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(Re)Setting the Agenda for College Men of Color: Lessons Learned from a 15-Year Movement to Improve Black Male Student Success

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Gordon, Gordon, and Nembhard (1994) and Brown (2011) highlight consistent themes in the social science literature on Black men in America. In these syntheses of studies published over several decades, these authors critique the hopelessness of this population as portrayed in media, books, academic research journals, and the collective imagination of U.S. citizens and others across the globe. They also problemize how Black men are routinely characterized as an endangered species and a group in crisis or at risk in various social milieu. Brown cites publications that date from the 1930s. Accordingly, pathological discourses that caricature Black men as lazy, incompetent, untrustworthy, and undeserving of respectability in our society are not new. Erik Eckholm's (2006) article in *The New York Times*, "Plight Deepens for Black Men, Studies Warn," reinforced much of what previous generations of scholars and journalists have repeatedly offered.

Consistent with writings in other disciplines, Harper and Davis (2012) conclude that years of published research on Black male students at all levels of education advance one long-standing narrative: They don't care about school. Specifically concerning higher education scholarship and practice,

Harper (2009) argues, "Anyone who takes time to read about them could confidently conclude that Black male undergraduates are troubled, their future is bleak, they all do poorly, and there is little that can be done to reverse long-standing outcomes disparities that render them among the least likely to succeed in college" (pp. 699–700).

Again, this depressing narrative is persistent and pervasive. It has been documented over and over again, and at this point it is unlikely to be surprising to most Americans within and outside the race.

Despite the durability of deficit-oriented narratives about Black male students in education and society, social panic concerning their educational attainment and outcomes in postsecondary institutional contexts seems to have worsened over a 15-year period (1997–2012). In particular, educators and administrators, as well as philanthropic organizations and professional associations, have become increasingly fascinated with the status of Black undergraduate men. Michael J. Cuyjet's (1997) "Helping African American Men Succeed in College" did much to raise consciousness among various stakeholders in higher education. Four years later, the magazine *Black Issues in Higher Education* (now *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*) posed an attention-grabbing question on its front cover, "How Much Does Higher Education Matter to Black Males?" that corresponds with an article inside by Roach (2001). That question and others like it have since been at the center of local and national conversations among postsecondary actors; much has been done on college campuses and elsewhere to improve Black undergraduate men's success. Notwithstanding, their enrollments, academic performance, and rates of baccalaureate degree attainment remain just as troublesome now as they were 15 years ago. But why? And what can be learned as various stakeholders introduce future initiatives in response to issues affecting Black undergraduate men, as well as Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI), Latino, and Native American male collegians?

This chapter chronicles the 15-year emphasis on Black male students in U.S. higher education. It first catalogs a range of efforts enacted between 1997 and 2012, and then explores why Black male student enrollments, engagement, and degree attainment rates remained relatively unchanged. This examination of the shortcomings and shortsightedness of these efforts could prove instructive for educators and administrators who attempt to improve outcomes among college men of color. Noteworthy is that Latino, AAPI, and Native American undergraduate men combined have received less attention than Black male collegians over the past decade and a half. Hence, this chapter is based on a movement intended to improve Black male student success but concludes with recommendations for future efforts aimed at all four groups, individually and collectively.

Cataloging a 15-Year Frenzy

Jackson and Moore (2008) raised questions about the burgeoning response to a so-called crisis among Black male students in education. Specifically, they asked if recent efforts were by-products of "popular media infatuation" (p. 847), or if educators, policymakers, and concerned others were authentically committed to enacting the structural changes required to reverse long-standing trends. In 2008 Open Society Foundations (OSF) introduced its Campaign for Black Male Achievement, which aims to address the social, political, economic, and educational forces that negatively affect outcomes for Black American boys and men. Three years later, OSF pledged $30 million to the New York City Young Men's Initiative, while the city of New York committed $67.5 million and Bloomberg Philanthropies, $30 million (Harper & Associates, in press). According to Shah and Sato (2012), total annual foundation donations for Black men and boys increased from $10.8 million in 2003 to $28.6 million in 2010, but education investments have been disproportionately concentrated at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Statistics presented in reports on the condition of Black male students in the early stages of the educational pipeline (e.g., Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010; Toldson, 2008, 2011; Toldson & Lewis, 2012) justify the rise in philanthropic spending on K–12 school endeavors. Comparatively, efforts focusing squarely on Black male student success in postsecondary educational contexts have been haphazard and not as well funded.

From 1997 onward, Black male undergraduates has increasingly become a fascinating unit of analysis among researchers and a topic of discussion among professionals at conferences and elsewhere in higher education. For example, more than 70 sessions about the Black undergraduate were presented at annual conferences of the American College Personnel Association and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators during the 15-year period; additional presentations were made at other national meetings for postsecondary educators and administrators. It seems that from one year to the next, more and more highly educated and seemingly well-intentioned people were convinced that something needed to be done about the alarming underrepresentation of Black men among collegegoers and degree earners.

Writings about the challenges confronting Black undergraduate men have been plentiful. Scholars, whose aims were to raise consciousness about these students and subsequently ignite a range of institutional responses, have surely succeeded. More has been written about Black male collegians over the past 15 years than any other specific racialized sex group in higher education (including Black women, White undergraduate men, and other groups of minoritized male students). Table 5.1 lists 11 books published

TABLE 5.1
Books on Black Undergraduate Men Published Between
1997 and 2012

Authors/Editors	*No. of Pages*
Bonner (2010)	217
Byrne (2006)	236
Cuyjet (1997)	110
Cuyjet (2006)	384
Dancy (2012)	220
Frierson, Pearson, & Wyche (2009)	336
Frierson, Wyche, & Pearson (2009)	365
Hilton, Wood, & Lewis (2012)	242
Jones (2004)	178
Palmer & Wood (2012)	224
Ross (1998)	160

since 1997. Bonner (2010), Dancy (2012), Jones (2004), and Ross (1998) are single-authored texts; the others are edited volumes that brought together several scholars from multiple institutions to contribute chapters on various aspects of Black men's experiences and outcomes across a range of institution types. The Byrne (2006) book focuses specifically on historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), whereas each chapter in Hilton et al.'s (2012) book is devoted to Black men in a particular postsecondary context (e.g., community colleges, religiously affiliated institutions, and for-profit universities). Cuyjet's (2006) book also includes nine chapters that showcase various institutional initiatives aimed at Black undergraduate men.

In addition to the 2,672 pages of these 11 books, researchers published more than 60 articles in peer-reviewed academic journals between 1997 and 2012. Some of these empirical studies focused more broadly on Black undergraduate men overall (e.g., Dancy, 2011; Dancy & Brown, 2008; Harper & Nichols, 2008; Harris, Palmer, & Struve, 2011; Jackson, 2012; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008a, 2008b), while others concentrated on specific subgroups and unique institutional environments (namely, HBCUs and community colleges). Twenty-five examples of the latter, including some details about the research methods on which each article is based, are presented in Table 5.2. As shown, the overwhelming majority were single-institution qualitative studies with an average of 27 participants (who in almost every

TABLE 5.2
Select Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles on Black Undergraduate Men

Subgroup/Sector	Article	Site(s)	Research Method	Sample Size
Achievers and student leaders	Bonner (2003)	Multiple (2)	Qualitative	2
	Harper (2009)	Multiple (30)	Qualitative	143
	Harper & Quaye (2007)	Multiple (6)	Qualitative	32
	Harper et al. (2011)	Multiple (6)	Qualitative	52
	Martin & Harris (2006)	Multiple (4)	Qualitative	27
Community colleges	Glenn (2004)	Multiple (2)	Mixed	n/a
	Hagedorn, Maxwell, & Hampton (2002)	Single	Quantitative	202
	Wood (2012)	Multiple	Quantitative	2,235
	Wood, Hilton, & Lewis (2011)	Multiple	Quantitative	575
	Wood & Turner (2011)	Single	Qualitative	28
Gay/bisexual men	Goode-Cross & Good (2009)	Single	Qualitative	7
	Goode-Cross & Tager (2011)	Single	Qualitative	8
	Patton (2011)	Single	Qualitative	6
	Strayhorn, Blakewood, & DeVita (2008)	Single	Qualitative	7
	Strayhorn & Mullins (2012)	Multiple (6)	Qualitative	29

Subgroup/Sector	Article	Site(s)	Research Method	Sample Size
HBCUs	Harper & Gasman (2008)	Multiple (12)	Qualitative	76
	Palmer, Davis, and Hilton (2009)	Single	Qualitative	11
	Riggins, McNeal, & Herndon (2008)	Single	Qualitative	13
	Rodney, Tachia, & Rodney (1997)	Multiple (11)	Quantitative	1,874
	Washington, Wang, & Browne (2009)	Multiple (35)	Quantitative	1,865
Student athletes	Beamon & Bell (2006)	Single	Quantitative	100
	Benson (2000)	Single	Qualitative	8
	Oseguera (2010)	Single	Qualitative	17
	Sellers & Kuperminc (1997)	Multiple (42)	Quantitative	702
	Singer (2005)	Single	Qualitative	4

instance were interviewed only once). Empirical evidence concerning the status of Black undergraduate men was also furnished in a series of research reports (e.g., Harper, 2006; Harper, 2012; Harper & Harris, 2012; Harper, Williams, & Blackman, 2013). Additional writings pertaining to Black male collegians were published in edited books (e.g., Brown, Dancy, & Davis, 2013; Dancy & Brown, 2012; Polite & Davis, 1999; Zamani-Gallaher & Polite, 2010) and special theme issues of peer-reviewed academic journals (e.g., *Journal of Men's Studies*, 2003; *Teachers College Record*, 2006; *American Behavioral Scientist*, 2008; *Journal of Negro Education*, 2009; *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 2011) focusing on Black male students across all levels of education, from preschool through graduate school.

College and university administrators seem to have been persuaded, at least in part, by the preponderance of research published and presented at conferences between 1997 and 2012. It is also likely that alarming academic performance data, low persistence and graduation rates, and firsthand observations of Black male disengagement on their campuses compelled postsecondary professionals to act in myriad ways. Most common was the creation and implementation of mentoring programs that matched Black male college students with faculty, administrators, and staff on their campuses. Another common institutional activity was a 1- to 2-day summit that brought together stakeholders from across the campus and sometimes from multiple institutions in a city or region. The convening typically included remarks from the college president or chief diversity officer about the importance of the event, an inspiring keynote speaker, a series of workshops and panels (which rarely had student presenters), and meals. The cost of an event of this magnitude can easily exceed $20,000. Shown in Table 5.3 are some institutions that hosted Black male summits. University of Akron has hosted its summit annually since 2008, with nearly 1,000 attendees in 2012. The Minnesota Private College Council and the United Negro College Fund have hosted similar 1- to 2-day gatherings focused on Black undergraduate men.

Several colleges and universities across the United States created multidimensional Black male institutes, centers, and initiatives (see Table 5.4). These resources vary in design and scope; most offer, but extend far beyond, protégé-mentor matching and annual day-long summits. The Center for Male Engagement at the Community College of Philadelphia, for example, provides an actual space for students that includes computers and support coaches (full-time professionals who provide academic, personal, and career counseling). The Todd A. Bell National Resource Center at The Ohio State University hosts an annual retreat, a lecture series, and a luncheon that raises funds for student scholarships, an early arrival weekend for incoming Black male freshmen, and an annual ceremony to celebrate students who

TABLE 5.3
Select Campuses Hosting 1- to 2-Day Black Male Summits

Type	Institution
Community college	Coastline Community College
	Howard Community College
	Lone Star College–North Harris
	Merritt College
	Miami Dade College
Private 4 year	Denison University
	Gallaudet University
	Morehouse College
	Princeton University
	University of Denver
	Wake Forest University
Public 4 year	Eastern Illinois University
	Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis
	Louisiana State University
	Old Dominion University
	University of Akron
	University of Alabama at Birmingham
	University of California, Irvine
	University of Illinois at Chicago
	University of New Mexico
	University of Northern Iowa
	University of Texas at Austin
	University of West Florida
	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
	Winston-Salem State University

TABLE 5.4
Select Black Male Centers, Institutes, and Initiatives

Initiative	*State*
Anne Arundel Community College Black Male Initiative	Maryland
Arkansas African American Male Initiative[a]	Arkansas
Cincinnati State Technical & Community College Black Male Initiative	Ohio
City University of New York Black Male Initiative[b]	New York
Community College of Philadelphia Center for Male Engagement	Pennsylvania
Midlands Technical College African American Male Leadership Institute	South Carolina
Morehouse College, The Morehouse Male Initiative	Georgia
North Carolina Central University African American Male Initiative	North Carolina
Philander Smith College Black Male Initiative	Arkansas
Prairie State College African American Male Initiative	Illinois
Sinclair Community College African American Male Initiative	Ohio
St. Louis Community College African American Male Initiative	Missouri
St. Philip's College African American Male Initiative	Texas
The Ohio State University Todd A. Bell National Resource Center	Ohio
University of California, Los Angeles Black Male Institute	California
University of Louisville African American Male Initiative	Kentucky
University of Maryland Black Male Initiative	Maryland
University System of Georgia African American Male Initiative[b]	Georgia
University of Virginia Luther Porter Jackson Black Male Initiative	Virginia
University of Wisconsin Beyond the Game Initiative	Wisconsin

Note. [a]Statewide initiative funded by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation unites seven community/technical colleges and 10 four-year institutions (including two HBCUs).
[b]Systemwide, multicampus initiatives.

achieve academic excellence. A structured course that acclimates first-year students to resources and introduces them to important people who can aid in their success is just one of many activities offered through the University of California, Los Angeles Black Male Institute. System-level efforts have emerged (e.g., the City University of New York's Black Male Initiative and the University System of Georgia's African American Male Initiative), and so too have statewide consortia such as the Arkansas African American Male Initiative. Finally, an incalculable number of clubs and organizations for Black undergraduate men (including over 200 chapters of the Student African American Brotherhood) were started on campuses across the United States between 1997 and 2012.

Publications and institutional activities listed in the four tables in this section represent only a fraction of everything done over a 15-year period to call attention to the needs of and issues faced by Black male students. The full catalog is much more extensive. Despite these efforts, Black male enrollment numbers remain sluggish in comparison to other groups, sex gaps in postsecondary degree attainment across all levels is most pronounced among Black students, and only one-third of Black men who start undergraduate degree programs at public 4-year institutions graduate within 6 years (Harper, 2012; Harper & Harris, 2012). Given the amount of attention devoted to this population, the stability of these trends seems counterintuitive. This raises two critical questions: Why has a decade and a half of multidimensional activity not yielded better results, and what should well-intentioned educators and policymakers keep in mind as they undertake new efforts to improve educational outcomes for all college men of color?

Some Weaknesses of the Movement

Scholars who study public policy often concern themselves with explaining gaps between the *intended* and *actual* effects of legislative actions, including the investment of public resources. Theirs is a useful approach for making sense of what happened in higher education between 1997 and 2012 on behalf of Black undergraduate men. Individually and collectively, the intent of activities described in the previous section was to raise consciousness and subsequently improve the status of a population. Consequently, U.S. higher education should have experienced gradual upticks in Black male student enrollment and rates of postsecondary educational attainment. For myriad reasons, this has not occurred. Explanations are manifold; a half dozen are offered next.

Flimsy Strategy, Missing Standards

Many well-intentioned people wanted to do *something* to improve the condition of Black undergraduate men on their campuses. In many instances, alarming statistics compelled them to act quickly and without serious strategic planning. As previously noted, older adults (usually faculty and staff) on many campuses were recruited and paired with Black undergraduate men, and mentoring was supposed to occur. Despite the popularity of mentoring programs, Harper (2012) reported the following from his study of 219 Black male college achievers at 42 colleges and universities:

> None said anything about their postsecondary institutions' structured mentoring programs as they named people, experiences, and resources that aided their college success. Put differently, no participant attributed even a fraction of his college achievement to a program that systematically matched him with faculty, staff, or peers with whom he was to routinely meet. (p. 16)

These programs and a range of other campus activities were hardly ever situated in a larger institutional strategy to improve Black male student success. Efforts were being launched in stand-alone and fragmented ways; they had not emerged from substantive, collaborative conversations and planning among cabinet-level leaders, academic deans and faculty, student affairs professionals, coaches and athletics administrators, and Black male students and alumni. Furthermore, a written strategy document that detailed a collective understanding of the institution's Black male student success problem was also missing on most campuses: What would be done, on what timeline, with what resources and by whom, and how would progress be measured? Instead, mentoring programs, 1- to 2-day summits, social activities, and Black male initiatives were being developed in the absence of standards such as those Harper and Kuykendall (2012) developed.

That the movement itself lacked strategy is noteworthy. Unlike K–12 school initiatives that have emerged from OSF's Campaign for Black Male Achievement, no one officially launched a movement focused on Black men in postsecondary education. Yet suddenly, dozens of articles started appearing in journals, books were being published, and professional conferences were abuzz with conversations about this population. It is possible that few people even recognized a movement had begun and was gaining momentum. It had no name, and there were no conveners, evaluators, or consortia of funders. People on college campuses across the country were unknowingly contributing to a directionless campaign.

Misplaced Onus for Student Success

Efforts born during the 15-year period tended to focus more on fixing the Black male student than on addressing structural and institutional forces that undermined his academic achievement, sense of belonging, and psychosocial development. Teaching him how to survive in racist classroom environments, for example, was often chosen over educating professors about the ways their pedagogical practices and other actions sustained racism and the marginalization of Black men in courses they taught. Concerning student engagement, one question was repeatedly asked by researchers and professionals alike: Why are Black men so disengaged? Insights into what faculty members and student affairs professionals were doing to engage these undergraduates in enriching educational experiences, inside and outside the classroom, were not how most conversations related to student engagement were framed.

Like many other diversity problems on predominantly White college campuses, the work of addressing troubling trends among Black male students usually fell on chief diversity officers, directors of Black cultural centers and multicultural affairs offices, or on a particular person of color in the student affairs division. Academic schools and departments were uncommon sites for institutional activity. Presidents, provosts, deans, academic department chairs, tenured professors, and high-ranking others typically were not at the table when important conversations were taking place about the status of Black men on campus. Likewise, as Harper and Harris (2012) note, policymakers had no real role in the movement. Consequently, insufficient programming in disjointed campus corners occurred in lieu of structural and macrolevel changes.

Amplification of Deficits

"Two-thirds who start college do not graduate within six years" and "they are among the most disengaged students on college campuses" (Harper, 2012; Harper & Harris, 2012) are just two of many trends repeatedly emphasized in academic publications, newspaper and magazine articles, and conference presentations pertaining to Black male undergraduates. The near-exclusive focus on problems plaguing this population inadvertently reinforced a hopeless, deficit-oriented narrative. Interventions introduced during the 15-year period were based almost entirely on bad data, statistical and observational reports of bad behaviors and outcomes, especially in comparison to other groups (Black women, White undergraduate men, etc.). Well-intentioned educators and researchers invested disproportionate energies into investigating the explanatory undercurrents of Black men's stagnant enrollments and other troubling outcomes. Doing so was critically important, as new insights

helped justify the creation of many institutional activities described earlier in this chapter.

Few initiatives were grounded in data and perspectives gathered from Black male achievers. Take, for example, the college completion statistic. Almost all the attention was placed on the two-thirds who did not complete college instead of trying to understand which personal and institutional factors helped one-third persist through baccalaureate degree attainment. Harper (2012) reports the following from the National Black Male College Achievement Study:

> Most surprising and most disappointing is that nearly every student interviewed said it was the first time someone had sat him down to ask how he successfully navigated his way to and through higher education, what compelled him to be engaged in student organizations and college classrooms, and what he learned that could help improve achievement and engagement among Black male collegians. (p. 15)

Harper further notes that 219 of 221 invited students agreed to participate in a 2- to 3-hour interview focused on their success, which suggests that Black men who do well in college are willing to share their navigational strategies and identify conditions that bolster their success. Unfortunately, education professionals, researchers, and journalists rarely sought them out. Therefore, interventions created to improve Black male student achievement were informed almost entirely by Black male students who did not succeed in college.

Men Without Masculinities

A small number of studies published during the 15-year period (e.g., Dancy, 2011, 2012; Harper, 2004; Harris et al., 2011; Martin & Harris, 2006) focused explicitly on masculinities and gender performativity among Black undergraduate men. Theories and frameworks from psychology, sociology, and gender or men's studies that help explain precollege gender socialization, poor trends in seeking help, gender role conflicts, and masculine expression anxieties among college-age men informed the conceptual design of these studies and the interpretation of data collected. Conversations at conferences and 1- to 2-day summits were hardly ever about masculinities among Black undergraduate men. Instead, the emphasis was on enrollment, engagement, and completion trends, with little to no consideration of how troubled masculinities may have contributed to any of these factors.

Masculinities were also mishandled in many Black male initiatives created during the movement. Like the conversations at conferences and summits,

programs and activities emerging from these initiatives focused mostly on strengthening unity and social satisfaction among Black undergraduate men, offering them restorative shelters from alienating predominantly White campus spaces, centralizing resources for their academic survival and success, and facilitating opportunities for their leadership development. Often missing were opportunities for them to critically reflect on themselves as men and acquire the tools necessary for disrupting patriarchy, sexism, misogyny, and homophobia within Black communities. The emphasis was primarily (sometimes exclusively) on increasing the number of Black male college graduates, without devoting much attention to their development into healthy and productive people who would eventually become spouses, partners, and fathers. Attempting to improve rates of success among these young men without paying sufficient attention to important (and sometimes conflict-laden) aspects of their masculinities was surely shortsighted.

Homogenization of Black Undergraduate Men

"Which Black men?" is not a question that seems to have been carefully contemplated in the design and implementation of many Black male initiatives and campus activities. Harper and Nichols (2008) identified tremendous in-group diversity among Black undergraduate men at the three institutions in their study. Substantive differences in their socioeconomic backgrounds, geographic and community origins (urban versus rural), sexual orientation, and group affiliations (student athletes, fraternity members, Black student union leaders, etc.) affected their interactions and solidarity, often in problematic ways. Moreover, Massey, Mooney, Torres, and Charles (2007) highlighted differences in the social origins of Black immigrant and Black American students at highly selective colleges and universities. These and other differences often went unacknowledged among panelists at Black male summits, authors of peer-reviewed studies, and architects of campus programming. Consequently, efforts intended to reach Black men inadvertently excluded particular subgroups within the race. Targeted, differentiated outreach to diverse sectors of Black male students was atypical; hence, attendance and participation rates in campus initiatives were often much lower than desired.

The homogenization of Black men was also evident in the substance of campus initiatives; race and being Black was foremost. As previously mentioned, the focus was rarely on Black male students as gendered beings. Furthermore, the ways race and gender intersected with other dimensions of their identities (e.g., sexual orientations, [dis]ability, spirituality and religiosity, and socioeconomic status) were often not thoughtfully considered. It is quite possible that gay and bisexual men felt marginalized and excluded as their sexualities went unacknowledged. This was likely exacerbated in social

spaces where Black male students were discussing romantic and sexual pursuits in exclusively heterosexist ways, or in leadership development programs that emphasized "acceptable" forms of masculine self-presentation. Another example is Black male retreats that included rites of passage rituals that reinforced patriarchal and hypermasculine notions of Black male leadership; effeminate men or those who did not perform their masculinities in a manner that has been socially constructed as strong probably experienced dissonance and alienation.

Small-Sample, Student-Exclusive, Single-Site Studies

As noted previously in this chapter, more than 60 peer-reviewed studies pertaining to Black male collegians were published in academic journals between 1997 and 2012. Despite this knowledge production, institutional leaders and faculty members as well as policymakers continually sustain practices, environmental conditions, and policies that cyclically undermine Black male student success. This could be attributable, at least in part, to the narrow methodological scope of research published during this era. Like many articles listed in Table 5.2, the overwhelming majority of studies on Black undergraduate men is based on samples with an average of 27 participants on a single college campus. Quantitative and large-scale, multisite qualitative studies have been in short supply. Therefore, findings and recommendations emerging from them tend to be context-bound and understandably interpreted with suspicion; most are far from generalizable.

While qualitative studies that provide nuanced understandings of a small number of students' experiences have considerable value, those tend not to offer sufficient cross-sectional insights to ignite institutional change and policy formation. Thick, rich, descriptive accounts that explain various phenomena are important and necessary, but so too are research studies that are big enough to influence macrolevel decision making in higher education. The popularity of studies based on onetime short interviews at a single institution raises at least one question about the goals of scholars who produced them: Were we writing for the sake of publication productivity (numbers), mere consciousness-raising and perhaps professional advancement (promotion and tenure), or were we writing to influence structural change on behalf of a population commonly underserved on college campuses? If it was the latter, then methods employed in most studies published during the 15-year period contradict our aims.
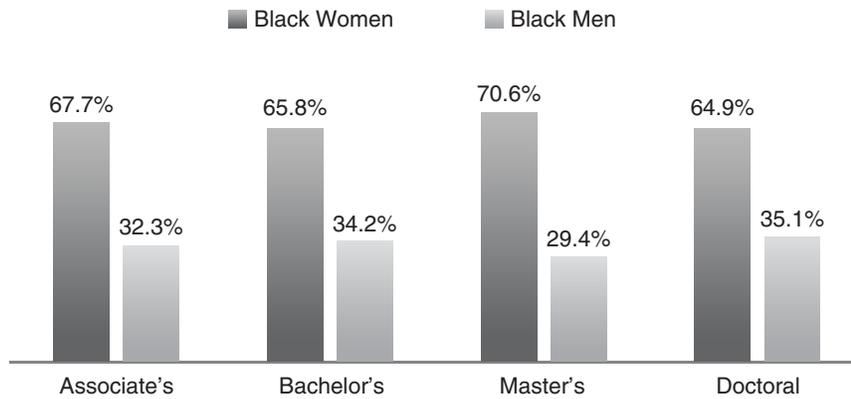
Another shortcoming of the existing published scholarship is that students have almost always been the sole unit of analysis in research studies. Data were rarely collected from administrators and faculty; policies affecting Black male college access and achievement were not analyzed with any

degree of regularity. Moreover, ethnographic studies that entail extended fieldwork (e.g., 12 months on a campus) and systematic observations of students' interactions with various institutional actors and structures have been unpopular; instead, interviewing a few students once for 30 to 90 minutes has been more common. No national, cross-sectional quantitative study of Black undergraduate men and the characteristics of institutions where they were enrolled was launched during the 15-year period.

Moving Black Women to the Margins: Another Unintended Consequence

Quantifiable differences between Black undergraduate men and their same-race female peers were used to justify the creation of male-exclusive initiatives created between 1997 and 2012. During this era, considerably more Black women than Black men applied to and enrolled in postsecondary institutions. Black undergraduates in 1980 consisted of 57.9 percent women, compared to 63.1 percent in 2011 (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Hence, the sex gap in enrollments has increased over time. These differences are more severe in particular sectors of higher education. At some HBCUs, for example, Black women outnumber their male counterparts by rates of 3 to 1. Lundy-Wagner and Gasman (2011) show the general consistency of this trend over time, which led to this conclusion: "The African American enrollment gap favoring women at HBCUs is not new. African American men *may* have only outnumbered women at HBCUs from their inception to the mid-1920s" (p. 947). Notwithstanding these historical patterns, scholars, campus leaders, and others seem to have become more troubled by the recent widening sex gap in enrollment, which ultimately produced alarming differences in Black students' degree attainment rates.

As shown in Figure 5.1, men earned roughly one-third of the degrees awarded to Black students across all levels, from associate through doctoral. Harper et al.'s (2013) analyses of six-year student athlete graduation rates across 76 universities in the six major intercollegiate sports conferences revealed an interesting set of trends among Black students. Specifically, at many institutions Black women graduated at higher rates than did most other groups of student athletes, including their White female teammates. For instance, in the Southeastern Conference, Black female student athletes' average six-year graduation rate (across four cohorts) was 74.6 percent, compared to 72.9 percent for White female student-athletes and 68.5 percent for undergraduate students overall on the 14 campuses. Comparatively, only 45.4 percent of Black male student athletes at those universities completed baccalaureate degree programs within six years.

FIGURE 5.1 Black Student Postsecondary Degree Attainment by Level and Sex, 2011

■ Black Women   ■ Black Men

	Associate's	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctoral
Black Women	67.7%	65.8%	70.6%	64.9%
Black Men	32.3%	34.2%	29.4%	35.1%

Note. Authors' calculations using data from *Digest of Education Statistics, 2012*, by U.S. Department of Education, 2013, Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics.

In addition to sex gaps in enrollment and attainment, documented and observed differences in Black student engagement added further justification for the investment of institutional resources in male initiatives. Based on data collected from 6,765 Black student respondents to the College Student Experiences Questionnaire, Cuyjet (1997) found that men devoted less time to studying, took notes in class less often, spent significantly less time writing and revising papers, and participated less often in class-related collaborative experiences than female respondents to the survey. Furthermore, Black women were more engaged in campus activities, looked more frequently in their campus newspapers for notices about upcoming events and engagement opportunities, attended more meetings and programs, served on more campus committees, and held more leadership positions at their institutions.

Similarly, Harper, Carini, Bridges, and Hayek's (2004) analysis of data collected from 1,167 Black undergraduates at 12 HBCUs participating in the National Survey of Student Engagement revealed statistically significant differences between men and women in activities such as studying, reading, preparing for class, writing papers, and working hard to meet professors' expectations. Black male HBCU students were less engaged than their female counterparts in these academic endeavors. As one measure of engagement, 57 percent of Black female respondents to the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (2005), compared to 45 percent of Black male respondents, indicated that they often or very often discussed readings and course content with others outside of class. Professionals and administrators from a

wide range of institution types were reporting similar engagement norms at national conferences and elsewhere during the 15-year period.

Sex differences in student engagement help explain, at least in part, academic performance gaps between Black male and female undergraduates. At summits and national conferences there were numerous anecdotal reports of Black men earning the lowest grade point averages (GPAs) among all undergraduates on a particular campus. Analyses of GPAs, disaggregated by sex, were not furnished in studies published between 1997 and 2012. This is likely attributable to the confidentiality of students' academic records and the sensitivity of academic performance data. Table 5.5 shows sex differences in GPAs among undergraduate members of the nine national historically Black Greek-letter organizations at a dozen large predominantly White public universities. Accordingly, during the 2011–2012 academic school year Black female members, on average, maintained a 3.02 cumulative GPA, compared to 2.67 for Black fraternity men. It is noteworthy that each of these national sororities and fraternities espouses a commitment to academic excellence in its mission statement, and has a minimum GPA requirement to join.

Trends such as these have helped manufacture an erroneous presumption that now permeates American higher education: which is that everything is just fine with Black female collegians. Statistical indicators were used as rationale for a 15-year-long focus on Black male students. Little about Black undergraduate women was published, few 1- to 2-day campus summits pertaining to their needs and issues were held, comprehensive Black female initiatives were not created, and they were rarely the topic of discussion at national higher education conferences. Black women's experiential realities were overshadowed by their statistical comparisons to Black men. They, too, grapple with many of the problems identified in Harper (2013): onlyness (the experience of being the only or one of only a few non-White students in a college classroom), niggering (stereotypes, racial microaggressions, and racist misconceptions regarding their intellectual competence and belongingness), and the shortage of same-race faculty role models on predominantly White campuses. Additionally, racism and sexism converge for them in unique ways that are psychologically and academically poisonous. They routinely outperformed their same-race male counterparts but often fell beneath women from other racial groups and White men on most measures of success. Despite this, the gender-exclusive 15-year movement pushed Black women's issues to the margins. It could be reasonably argued that higher education scholars, administrators, journalists, and others, perhaps unintentionally, left Black female undergraduates behind during this era.

TABLE 5.5
Black Sorority and Fraternity Members' GPAs, 2011–2012

Institution	*Sororities*	*Fraternities*
Auburn University	2.89	2.50
Clemson University	3.04	2.94
Florida State University	3.09	2.62
Georgia Institute of Technology	3.20	2.88
North Carolina State University	2.84	2.80
Ohio State University	3.11	2.68
Purdue University	3.14	2.63
University of Florida	3.12	2.87
University of Missouri	2.78	2.04
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	2.92	2.75
University of South Carolina	3.02	2.72
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	3.13	2.60

Note. From "Greek Life Statistics," Auburn University Greek Life, 2012, https://cws.auburn
.edu/studentAffairs/greekLife/statistics.aspx; "Policies, Grades and Statistics," Clemson Uni-
versity Campus Life, 2013, www.clemson.edu/campus-life/fraternity-sorority-life/grades-stats
.html; "Scholarship Reports," Florida State University Office of Greek Life, 2013, http://greeklife
.fsu.edu/Dates-Resources/Scholarship-Reports; "Greek Affairs: Reports," Georgia Tech Dean
of Students, 2013, www.greek.gatech.edu/plugins/content/index.php?id=4; "Reports: Grades
& Membership," North Carolina State University Greek Life, 2013, www.ncsu.edu/greeklife/
reports.php; "Ohio Union: Grade reports," The Ohio State University, 2013, http://ohiounion
.osu.edu/get_involved/sorority_fraternity/grade_reports; "Purdue Greeks," Purdue Frater-
nity and Sorority Life, n.d., www.purduegreeks.com/#_p.Resources%2FGrade%20Reports
; "Sorority & Fraternity Affairs: Grade Reports," University of Florida Student Activities and
Involvement, 2013, www.studentinvolvement.ufl.edu/SororityFraternityAffairs/Resources/
GradeReports; "Grades: Chapter Academic Records," University of Missouri Office of Greek
Life, 2012, http://greeklife.missouri.edu/greek-statistics/greek-statistics/; "Academic Reports,"
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Fraternity & Sorority Life and Community
Involvement, n.d., http://ofslci.unc.edu/greeks/reports; "Fraternity and Sorority Report, Fall
2012," University of South Carolina, 2013, http://www.sa.sc.edu/fsl/files/2010/10/Greek
-Report-Fall-2012-FINAL.pdf; "Fraternity and Sorority Life: Academic Reports," Virginia
Tech Division of Student Affairs, 2013, http://www.greeklife.vt.edu/resources/academicreports
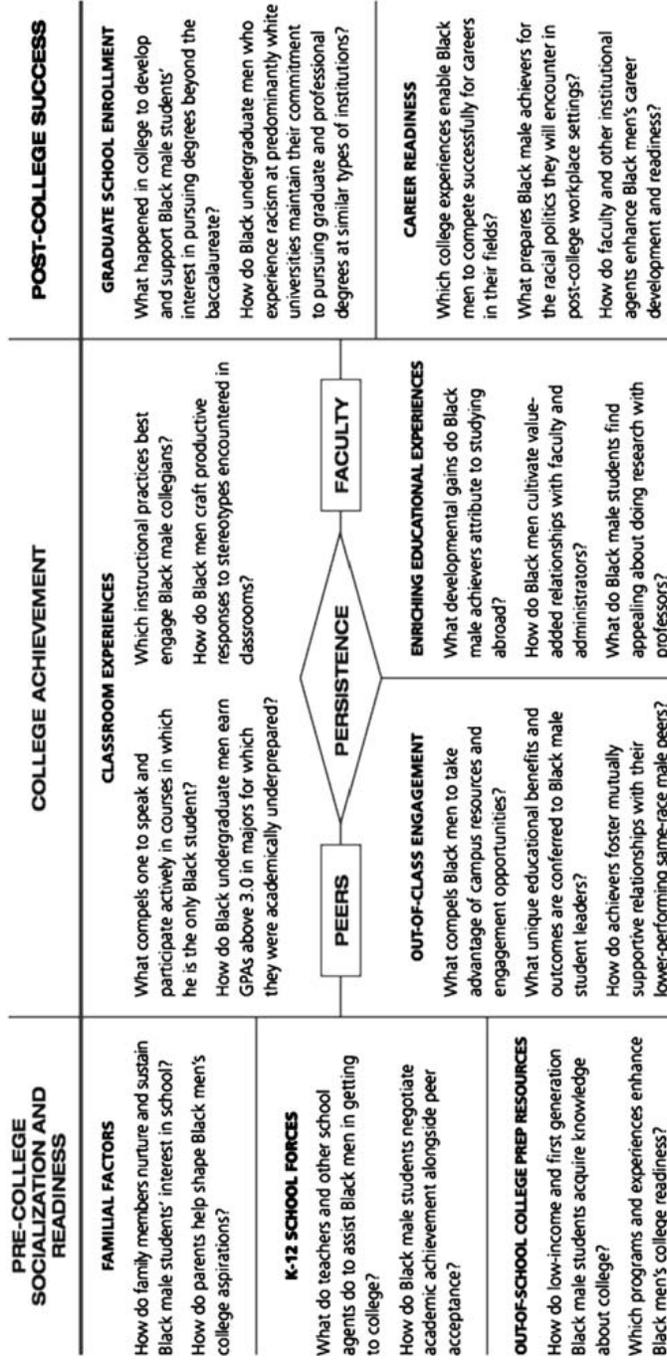.html.

Improving Success for College Men of Color: A Better Way Forward

The 15-year movement to improve Black male student success was not a complete failure. Among its most praiseworthy accomplishments is the national conversation it ignited. Undoubtedly, more people within and outside higher education are more aware of the troubling status of these students than they were prior to 1997. In some ways, the movement is also a promising example of the momentum that could be created across hundreds (perhaps thousands) of college and university campuses in response to a set of pressing issues plaguing a particular population. The attention devoted to Black men has been remarkable. Nevertheless, problematic features of the movement must be corrected. This is especially important as a broader, more inclusive agenda is being crafted for college men of color.

Future institutional responses to challenges that undermine access, engagement, academic achievement, psychosocial development, and attainment for AAPI, Black, Latino, and Native American men must be strategic. Assuming greater institutional responsibility for the success of these students is a requisite first step that entails bringing together stakeholders from all corners and levels of the institution—from the president and provost to tenured professors, student affairs professionals, and undergraduate students—to study these problems in systematic ways, collaboratively develop plans of action that include classroom and out-of-class interventions, and devise assessment and accountability mechanisms to ensure the institution reaches its student success goals. Questions such as, "Why do so few Black men apply to this college?" must be replaced with critical examinations of how and why the institution fails to attract more Black male applicants. Metrics such as those developed by Harper and Kuykendall (2012) also would be useful. Examples of five campuses that adopted these standards, created cross-sectional teams, and assumed institutional responsibility for Black male student achievement are provided in Harper's (2014) report.

To ensure success for college men of color, anti-deficit perspectives should inform future initiatives created for them. Commonly asked questions such as, "Why are they so disengaged?" for example, must be replaced with inquiries regarding the impetus for engagement among those who participate actively in their classes, study in disciplined ways, collaborate frequently on academic matters with peers outside of class, participate actively in a variety of clubs and organizations, and take advantage of enriching educational experiences (study abroad programs, summer internships related to their majors, collaborative research opportunities with faculty, etc.). Harper's (2012) anti-deficit achievement framework in Figure 5.2 includes several

FIGURE 5.2 Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework

PRE-COLLEGE SOCIALIZATION AND READINESS	COLLEGE ACHIEVEMENT	POST-COLLEGE SUCCESS

FAMILIAL FACTORS

How do family members nurture and sustain Black male students' interest in school?

How do parents help shape Black men's college aspirations?

K-12 SCHOOL FORCES

What do teachers and other school agents do to assist Black men in getting to college?

How do Black male students negotiate academic achievement alongside peer acceptance?

OUT-OF-SCHOOL COLLEGE PREP RESOURCES

How do low-income and first generation Black male students acquire knowledge about college?

Which programs and experiences enhance Black men's college readiness?

CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES

Which instructional practices best engage Black male collegians?

How do Black men craft productive responses to stereotypes encountered in classrooms?

What compels one to speak and participate actively in courses in which he is the only Black student?

How do Black undergraduate men earn GPAs above 3.0 in majors for which they were academically underprepared?

OUT-OF-CLASS ENGAGEMENT

What compels Black men to take advantage of campus resources and engagement opportunities?

What unique educational benefits and outcomes are conferred to Black male student leaders?

How do achievers foster mutually supportive relationships with their lower-performing same-race male peers?

ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

What developmental gains do Black male achievers attribute to studying abroad?

How do Black men cultivate value-added relationships with faculty and administrators?

What do Black male students find appealing about doing research with professors?

PEERS

PERSISTENCE

FACULTY

GRADUATE SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

What happened in college to develop and support Black male students' interest in pursuing degrees beyond the baccalaureate?

How do Black undergraduate men who experience racism at predominantly white universities maintain their commitment to pursuing graduate and professional degrees at similar types of institutions?

CAREER READINESS

Which college experiences enable Black men to compete successfully for careers in their fields?

What prepares Black male achievers for the racial politics they will encounter in post-college workplace settings?

How do faculty and other institutional agents enhance Black men's career development and readiness?

examples of how questions commonly asked about failure, disengagement, insufficiency, and underperformance can be inverted to ascertain instructive insights into student achievement.

As previously mentioned, more has been written about Black undergraduate men over the past 15 years than the three other men-of-color groups combined. Additional scholarship has to be produced to provide a more nuanced understanding of Native American, Latino, and AAPI men's experiences and outcomes in postsecondary educational contexts. This research, as well as future studies on Black undergraduate men, must be methodologically sophisticated and based on more institutions and larger student samples. This is not to suggest that rich, deeply textured small qualitative studies are no longer useful. They add considerable value to our understanding of who students are and how they experience higher education. But macrolevel institutional and policy change is unlikely to ensue in the absence of studies that reach further and include more participants.

Researchers and education professionals alike must pay more careful attention to in-group diversity as they study college men of color and create initiatives that attempt to respond to their varied needs. This is especially critical among AAPI and Latino men, as there are substantive dissimilarities across ethnic/cultural subgroups. The same can be said for tribal differences among Native American male students. Any effort to appeal generally to men of color or even to one particular broad racial group will inevitably fall short of attracting all male students therein. Hence, it must be multipronged, as well as marketed and delivered in ways that account for students with intersecting identities (e.g., low-income Pacific Islanders, gay Native American men, and Latino atheists).

Moving forward, architects of men-of-color campus initiatives must be mindful of the masculinities students enter college with, as well as how they develop, negotiate, and perform their gender identities on campus. Programming and other interventions (e.g., one-on-one advising with students) should aim to unmask and address the sociological undercurrents of men's bad behaviors and poor help-seeking tendencies. Likewise, spaces should be created that offer men opportunities to engage in critical individual and collective reflection on how they have been socialized to think of themselves as men; the origins of their sexist and misogynistic perspectives on women; how and why they embrace homophobia; how patriarchy and heterosexism undermine solidarity in communities of color; and what kinds of partners or spouses, fathers, and citizens they aspire to be in their postcollege lives. Increasing enrollments and completion rates among college men of color should remain among the highest priorities of campus initiatives, but

graduating well-developed men with strong, conflict-free gender identities must also be of the utmost importance.

Finally, efforts enacted to improve the status of Latino, Native American, AAPI, and Black male students should not be at the expense of women of color. While statistics often indicate they are doing comparatively better, undergraduate women have developmental needs and face a range of gender-specific challenges that deserve resources and attention. Scholars and various institutional agents need to invest more energy in understanding the unique gendered experiences of women and men of color on campus. These understandings should lead to actions and activities that are sometimes, but not always, tailored along gender-exclusive lines. Understanding their experiences can prevent a repetition of the marginalization of women that occurred during the 15-year movement to improve Black male student success in higher education.

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