘status quo’ or ‘business as usual’ can lead to exclusion, isolation, and marginality. Instead, the organization must have a ‘sense of urgency’ about improving outcomes for Black men. This urgency is demarcated by placing a high institutional priority on addressing institutional programs, policies, and practices that subjugate these men (Harper, 2009).

Moreover, the organization must also embrace an internal locus of control, where the institution recognizes its ability to control the academic futures and outcomes of Black men (Harris et al., 2010). This is juxtaposed with traditional external locus of control, where the students, their precollege experiences, and external pressures (e.g., family commitments, work obligations, life stress) have primary control over their academic matters. This point is key; an organizational internal locus of control is essential, as it is a critical ingredient for colleges and universities to improve outcomes for Black male students. In tandem, organizations that are guided by critical consciousness, place high institutional priority on Black male success, and assume the power to improve outcomes for these men, will have the critical agency to do so.

Institutions also bear responsibility for the confluence of normative communication, beliefs, and actions that shape the institutional climate for Black men. By normative, we are referring to the typical modes of operation and messaging that permeate the campus climate. Organizational leaders are responsible for providing campus climates that are authentically affirming, welcoming, non-isolating, and validating (Harper, 2010; Harris et al., 2010). Moreover, the utility of college as a tool for achieving desired life outcomes must be reinforced (Wood & Hilton, 2012). Such climates occur when there is perceived and real support from faculty and peers, and when there are high expectations for Black males as well as for those serving them (Harper, 2009).

Institutions are also responsible for providing educational environments for Black men that are anti-racist and color conscious (Bensimon, 2005). Anti-racism involves vigorous exposure of false assumptions and mores as well as progressive action to eradicate racism. For instance, awareness of and response to racial and gender micro-aggressions (Harris et al., 2010) and White privilege (Bensimon, 2005) is needed. The aforementioned affirming and anti-racist environments can only occur when intergroup dialogue and open communication are fostered (Harper, 2009, Kezar, 2005a, 2005b) among key stakeholders (e.g., administrators, faculty, staff, students).

Colleges and universities also have institutional responsibility for strategic partnerships with PreK-12, other postsecondary institutions, and industry. With respect to PreK-12 education, colleges are responsible for making students aware of assumed expectations and competencies for collegiate enrollment and success (Wood & Hilton, 2012). Partnerships with local school districts are necessary to ensure that students are being socialized early on for college preparedness and success. This requires programming and services that bring future students ‘to the ivory tower’ (e.g., community events, academic summer camps, college tours) as well as bringing the ‘ivory tower to them’ (e.g., outreach, off-site dual credit opportunities). Partnerships with PreK-12 should include, as a core strategy, the involvement of diverse student representatives who can serve as visual role models to show students that college is for them. This can be particularly important for men of color who are oftentimes socialized in prior schooling to perceive school as a White female domain (due to the predominance of White female teachers in PreK-12) (Harris & Harper, 2008). Specifically, Harris and Harper (2008) suggest that the compositional structure of personnel in PreK-12 has inculcated perceptions that school is not for students of color, nor men. Therefore, when a Black student engages in school, they are often perceived as ‘acting White’ or countering their racial identity. Similarly, when boys engage in school, they may be teased by peers for being a wuss or sissy. The confluence of both the racial and gender identities for Black males further intensifies these messages (Harris & Wood, in press). Given the aforementioned, colleges and universities are responsible for disrupting erroneous messages about identity and school.

In addition to partnerships with PreK-12, colleges and universities are also responsible for partnerships with other postsecondary institutions. This is a particularly salient recommendation for community colleges. Community colleges serve as the primary pathway into postsecondary education for men of color. Moreover, Black men often enter the community college with the intent to transfer to a four-year college or university (Wood & Palmer, 2014). As noted by several scholars, successful transfer is the result of strong partnerships, articulation agreements, and mutual commitments between both sending and receiving institutions (Jain, Herrera, Bernal, & Solórzano, 2011; Turner, 1988, 1990, 1992; Turner & Fryer, 1990). Thus, sending and receiving institutions must take responsibility for fluid transitions between institutions that foster success. Finally, partnerships with industry are also key to Black male success. In particular, colleges should establish partnerships that result in professional opportunities (e.g., internships, practicum, fellowships, work experiences) that allow graduates to better position themselves for the job market. For example, research on Black male collegians has shown that they are often concentrated in physically demanding jobs, work late night hours, and have jobs that are temporary in nature (Wood, 2010; Wood & Jones, in press). Such experiences
organizational learning places strong emphasis on collaborative inquiry teams (Kezar, 2005a, 2005b) that employ practitioner-based models (Harris et al., 2010). As a result, inquiry is not solely a responsibility of researchers (e.g., faculty, institutional research personnel) but of all members within the organization. This is a critical aspect of any learning organization, as individuals may be more likely to respond to findings that they generate from their data, as opposed to results presented to them by ‘others.’ Collaborative practitioner teams should also engage in reflective practice (Dowd et al., 2013), where key stakeholders reflect upon their role in fostering the outcomes that they have produced.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The totality of the eight domains of institutional responsibility (e.g., programs, policies, practices, resources, structures, climates, partnerships, inquiry) work to produce positive student outcomes. The benefit of these domains as embodied within the CAO model is the proper specification of a historically mis-specified model of student success. This revised orientation restates the burden of student success on organizations, not individual students. To provide clarity on how to enact this model in the areas of research, policy, and practice, the next chapter articulates strategies that are necessary for a focus on institutional responsibility.
Black men’s dismal college enrollments, disengagement and underachievement, and low rates of baccalaureate degree completion are among the most pressing and complex issues in American higher education. Perhaps more troubling than the problems themselves is the way they are continually mishandled by educators, policymakers, and concerned others. Amplifying the troubled status of Black male students at all levels of education has, unfortunately, yielded few solutions. Thus, educational outcomes for this population have remained stagnant or worsened in recent years. This is attributable, at least in part, to the deficit orientation that is constantly reinforced in media, academic research journals, and educational practice.

(Harper, 2012 p. 1)

Institutional change is a natural outgrowth of institutional responsibility for Black male success. However, as noted by Harper (2012), shifting the burden of collegiate success to the student via a deficit orientation will not produce desirable results. While research and practice focused on improving outcomes for Black men has been spurred by authentic intentionality for advancement, we concur with Harper (2012, 2014) that the deficit orientation has inhibited progress. Specifically, we point to the frameworks of old (e.g., Astin, 1984, 1993; Kuh, 1987; Tinto, 1975) that have shaped the epistemological and philosophical orientation of scholarship and practice as contributing causes for disparate outcomes.

These research paradigms have led to flawed research and interventions because they assumed a locus of causality that begins with the student, not with the institution. Because of this detrimental fallacy, scholars and practitioners have developed questions, designed studies, analyzed data, created interventions, initiated programs, and revised services underpinned by foundational misconceptions. As a result, after decades of mis-specification, colleges and universities still do not adequately serve the lion’s share of Black men. As noted
by Harper (2014) despite the last 15 years of research and action around Black men, their plight in education has only worsened. We believe this is due to a philosophical foundation that is frail. Guided by the CAO model in the previous chapter, this chapter articulates core elements of research and practice focused on institutional responsibility.

**TOWARDS A FIRM FOUNDATION**

The importance of a firm foundation cannot be understated. The biblical allucy of a house built on sand versus a house built on rock illustrates the importance of a proper foundation. The house built on sand was supported by a weak foundation, so when tested by the powers of the rain, floods, wind, the house fell. In contrast, the house built on rock withstood the rains, the floods, and the winds. Despite all the beating withstood, the house did not fall. A conceptualization of factors affecting student success beginning with the student’s effort, background, and responsibilities represents the house built on sand (e.g., Astin, 1984, 1993; Kuh, 1987; Tinto, 1975). Despite the ornate walls of scholarship and seemingly firm ceilings of practice erected on this foundation, the house itself remains weak and ineffective. Tested by the rains of contentious organizational governance, the floods of student diversity, and the winds of dwindling institutional resources, the house will fall by fostering stratification and inequity (particularly for Black men). In contrast, a foundation rooted in institutional responsibility and accountability represents the house built on rock. Given the strong foundation, the walls of scholarship and ceilings of practice can withstand the environmental pressures while fostering positive outcomes for students. Unfortunately, much of the scholarship on student success in postsecondary education has been built on a weak foundation. Therefore, the effect of this scholarship on practice has been futile, particularly for historically underrepresented and underserved men.

The arrival at this critical point of futility is a function of the interrelationship between epistemology, ontology, and methodology. These elements are all critical components of a paradigm. A paradigm is a philosophy that guides one’s view of the world. As noted by Entman (1993) a paradigm is “a general theory that informs most scholarship on the operation and outcomes of any particular system of thought and action” (p. 395). Guba and Lincoln (1994) noted that these paradigms address several primary areas of concern: (a) ontology: “the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what . . . can be known about it” (p. 108); (b) epistemology: “the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known” (p. 108); and (c) methodology: how “the inquirer (would-be knower) goes about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known” (p. 108).

Epistemology and ontology shape the core assumptions that undergird methodology. For the ‘traditional,’ status-quo research on student success, what can be known and the relationship with the known begins with the individual and focuses on their relationship with greater social life. This is likely due to the predominance of sociological disciplinary lenses used in higher education research. Tierney (1992) noted that much of higher education research on student success emanates from the works of Spady (1970) and Tinto (1975, 1993), whose research is clearly sociological. Tierney noted that their work was grounded in the writings of Durkheim, “the father of modern sociology [who] posited that the degree to which an individual was integrated into the fabric of societal institutions lessened the likelihood that someone experienced anomie” (p. 606).

This historical underpinning of the sociological tradition provides insight into how the focus on the student as opposed to the institution began. As a result of this disciplinary orientation, the methodologies employed to examine student success have focused on students’ background (e.g., high school GPA, parents’ highest level of education, income), academic (e.g., use of services, discussions with faculty, hours spent studying), and social (e.g., friendships on campus, participation in clubs) predictors of integration, involvement, and engagement. Even Bean and Metzner’s (1985) model of non-traditional, student attrition (which is widely viewed as counter to Tinto’s paradigm) has avoided any meaningful focus on institutional factors affecting student success. Bean and Metzner extended the importance of students’ external environments and psychological outcomes as core attrition factors, noting that the external lives of students shape their experiences in colleges and can pull them away from academic matters. In attempting to provide a critique of Tinto, Bean and Metzner simply extended the deficit tradition.

In the previous chapter, we articulated the CAO model that is buttressed by the eight domains of institutional responsibility. Here, we highlight key methodological strategies for investigating Black male success for an institutional responsibility research (hereafter referred to as IRR). These elements include: (a) an applied orientation; (b) appropriate theorizing; (c) accounting for student effort; (d) disaggregation of data; (e) focus on the effect of institutional actions; (f) perceptions of the institution; and (g) personal factors as filters. These elements are essential for improving upon prior research.

**SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR IRR ON BLACK MALE COLLEGIANS**

**Applied Orientation**

The first aspect of IRR is a dedication to the applied orientation. Research designed to improve organizations should be predominantly (though not entirely)
applied in nature. By applied, we suggest that this research should be focused on having a direct effect on organizational outcomes (e.g., academic performance, affective development, cognitive development). Research that is most likely to improve desired outcomes will tend to be less theoretical and more interested in how the results will directly and tangibly inform the eight domains of institutional responsibility (i.e., programs, policies, practices, resources, structures, climates, inquiry, partnerships). In contrast, research for the sake of knowledge production with no tangible recommendations for change will not improve the lives of Black men (or other underrepresented groups). This notion of a focus on applied research emanates from a critical race theory perspective dedicated to uncovering inequity, challenging domination, and fostering new systems of power through social justice (Yosso, 2005). Bensimon (2011) suggests that research without an applied orientation is like a physician who examines a patient, theorizes about the problem, but never treats the patient to improve their health. Many would contend that such treatment would be malpractice. Similarly for research on historically underrepresented men (such as Black men), researchers who understand the multiplicity of challenges facing them yet do not provide concrete recommendations for treatment are engaged in negligence. Thus, to improve outcomes for Black men, research should provide concrete recommendations that are accessible to lay audiences that empower them to better serve these men.

Appropriate Theorizing

Appropriate theorizing is the second element of research on Black men focused on institutional responsibility. As noted in Chapter 3, the majority of scholarship on Black men has employed traditional frameworks (e.g., Bandura, 1986; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Tinto, 1975). Moreover, these frameworks have often been developed on populations of White men in four-year colleges and universities. Further, we have argued that these frameworks reify inequity rather than produce parity. Instead, frameworks that have been created specific to the Black male experience are woefully underutilized. In this chapter and in Chapter 4, we illustrate how the traditional frameworks have placed the onus of student success on the student as opposed to the institution. Therefore, future scholarship on Black men should employ frameworks attentive to the unique yet distinctive (non-homogenous) realities of Black men (e.g., African American Male Theory (Bush & Bush, 2013a), Anti-Deficit Achievement Theory (Harper, 2010, 2012), Expressions of Spirituality (Herndon, 2003), Prove-Them-Wrong Syndrome (Moore et al., 2003), and Capital Identity Projection (Wood & Essien-Wood, 2012)) as well as lenses that place the onus of responsibility on the institutions that serve them (e.g., the SEO model (Harris & Wood, in press), Eight Standards of Institutional Efforts for Black Men (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012)). Moreover, we recommend the use of the CAO model to focus directly on institutional actions (e.g., programs, policies, practices, resources, climates, structures) influencing outcomes for these men.

Controlling for Student Effort

The third core element for institutional responsibility research on Black men is controlling for student effort. Typically, student effort has been measured via timespending patterns (e.g., time spent studying, preparing for class, completing assignments), active learning (e.g., asking questions in class, making class presentations, preparing multiple drafts of papers, completing readings on time), and action control (i.e., measures of students’ focus on school, work ethic, and drive). When used as independent variables and/or predictors of desired outcomes (e.g., engagement, achievement, persistence), these variables simply reinforce a perspective focused on what the student is or is not doing to facilitate their success. Qualitatively, this involves findings themes evident across men whose levels of effort and engagement are varied.

Quantitatively, we contend that the analogous approach is to employ student effort (or related measures) as a control variable instead of using effort as independent or predictor variables. This approach will hold constant the differential effect of student effort and allow the research to hone in on the relationship between institutional predictors (e.g., faculty validation, service efficacy, high impact practices) and student success outcomes. One clear example of this comes from Wood and Ireland (2014) in their research on determinants of faculty-student engagement for Black men in the community college. Their research used active learning as a control variable, and then focused on the effect of institutional program and services (e.g., learning communities, orientation, study skills courses), college climates (e.g., college-level sense of belonging and diversity interactions), and college characteristics (e.g., college size, urbanicity) to examine the role of these factors on fostering environments of engagement. Their research highlighted the benefits of learning communities, study skills, courses, and orientation programming for engagement.

Disaggregation

The fourth key component of effective, institutionally focused research on Black men is disaggregation. The overwhelming majority of research on Black men in higher education portrays them as a single group (see critiques by Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2004, 2005, 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010). This perceptive avoids acknowledgement of their unique backgrounds, interactions, cultural variations, affiliations, and ethnicities (Harper & Nichols, 2008; Palmer & Wood, 2012; Strayhorn, 2013). A growing body of research on
Black men has increasingly focused on differential nuances, acknowledging that institutions provide different learning environments that create disparate experiential realities for Black men (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2004; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010; Wood & Turner, 2011).

Key differences within the Black male population cannot be trivialized. From an institutional responsibility perspective, heterogeneity requires programming, policies, structures, and resources that serve the unique needs of students. For instance, professional development programming to enhance faculty members’ ability to adequately serve their students requires an understanding of the distinctiveness across student populations. As a result, disaggregation of Black men by key characteristics and intersections is necessary (Palmer & Wood, 2012). For example, quantitative models that examine the effect of institutions on Black male success should examine how those relationships differ between African Americans, Mixed-Race Blacks, West Africans, East Africans, Afro-Latinos etc. without collapsing them into a single group for analytic purposes. Moreover, intersections of class, ability status, sexual orientation, and other salient identities should be modeled as separate sub-groups, not solely as control variables.

In addition, there are key differences between Black male populations across institutional types (e.g., HBCUs, community colleges, PWIs, MSIs, for-profits). For example, Black men in community colleges (in comparison to their four-year counterparts) are more likely to be older, have children, be married, and to have delayed their enrollment into postsecondary education (Wood, 2013). Given these key differences, there is also a need for further disaggregation by institutional type (Palmer et al., in press; Wood, 2013). We believe that qualitative researchers have been more attuned to these key within-group differences and intersections; however, results are still often presented as salient themes across men, rather than salient themes within men.

A Focus on Institutional Actions

The fifth aspect of IRR is a focus on the effect of institutional actions. In the prior chapter, we explicated eight core domains of institutional responsibility, including: programs, policies, practices, resources, structures, climates, inquiry, and partnerships. The core of IRR is an intensive focus on the influence of institutional action in these domains on Black male student success (e.g., persistence, achievement, attainment, transition, labor, market outcomes). In general, IRR should focus on how these eight domains are manifested and enacted. Moreover, this research should emphasize colleges and universities trying to enhance their success in these areas. Harper (2014) extols the importance of this approach, noting that prior research on Black men has tended:

Harper’s (2010, 2012) anti-deficit achievement framework presents a compelling repositioning of questioning needed in a new line of research on Black men. He provides examples of how to reframe questions relevant to them. For example, instead of asking “Why are Black male undergraduates so disengaged in campus leadership positions and out-of-class activities?” he recommends asking “What compelled Black male students to pursue leadership and engagement opportunities on their campus?” While Harper provides several examples of anti-deficit framing, he also provides an example of institutional responsibility framing. For instance, as opposed to inquiring “Why are Black male students’ grade point averages often the lowest among both sexes and all racial/ethnic groups on many campuses?” he suggests that practitioners instead ask “What resources proved most effective in helping Black male achievers earn GPAs above 3.0 in a variety of majors, including STEM fields?” (p. 68). Following Harper’s logic, IRR requires a repositioning of the typical questions and lines of inquiry that frame research. In Table 5.1, we present how research and practice from an institutional responsibility lens can reframe typical lines of inquiry on Black men.

Perceptions of the Institution

A sixth component of IRR research is a focus on perceptions of the institution. Researchers should examine how students believe they are viewed by institutional affiliates (e.g., faculty, staff, administration) as well as other students. Their perceptions of others’ views of them help to frame the messaging, microaggressions, and nuanced dynamics that emanate from the culture of the institution. For instance, research on sense of belonging serves as an example of this recommendation. Strayhorn (2012) defined sense of belonging as: ‘students’ perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)” (p. 3).

The ways in which sense of belonging has been measured by scholars differs. For instance, Maestas, Vazques, and Zehr (2007) measure belonging using students’ perceptions of their connectedness to campus. Similarly, other scholars have operationalized belonging as students’ perceptions of ‘fit’ with the institution
### Table 5.1 Reframing Practice and Research from an Institutional Responsibility Lens

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<th>Student responsibility framing</th>
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<td>Why are these guys so unprepared?</td>
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<td>Why are they so disengaged in campus life?</td>
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<td>Why don't they care?</td>
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<td>Are they seeking out help when they need it?</td>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why are these guys so unprepared?</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have low yield rates, why are they enrolling elsewhere and not here?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why are they so disengaged in campus life?</td>
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<td>Why don't they care?</td>
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<td>Are they seeking out help when they need it?</td>
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#### Practice
- How are we partnering with PreK-12 to ensure Black men are aware of college entrance requirements?
- How are we collaborating with high schools to ensure that Black men are participating in dual credit opportunities?
- How are we transitioning Black men from remedial services to academic excellence programming?
- How does our recruitment process impede access for Black men?
- How do initial experiences with admissions and financial aid staff deter them from coming here?
- How are we using institutional research personnel to identify how our climate is conveying messages that inhibit access?
- How are we purposively engaging Black men in high-impact practices (e.g., research experiences, academic clubs, study abroad)?
- How are we remediating our faculty members to better engage Black men through culturally relevant practices?
- How can we ensure that our student affairs staff are valuing our Black men?
- Are faculty creating an environment of belonging that communicates care for Black men?
- How do we ensure our faculty are aware of microaggressions that they are conveying to Black men?
- Are we assessing Black male perceptions of care from our student service staff?
- What intrusive services (e.g., mandatory advising, tutoring) are we providing to ensure they get help when they need it?
- What kinds of professional development programming do we have in place that help us better serve our male students?
- Are we using early alert systems to identify students who may need some extra support?

#### Research
- What institutional practices predict Black male persistence?
- How do campus administrators build stakeholder relationships across the institution to better serve Black men?
- What are the most integral programs for increasing non-cognitive outcomes (e.g., self-efficacy, locus of control, intrinsic interest) for Black men?
- What aspects of college programs, policies, and practices result in differential outcomes for men by the intersections of age, income, disability etc.
- How do Black men make meaning of their experience in college?
- How are institutions fostering negative racialized and gendered experiences for Black men?
- What messages are being communicated to Black men through the institutions' compositional diversity?
- How are institutions fostering social stratification among Black men?
- What causes Black men to be resilient?
- What institutional barriers are in place that require Black men to be resilient?
- How can colleges and universities empower Black males to succeed?
- How do institutions use inquiry (e.g., assessment, evaluation, research) to better understand the effectiveness of their service to Black men?
- Are Black men making connections with their faculty members in and out of the classroom?
- Do faculty members make Black men feel comfortable interacting with them in and out of the classroom?
- What are effective training programs that can remediate ineffective faculty?
- Do faculty members validate Black men?
- What proportion of between college variance in student outcomes is explained by validating experiences from faculty?
predictor variables (e.g., perceptions of racial-gender stereotypes from faculty, validating experiences from faculty, and faculty-student engagement) were modeled as predictors of perceptions of belonging with masculine identity (e.g., school as a feminine domain, breadwinner orientation, competitive ethos, help-seeking behaviors) and racial identity variables used as interaction terms. Thus, they were able to make statements about the effect of faculty on Black males’ perceptions of belonging while still accounting for how these institutional factors are modified via respondents’ identities. A similar approach can be taken with cross-level interactions (in multi-level modeling) to examine aggregate measures of institution climate with personal mediators. For qualitative research, a similar approach can be taken, where examinations of perceptions, experiences, and meaning-making from institutional actions (e.g., validation from staff, perceptions of care from staff, campus racial climate) are examined through the lens of intersectionality.

A PROACTIVE RESPONSE TO CRITICISM

Now that we have articulated our perspective on IRR, we would like to take some space here to proactively address two potential critiques of the ideology. Scholars and practitioners alike may perceive this work as ‘blaming the institution.’ In no way do we suggest that the institution is the root cause of Black male underachievement. Nor are practitioners solely to blame for deleterious outcomes for Black men. To be clear, one (among several) root cause of inadequate actions relevant to Black men originates from researchers and theoreticians. One of the scholarly community’s roles is to serve as ‘thought leaders’ for the academic training of practitioners. Unfortunately for Black males, the core notions underlying the training of practitioners have been flawed. In turn, practitioners have adhered to the predominant ideologies emanating from their academic training, focusing on students as the locus of causality for achievement as opposed to the institutions that serve them.

Given this context, we concur with Bensimon and Malcom (2012) that rather than being solely focused on ‘remediating’ the student, there is a need to remediate the faculty and staff that serve them. In this vein, they argued that there is a need to “remEDIATE practices—in admissions and recruitment, in classrooms, in tutoring centers, in science labs, in counseling services—that are failing students of color, and to create new practices where needed” (pp. 3–4). To remediate suggests that in prior training one did not learn (or was not taught) the necessary tools and concepts that were needed. In this case, we contend that practitioners have been improperly trained by thought leaders, of which the root cause is one of epistemological and ontological origin.

Another similar critique that is necessary to address is the role of student responsibility. Some may perceive this volume as being fully avoidant of addressing...
the students’ role in studying, attending class, meeting with faculty, and the execution of other necessary academic habits. Unequivocally, we believe that students are responsible for critical self-agency to improve their own lives. Students have responsibility for their academic outcomes, as such; we do not seek to belittle the self-determination necessary for success. That being said, we perceive the conversation on responsibility as a pendulum, with one end of the continuum representing student responsibility and the other end representing institutional responsibility. For decades, the focus of student responsibility has been so predominant that the pendulum must swing in the other direction toward institutional responsibility.

Specifically, the years of practice relevant to Black men that has focused on student responsibility have produced little in the way of improvement (Harper, 2014). That is because, like all students, Black males are by-products of the environments that they are socialized in. As noted by Marks (2014), “how do we blame [students] for reacting to environments that we create?” In contrast, a student educated in an environment of affirmation, high expectations, and racial parity will succeed. Thus, the focus on institutional responsibility that empowers Black men is needed. Of course, a student attends college for only a few short years. While these colleges and universities cannot be expected to undo the damage that has been caused by the preponderance of their precollege experiences, colleges can and must make strides to better support Black men.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has provided a description of seven core elements that are indicative of institutional responsibility research on Black men. These elements include: (a) an applied orientation; (b) appropriate theorizing; (c) accounting for student effort; (d) disaggregation of data; (e) focus on the effect of institutional actions; (f) perceptions of the institution; and (g) personal factors as filters. As expounded upon in this chapter, we believe that prior research and practice on Black men is fundamentally flawed, in that the onus of success rests on students, as opposed to the institutions that serve them. While we do not seek to take away the importance of students’ responsibility for their own success, we do envision that Black men will experience enhanced outcomes (e.g., persistence, achievement, attainment) through a remediation of research and practice that has failed to improve their educational realities and outcomes.

NOTE

1 Readers interested in a more specific articulation of ways to improve research on Black men (in general) should see Shaun Harper’s (2014) chapter, “(Re)setting the agenda for college men of color: Lessons learned from a 15-year movement to improve Black male student success.”

Chapter 6

Strategies for Recruiting and Supporting Black Men in Higher Education

In the prior two chapters, we explicated the CAO model of institutional responsibility for Black male success. We also discussed strategies for using the model to advance research on Black men in postsecondary education. In this chapter, we turn to the use of the model for institutional practice. Herein, we discuss differing strategies for ‘Action,’ embodied in the CAO model that has direct implications for Black male recruitment, retention, and student affairs programming. Specifically, this chapter provides an in-depth description of practice recommendations based on three ‘Action’ elements: partnerships, climates, and programs. The three areas are highlighted given that researchers have been more diligent in evaluating strategies in these areas.

CAO: PARTNERSHIPS

The importance of partnerships was identified as a core institutional responsibility in the CAO model. Specifically, partnerships that foster college preparedness and fluid transitions between institutions (e.g., high school to college, community college to university), were extolled. Moreover, given the information discussed in Chapter 2 regarding issues that hinder the academic preparedness of Black males in PreK-12, postsecondary education institutions should focus on establishing a comprehensive alliance with their local PreK-12 school district to help increase preparedness among Black males for higher education. In fact, Howard (2006) noted that the most critical intervention that colleges and universities can implement to increase access and success among Black males is the formation of an educational alliance between PreK-12 and postsecondary education. There are several trends occurring in higher education, which make the implementation of educational alliances between higher education and PreK-12 particularly urgent. First, affirmative action seems to be increasingly facing demise.