VARIABLES ASSOCIATED WITH ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES IN FOUR-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: A SYNTHESIS OF STUDIES

by

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VARIABLES ASSOCIATED WITH ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES IN FOUR-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: A SYNTHESIS OF STUDIES

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Educational Administration

(ABSTRACT)

This project was a synthesis of studies of the academic achievement of African-American males in undergraduate, four-year institutions in the United States. The purpose of this synthesis was twofold. The first purpose was to collect studies on the academic achievement of African-American males. The second purpose was to identify variables associated with achievement of African-American males.

In this review of 13 studies, 48 variables associated with academic achievement of undergraduate, African-American males were identified. These variables were placed into three categories: personal variables, demographic variables, and institutional variables. Personal variables were sub-divided into non-cognitive and cognitive variables.

Findings specific to each category of variables are included below:

Personal, non-cognitive variables.—African-American males with high scores on measures of educational aspirations, values (courage, exciting life, cleanliness, imagination, and helpfulness), emotional intelligence, acceptability of mixed dating, self-confidence, satisfaction with academic advising and tutoring, being in control of academic outcomes, preference for long-term goals, academic self-concept, self-esteem, self-concept of ability, specific personality traits (achievement aspirations, affiliation, dominance, endurance, exhibition, harm avoidance, nurturance, order, play, and understanding), favorable opinions of their study habits and relationships with others, and low scores on alienation and reliance on family and institutions to solve social and
academic problems had higher grade-point averages than those with contrasting scores on these variables. Encouragement from family and other role models appears to be associated with academic achievement of African-American male undergraduates as well.

**Personal, cognitive variables.**—African-American males with high grades in high school, high class ranks in high school, and high scores on college entrance examinations had higher college grade-point averages than those with lower high school grades, high school ranks, and entrance examination scores.

**Demographic variables.**—Non-transfer, younger students in nondevelopmental and humanities and arts programs were more likely to persist in college than transfer and older students in developmental and math and science programs. Participants in a math workshop achieved higher grade-point averages in a freshman calculus course than students who did not participate in the workshop.

**Institutional variables.**—African-American males who attended predominantly black colleges and universities earned higher grade-point averages than those who attended predominantly white colleges and universities. African-American males who attended four-year institutions earned higher grade-point averages than those who attended community colleges. Those on both black and white campuses who scored higher on a college environment opinion survey covering academic integration, satisfaction with the campus environment, and institutional support achieved higher grade-point averages than those who scored lower on the survey. For those on white campuses who came from high schools with very different racial compositions from those of the colleges they were attending achieved higher grade-point averages than students who came from high schools with very similar racial compositions to those of the colleges they were attending.

In conclusion, academic achievement of undergraduate African-American males is associated with a combination of personal variables, demographic variables and institutional variables. The majority of these variables are personal, non-cognitive variables.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I thank Dr. Parson for asking probing questions that caused me to further assess information related to my project.

I thank Dr. Joyce Williams-Green for making time to discuss my project with me and for offering advice and resources.
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated

…to my father (posthumously), to my mother, my son, my friends,
and to undergraduate African-American males.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

There has been an endeavor to discover variables that seem to underpin academic achievement of African Americans. For nearly a century, researchers have studied academic performance in the context of people without equal access to schooling and their low academic achievement. Their investigations were organized around what is known today as non-cognitive variables. They asserted that for African Americans academic achievement was related to many variables such as access and equality (Washington, 1901), financial resources (Woodson, 1933), personality and independence (Lavin, 1965), and self-esteem (Guggenheim, 1969). In other words, these researchers implied that ability was merely one of several variables related to academic performance.

Among researchers today who have continued to search for variables that seem to relate to achievement of African Americans is Ladson-Billings (1994) who used the metaphor of a dream to interpret the elusiveness of academic achievement. She wrote--

…the quest for quality education remains an elusive dream for the African-American community. However, it does remain a dream--perhaps the most powerful for the people of African descent of this nation. (p. ix)

From Woodson (1933) to Rowan (1996) there was agreement with Ladson-Billings (1994) that education was an honored right because it was associated with social and economic gain. It was also associated with freedom in the context that slaves were denied legal access to education (Banks, 1996).

The achievement dream still exists, and researchers are continuing to launch investigations of academic performance in the context of what affects it, how it can be achieved, and how it can be sustained (Astin, 1982; Graham, 1994; Hrabowski, 1991; Hrabowski & Maton, 1995; James, 1990; Nettles, 1991). These researchers reported that academic achievement is associated with non-cognitive variables as well as cognitive variables. For example, non-cognitive variables such as climate and environment
(Dezmon, 1995) should be accorded recognition along with cognitive variables such as high school grade-point average and high school class rank (Astin, 1982).

The question of how those variables can be managed to improve academic performance of African-American males is still a complex problem at all levels of education. Researchers are continuing to investigate ways to improve academic achievement (Butler, 1994; Clark, 1983; Comer & Poussaint, 1992). Practitioners nationwide are waiting for responses to a social problem that disproportionately affects African Americans.

Colleges and universities stand to profit from a synthesis of research findings associated with the improvement of academic achievement of African Americans, more specifically African-American males at four-year educational institutions.

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to discover the variables associated with academic achievement of African-American males. More specifically, the problem was to look at variables that may be manipulated to improve the academic achievement of African-American males at four-year educational institutions.

Historically, from elementary to post-secondary education, the academic performance of African Americans is lower than other racial groups (Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991; Graham, 1994). According to Rosenberg and Simmons (1971), 38% of black students in an urban public school system in the southeast had grades of A or B compared to 48% for white students. Rosenberg and Simmons further asserted that based on standardized tests given each year, notably during high school, the achievement gap between white and black students widens. At the university level, Scott (1995) examined the academic achievement, as measured by grade-point average, of black students attending a predominantly white university in the South. She found that during a ten-year period (1979-1989) “by the fourth year, the qualitative cumulative average for black students was below C+, and the average for white students approached B-” (p. 15).

Table 1 includes data highlighting the educational attainment of blacks and whites from 1985-1996. In 1985, more than 11% of African-American males held a bachelor’s degree. In 1996, the number of African-American males holding a bachelor’s degree
Table 1

Percentage of African Americans 25 Years and Over Who Have Completed High School or College by Gender—1985-1996: U.S. Census Bureau

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Female</th>
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<td>58.4</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>1986</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>74.3</td>
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Percentage of People 25 Years and Over Who Have Completed High School or College—1996

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<td>1996</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>21.4</td>
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increased 1.2 percentage points. During the same time period, for African-American females, the increase was 3.0 percentage points. However, for a six-year period (1985-1991) African-American males received more bachelor’s degrees than did African-American females. The opposite was true for high school diplomas. Even so, in 1996, the high school dropout rate for African Americans and for whites was near five percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 1996a).

From these data, it appeared that African Americans’ educational progress was gaining momentum. However, the academic achievement gap between African-American males and white students still existed (Ford, Okojie, & Lewis, 1996; Gibbs, 1988; Guggenheim, 1969; Lavin, 1965; Rosenberg & Simmons, 1971; Steele, 1992). Therefore, the problem of this study was to investigate the variables that appear to influence academic achievement of African-American males in undergraduate four-year institutions of higher education.

**Context of the Problem**

Researchers and educators are beginning to investigate variables that may be associated with improved academic achievement in lieu of studying barriers to academic achievement of African Americans (Graham & Folkes, 1990; Hrabowski, 1991; Hrabowski & Maton, 1995; McMurry, 1993). The literature is replete with what has gone wrong with African Americans in terms of educational achievement, socioeconomic status, and crime (Hernstein & Murray, 1996; Kunjufu, 1989; Rowan, 1996). For example, Rowan (1996) wrote that African-American males make up six percent of the United States population, but represent 50% of the incarcerated and 35% of special education students. According to Clark (1983), these discrepancies engender racial rage, dissatisfaction for educators, and economic and social discord for African Americans.

The rage and discord were highlighted by Graham (1994) in her study of motivation of African Americans. In her investigation, Graham conducted an extensive examination of studies of a priori predictions that African Americans have a negative self-concept about their academic ability. She reviewed studies of African Americans as people who are not motivated to achieve and who lack personality traits associated with academia. Graham found that--
As measured by research on need for achievement, there is no strong evidence that African Americans lack personality traits associated with motivation. Both expectancy for future success and self-concept of ability among African Americans remain relatively high even when achievement outcomes indicate otherwise. (p. 103)

Despite these a priori predictions, the United States Census Bureau reported that nearly 75% of the two million African Americans who were 25 and older were high school graduates. About 14% of this age group (African Americans) were college graduates, and between 1995 and 1996 their median income was $25,970 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1996a). In 1995, people without a high school diploma earned $24,000 less than people with a baccalaureate degree--$13,697 versus $37,224 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1996b). According to Rowan (1996), it appeared that earnings were dependent on the level of education. Therefore, the question is: “What can be done to increase the educational level and academic achievement of African Americans, more specifically of African-American males at four-year educational institutions?”

In response to this question, researchers began investigations of academic achievement of African-American males (Fleming, 1984; Gibbs, 1988; Slavin, Karweit, & Madden, 1989; Treisman, 1985). Those scholars recognized that some African-American males were achieving. As time passed, other authors began to speculate that many of those males were capable of achieving in school but were not capitalizing on their academic strengths, nor were they advancing academically (Nettles, 1991; Rowan, 1996). For example, some students wanted to avoid the “acting white” reference used by their peers (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

To investigate academic problems, educators, graduate students, and researchers began to design studies of academic achievement of African Americans (Astin, 1977; Nettles, 1991; Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976). Those researchers found that cognitive variables such as Scholastic Aptitude Test scores and high school grades were related to academic achievement. They also asserted that non-cognitive variables such as self-concept, educational aspirations, educational background, family background, family and peer support, and financial stability were associated with academic achievement of African Americans.
Astin (1982) found an association between academic achievement and the following variables: (1) Scholastic Aptitude Test scores, (2) high school class rank, (3) socioeconomic background, (4) high school curriculum, (5) parents’ education level, and (6) family income level.

Other variables associated with academic achievement are independence, maturity, and autonomy (Astin, 1982; Oliver, Rodriquez, & Mickelson, 1985). However, Allen, Epps, and Haniff (1991) posited that some undergraduate African-American males with these qualities did not achieve high grade point averages in college. Therefore, the following questions seem appropriate: What influences academic achievement of African-American males? What are the variables that may reverse low academic achievement of African-American males in undergraduate four-year educational institutions (Davis, 1994; Ford, Okojie, & Lewis, 1996; Nettles, 1991)?

There are accounts of African-American males who achieved scholastically (Carr, 1992; Hrabowski, 1991; Hrabowski & Maton, 1995; Padilla, Trevino, & Gonzales, 1997). However, there was an absence of a synthesis of studies that identified variables associated with academic achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide undergraduate school personnel with data to aid in the development of instructional and social programs related to improving academic achievement for African-American males.

This synthesis may provide data on the relationships between cognitive and non-cognitive variables and academic achievement of African-American males. Furthermore, increased awareness, knowledge, and understanding for administrators, teachers, parents, and even students may ensue. Educators may use these data as a basis to understand that it may take a combination of cognitive and non-cognitive variables to increase academic achievement of African-American males.

This study is intended for educators who will consider cognitive and non-cognitive variables of academic achievement as they plan educational programs that involve African-American males. This study is intended for those interested in including personnel from levels of education other than their own as they plan academic programs.
There are linkages of cognitive and non-cognitive variables to academic achievement at all three levels of education--elementary, secondary, and post-secondary.

In summary, the results of this investigation are intended for use by administrators and higher education instructors interested in developing programs for improving academic achievement of undergraduate African-American males. The results of this study have implications for curricular changes and changes in admissions policies and counseling services for students.

This study is not arcane, for it is intended for real people who are interested in improving and sustaining academic achievement of African-American males. This study is a base for future research on the academic achievement of African-American males in undergraduate school.

Research Question

What are the variables associated with academic achievement of African-American males in undergraduate four-year educational institutions?

The studies selected for this synthesis contained variables that may be manipulated in ways to improve the academic achievement of African-American males. The results of 13 studies were gathered for school leaders interested in research about a continuing and perplexing social problem that disproportionately affects an entire race of people.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used throughout the synthesis.

**Academic achievement**--Academic achievement was indexed in 12 of these studies as the college grade point average (CGPA) on a four-point scale. One study included a nine-point scale with nine as a representation for the grade “A.”

**African-American male**--Male Americans of African descent were the population of people from whom the subjects were selected. The terms blacks, black Americans, black males, and African Americans were used interchangeably throughout the 13 studies. However, the present researcher will use the term African American.
Personal variables--For the purpose of this study, personal variables were defined as past experiences that included high school grades, high school class rank, and college entrance examinations. Personal variables consisted of non-cognitive and cognitive variables.

Non-cognitive variables--For the purpose of this study, non-cognitive variables were defined as those that are not academic. Examples are self-concept of ability, self-confidence, self-esteem, and endurance.

Cognitive variables--For the purpose of this study, cognitive variables were defined as those that are academic--high school grades, class rank, American College Test scores, and Scholastic Aptitude Test scores.

Demographic variables--In this study, demographic variables were defined as characteristics of the sample. Examples are age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, and transfer status.

Institutional variables--In this study, institutional variables were defined as characteristics of the institution. Examples are college environment, racial congruency, academic support programs, financial support, and types of degrees offered.

Educational institution--This term was used as a reference to four-year, public colleges and universities.

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCU)--The enrollment at HBCUs is predominantly black.

Predominantly white colleges and universities (PWCU)--The enrollment at PWCUs is predominantly white.

Pre-study literature review--The pre-study literature review was conducted in the spirit of the usual literature review. The purpose of this review was to discover the literature on the academic achievement of African Americans. From this review, 89 articles and studies were selected for further examination because they dealt with variables associated with academic achievement of African-American males. After this examination, 13 studies emerged and became part of the synthesis.

Review of studies in the synthesis--This review included an examination of the 13 studies.
Racial congruency (high school and community)--This was defined as the “degree of ‘fit’ between the racial composition of the high school … [or] community [of the] respondent … and his/her college’s racial environment” (Davis, 1994, p. 625).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, context, purpose of the study, research question, and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature on personal, demographic, and institutional variables related to academic achievement at the undergraduate level. Chapter 3 includes the research methodology, search sources of the studies included in this synthesis, and criteria for inclusion. Chapter 3 also includes a list of studies in this synthesis, limitations on the selection of the studies, and a description of the community of scholars who authored the studies. Chapter 4 includes a summary of each study, information on the statistics used by the researchers to analyze their data, and a summary of findings. Chapter 5 includes the conclusions, recommendations for colleges and universities, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 2

A PRE-STUDY REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This research is a synthesis of findings from 13 studies of the academic achievement of African-American males in four-year undergraduate institutions. Three intellectual bins (Miles & Huberman, 1994) were used to categorize variables associated with academic achievement. Intellectual bins are general constructs or broad categories. For the purpose of this study, those intellectual bins consist of personal variables, institutional variables, and demographic variables.

From a review of the literature related to those intellectual bins, a pre-study theory of academic achievement was developed (Figure 1).

The Pre-study Theory

The purpose of this review was to explain variation in the academic achievement of African-American males. To that end, the following information is credited to researchers who have investigated how certain variables are related to academic achievement.

According to Pascarella and Terenzini (1980), retention and academic achievement are rooted in personal and institutional variables. Hrabowski and Maton (1995) concurred by asserting that social and academic integration are necessary ingredients of academic achievement of African Americans. While there is ample documentation of the personal characteristics students need before enrolling in college (Comer & Poussaint, 1992; Nettles, 1991), there are also institutional characteristics that are related to academic achievement (Gibbs, 1988). Astin (1982) argued that retention and academic achievement are dependent on a combination of variables such as personal, institutional, and demographic variables. These three categories of variables are the intellectual bins of the pre-study theory (see Figure 1). Following are examples of these sets of variables which are of interest to the researcher.
Figure 1. Variables associated with academic achievement of African-American males in four-year undergraduate institutions. Academic achievement is defined as college grade point average.
Figure 1. (Continued) Variables associated with academic achievement of African-American males in four-year undergraduate institutions. Academic achievement is defined as college grade point average.
Personal variables--Personal variables are those that emanate from the individual; they tap individualized information that comes from within. These variables consist of two groups--cognitive and non-cognitive. Some examples of the personal, non-cognitive variables are self-esteem, locus of control, stigma, and social and academic integration. Some examples of the personal, cognitive variables include high school grade-point average, high school rank, American College Test scores, and Scholastic Aptitude Test scores.

Demographic variables--Demographic variables are descriptive characteristics of the sample. Some examples include parental level of income and parental level of education.

Institutional variables--Institutional variables are those that emanate from the institution such as counseling services that are provided, the faculty’s interactions with students, availability of financial aid, the institution’s climate and environment, and special programs such as academic seminars.

Personal Variables

Personal variables are divided into two categories--non-cognitive variables and cognitive variables. Each category will be addressed in turn, beginning with non-cognitive variables.

Non-cognitive Variables

This section includes information on relationships between non-cognitive variables and student performance.

Self-esteem. Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) examined 2625 elementary and secondary students in Baltimore, Maryland. They examined the association between academic achievement and self-esteem of African-American and white students. Much of self-esteem unfolds in the context of negative academic experiences. Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) defined self-esteem as “a negative or positive attitude toward oneself and the associated emotional reactions” (p. 9). They further explained that a person with
“high self-esteem does not consider himself better or worse than others, and low self-esteem means that the individual lacks respect for self, considers himself unworthy, inadequate, and seriously deficient as a person” (p. 9).

Students at a young age begin to form self-confidence and, perhaps, self-satisfaction. Because many of their experiences are school related, it is important to consider a relationship between academic achievement and self-esteem. Therefore, the question is: Prior to undergraduate school, what is the association of academic achievement and self-esteem of African-American students?

Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) addressed this question by studying the relationship between self-esteem and report card grades of elementary and secondary students. They documented that “schools in our society are concerned with comparing, measuring, and evaluating the merit and worth of the child, and the evaluations are manifested overtly in the form of tests and report card grades” (p. 88). Rosenberg and Simmons further argued that a student’s report card grades are shared with others such as family members, relatives, and peers who then form images of the students--images based on the report card grades. If grades are not good, then those who saw the report card may have a negative image of the student, which was a possible cause of low self-esteem. Report card grades affect self-esteem because students may base their self-worth on grades, which represent their academic success or failure. To clarify this point, Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) stated, “In clear and fairly precise terms, the report card indicates just how ‘good’ or ‘bad’ he is; and this process of assessment continues throughout his school years” (pp. 91-92).

In light of this literature on the relationship of school achievement and how students consider themselves academically, it appeared there may be an association between report card grades and self-esteem. However, in the state of Maryland, students’ scores on the Rosenberg and Simmons’ (1971) self-esteem scale indicated that grades had less effect on self-esteem of African-American students (effect size .11) than on white students (effect size .28). The effect size was measured by correlation coefficients squared. In other words, 11% of the variance in report card grades of African Americans is shared by self-esteem while for white students the shared variance was 28%. In another body of research, Graham (1994) argued that African Americans’ self-concepts are not
lower than their white peers, even though their academic performance is consistently lower.

The question now becomes: How can African-American students experience poor academic performance and score high on self-esteem measures? Perhaps Ogbu’s (1971) theory of poor academic performance explains this occurrence. In his ethnography of education in an urban neighborhood, Ogbu examined the relationship between academic performance and high aspirations. He explained that consistently poor academic performance of African Americans attending Stockton’s (California) high schools had no effect on their high aspirations. In Ogbu’s survey, 99% of Stockton’s high school students aspired to complete secondary school. Fifty-three percent aspired to graduate from a four-year college, and 34% aspired to an advanced degree. Graham (1994) supported these findings in her documentation that academic achievement of African Americans did not affect their self-concept of academic ability or their anticipation of achievement.

Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) used the following three principles of selectivity to explain how African Americans protect their self-esteem and to explain why African Americans do not define themselves according to their grades or base their future on current experiences such as poor academic performance: (1) the principle of selective interpretation, (2) the principle of selective perceptions, and (3) the principle of value selectivity. Rosenberg and Simmons’ (1971) three principles provide an interpretation of low academic achievement and divergent high self-esteem. A discussion of these three principles follows:

1. Selective interpretation refers to how information is interpreted by different individuals. There are likely to be as many interpretations of a single event as there are observers. In terms of high report card grades, students may interpret grades as a representation of their ability or efforts, especially when the grades are high. However, students may not believe that they are academically bright just because their grades are high. If their grades are poor, students may not relate them to what they are capable of achieving; they may see them merely as a reflection of boring school chores.

   In their study of self-esteem and report card grades, Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) reported that grades were interpreted differently by black and white students. For
example, black students did not relate good grades to intellectual ability; whereas, white students did interpret grades as a representation of intelligence. Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) offered that different interpretations of grades might explain why black students’ self-esteem is less affected by good grades or poor grades.

2. Students use selective perceptions to describe their parents’ attitude about their ability. Rosenberg (1989) asserted that both black and white students who performed poorly believed their parents thought that they were not intelligent. Therefore, they relate poor grades to their perception of what parents think of their academic ability. Even so, black students did not relate poor grades to their intelligence. Again Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) offered that a dissimilar interpretation of grades might explain why black students’ self-esteem is less affected by good grades or poor grades.

3. Value selectivity is another reference to students’ values and to what is important to them. Students use their values and qualities as measures of self-evaluation—meaning that self-esteem is underpinned by (1) events important to them, (2) their cares, and (3) their qualities.

Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) examined the association between grades and the value that black and white students assign to smartness. These authors defined the value of smartness as a belief in earning good grades. They reported that 35% of the African Americans who received poor report card grades reported that there was no relation between grades and their value of smartness as compared with 55% of white students (Rosenberg & Simmons, 1971). It appeared that whites valued smartness. If this is true, the value of smartness affected white students’ self-esteem. For blacks, the value of smartness, which is the same as earning good grades, had less effect on their self-esteem. Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) connected value selectivity to selective interpretation and to selective perception to strengthen the shield of self-esteem.

In summary, Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) conceptualized self-esteem as the positive or negative attitude that one has of self. Both kinds of attitude were based on personal qualities and on what one viewed as important enough to value. Therefore, self-esteem was protected with selective interpretations, perceptions, and the students’ values. Based on Rosenberg and Simmons’ (1971) theory of self-concept, African-American
students who performed poorly did not think of grade-point average as part of their self-esteem.

Locus of control, expectancy of success, and self-concept of ability. Graham (1994) reviewed over 100 studies on motivation in African Americans. The following three topics were among those included in the studies under her review: (1) locus of control, (2) expectancy of success, and (3) self-concept of ability. Graham reviewed locus of control to investigate the hypothesis that African Americans were more likely to believe in external locus of control than in internal control of results. She reviewed the other two areas of research to investigate the hypothesis that African Americans have negative perceptions of their academic ability.

Graham (1994) defined locus of control as a general acceptance of reasons for outcomes. Graham explained that internal and external personalities were on opposite ends of a continuum. She defined internals as “individuals who think of themselves as completely responsible for their own behavior and reinforcements, and externals as people who believe that powerful others, luck, or circumstances beyond their control are responsible for outcomes and reinforcement” (p. 69). In turning to academic achievement, internals were more likely to believe that the achievement was related to their ability and failure was related to a lack of effort. In other words, they held themselves responsible for their failure. This group was more likely to accept accolades for their achievement. On the other end of the continuum were the externals who were more likely to reject the responsibility for failure. For academic success, the externals were more likely to believe that their hard work or their intellectual ability did not cause their success. While conducting studies of the locus of control, Dyal (1984) hypothesized that African Americans are less likely to be internal when compared to whites.

Graham (1994) asserted that, not unlike the analysis of locus of control, the hypothesis for studies she reviewed was that blacks had lower aspirations than whites. In other words, there would be an association between the socioeconomic status of black families and future outcomes as perceived by their children. Children from families with a high socioeconomic status would also score high on measures of aspirations, and children from families of low socioeconomic status would score low on those same measures. The results showed that African Americans reported that poor current
performance did not mean that future outcomes would also be poor (Guggenheim, 1969). Ogbu found the same results in his 1971 ethnography: There was no association between poor academic performance and future aspirations. Graham (1994) reported that for mid-socioeconomic blacks, their aspirations were high if their current success was high and low if there was current failure. In summary, blacks more often than whites expect future success (Graham, 1994; Ogbu, 1971).

According to Graham (1994), “the general pattern of high academic self-concept among African Americans was relatively uninfluenced by social class distinctions” (p. 98). This finding was true of black and white fifth graders who were administered Brookover’s Self-concept of Ability Scale. In light of Graham’s findings, it appeared that African Americans determined that their socioeconomic status is not related to their aspirations, academic ability, and their self-concept. They continue to aspire to attending college and earning a comfortable living (Ogbu, 1971). Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) posited that African Americans ascribe to these beliefs in order to protect their self-esteem.

African-American students do not view poor academic performance as a predictor of their future success. They do not associate their academic performance with their academic ability self-concept. Graham (1994) also concluded, “A motivational psychology for African Americans must incorporate a range of cognitive and affective determinants of behavior” (p. 105). Graham associated cognitive determinants with her expectancy theory. In other words, academic performance is related to one’s aspirations. Graham (1994) also stated perhaps African Americans overrate their future success in response to their academic performance. Graham believed that when studying motivational psychology of African Americans, the affective domain should be incorporated. She agreed with Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) that African-American students do not relate academic performance to their self-esteem. However, achievement does matter to them.

Stigma. Steele (1992) defined stigma as “the endemic devaluation many blacks face in our society and schools” (p. 68). According to Steele (1992), devaluation as applied to African Americans means that they are intellectually inferior, they have low academic achievement, and poor socioeconomic status. Steele further states that
devaluation is the image that society has of African Americans and that these images classify people. Some of these images are developed from (1) a plethora of literature on low academic achievement of African Americans at all levels of education, (2) media accounts of African Americans going to jail, and (3) the under-representation of African-American males and faculty members at colleges and universities (Banks, 1996; Gibbs, 1988; Sealey, 1997; Steele, 1992).

According to Steele (1992), negative characterization is institutionalized and is subtly applied to African-American students from elementary to higher education. This stigma frequently holds true although many of those students are eager to learn and are well prepared academically and socially. In light of this information, why do so many of these students experience achievement failure? Steele (1992) offered that educators and administrators do not include devaluation as a variable associated with academic achievement of African Americans.

The literature supported that African Americans can and do achieve academically during their enrollment as college students. Even so, the problems of academic failure and dropout still exist. According to Steele (1992), more than 50% of African Americans drop out of college. Steele argued that stigma, a non-cognitive variable, affected the graduation rate of blacks in college. Steele (1992) explained that the stigma attachment was a concern because only 30% of black students graduate from college compared with 55% of whites. Gibbs (1988) concurred with Steele and further noted that grades of black students were lower than for white students, and it took black students approximately six years to earn an undergraduate degree.

The literature included information that oftentimes high scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test did not predict academic achievement and the high dropout rate of African Americans. Steele (1992) found that one ivy league university’s dropout rate was 33% for African Americans with high SAT scores (combined SATs 1200 plus); and for white students with the same SAT scores, the dropout rate was 11%. Steele believes that a low grade-point average in college is one reason for the dropout rate of African Americans. This state of affairs begs an answer to the following questions: What can be done to improve the academic achievement of undergraduate African-American males? What
happens to students who come from prestigious high schools and are well prepared academically as measured by standard assessments?

Steele (1992) offered that the stigma of race contributed to poor academic performance. Students do not perform well when they perceive that they are devalued because of race; when they feel and perhaps witness that race continues to undermine all efforts; when the curriculum does not reflect multiculturalism (Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976). According to a noted psychologist (Fleming, 1984), another example of racial devaluation is a hostile academic environment in which black students do not perform well.

In spite of these examples of devaluation, Steele (1992) referenced a number of programs from elementary to higher education. These programs were implemented to address the retention and academic achievement of African-American males. The James Comer (1988) Program (Yale University) began its operation in New Haven, Connecticut’s inner city schools. The underpinning of this program was the relationship between teacher and child. At two of the schools that used this program, academic performance of African-American males increased from low to high achievement. Another program at the college level was the Professional Development Workshop developed by Treisman (1985) at the University of California at Berkeley. In this program, African-American students with impressive entrance credentials such as high school grades, class rank, and SAT scores were invited to participate in structured work groups to solve difficult calculus problems, and they were encouraged to discuss their homework assignments with those in their study groups. Students in the Professional Development Workshop graduated at a higher rate, in less time, and with higher grades than the African Americans who did not participate in the workshop. Because students dropped out of school mostly at the end of the first term, this program served only first-year students.

In both programs, teachers and instructors were involved in the students’ progress. At Berkeley, faculty members helped to design the program and worked closely with the program’s administrators and the students. There were similar programs in Prince George’s County in Maryland and at Debra Miers’ school in Harlem. The personnel for these programs have recognized that racial stigma may be associated with
academic achievement. They propose that race is a non-cognitive variable of academic achievement. In these schools, according to Steele (1992), “there was harmonious race relations among students and a commitment by teachers and schools” (p. 76). Steele believes that race relations among the students at these schools are peaceful; the teachers are committed to the academic achievement of all students attending their schools; and the teachers value ethnicity (Steele, 1992).

**Social and academic integration.** In the context of undergraduate students, Hrabowski and Maton (1995) defined academic integration as “a sense of academic belonging, intellectual development, faculty contact, and commitment to the school” (p. 20). They defined social integration “as a sense of attachment to college social life, social contacts with faculty and staff, positive peer interaction, and a general sense of belonging in the university” (p. 20).

The literature was replete with information on the importance of the interaction between students and faculty. The literature included accounts of the need for African-American students to believe that they were prepared well enough to belong academically. Hrabowski and Maton (1995) maintained that when students are academically and socially integrated with college life, their academic achievements improve and they experience a higher rate of retention. However, in order to support such integration, the institution and the student must be right for each other. In other words, according to Hrabowski and Maton (1995), there is an association between the characteristics of the institution and those of the students. These authors proclaimed that the institution must implement programs to address social and academic integration, and the students must take advantage of the services. According to Ogbu (1971), Hrabowski and Maton (1995), and Steele (1992), there is an association between feelings of isolation and academic achievement.

In summary, the non-cognitive variables that appeared to be associated with academic achievement are: (1) self-esteem, (2) locus of control, (3) stigma, and (4) social and academic integration. Additionally, interacting with the faculty and fellow students, experiencing feelings of belonging, and participating in college life are also associated with academic achievement of undergraduate African-American males (Hrabowski & Maton, 1995). There is a higher retention rate and higher academic achievement of
African-American males when schools have programs that are based on these variables (Astin, 1982; Nettles, 1991; Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976; Tinto, 1972). Authors who studied these variables did not explore a relationship between racial discrimination and academic achievement. According to Fleming (1984), Gibbs (1988), and Allen, Epps, and Haniff (1991), undergraduate students with high grade-point averages in college know how to cope with racial problems on campus. These students have the determination to succeed and, therefore, do not view racial discrimination as a deterrent to academic achievement.

Cognitive Variables

This section includes four personal, cognitive variables, as described by Astin (1982) and Nettles (1991), that are associated with college grade-point average. The personal, cognitive variables are: (1) high school grade-point average, (2) high school class rank, (3) college entrance examination scores, and (4) Scholastic Aptitude Test scores. These variables are part of the students' past academic performance.

High school grade-point average and class rank. Astin (1982) defined grade-point average as “a measurement of achievement—an average derived from a system in which the familiar letter grades (A, B, C, and so forth) are assigned numbers, and the numbers averaged” (p. 3). Astin further denoted that class rank is based on the students’ grade-point average and scores on standardized assessments such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Colleges use SAT scores as a criterion of admission and grade-point average to determine which students will be retained after their freshman term. More than 50% of freshmen do not return to college after their second semester (Steele, 1992).

It is perceived that receiving poor grades is the reason for African-American students not returning for their second year of college. According to Lavin (1965) and Astin (1971, 1982), there is a moderate correlation between high school grades and college grades. The Pearson correlation is .51 for males and .52 for females. Thus, academic performance in college shares a little over 25% of the variance with academic performance in high school. Astin (1982) maintained that students must have well-developed study habits and a high grade-point average from high school. In response to
such information, it appeared that high school grades along with other variables are associated with academic achievement at the undergraduate level.

**College entrance examination.** Astin (1971) defined college entrance examinations as “tests of academic ability” (p. 7). Astin reported correlations between freshman grade-point average and college entrance examination scores as .35 for males and .43 for females. When looking at variables associated with freshman college grades, high school grades shared 26% of the variance in college grade point average for males and 27% for females (Astin, 1971). College entrance examinations shared 12% of the variance in college grades of men and 18% of the variance in college grades of women.

In summary, the correlation of high school grades and college grades was higher than the correlation between aptitude test scores and college grades. Astin concluded that high school grades were a better predictor of college grades; however, information from aptitude tests should be used to make the prediction more dependable.

**Scholastic Aptitude Test--Verbal.** Nettles (1991) reported in a study of campus race that aptitude test scores (SAT), high school grades, motivational level, integration into campus life, and frequency of interactions with faculty members were all correlates of college grade-point average of white and black students. Nettles (1991) maintained that in addition to these correlates, for black students, there were other predictors of academic achievement--marriage, congruence of the racial composition of one’s college and high school, and financial needs.

**Demographic Variables**

Demographic variables are those that are centered around parental level of income and parental level of education.

**Parental level of income.** Astin (1982) reported a positive relationship between a family’s income and academic achievement of undergraduate students. Astin found that, “Among blacks, parental income is related to undergraduate GPA, undergraduate persistence, and satisfaction” (p. 94). Astin reported that African-American students from families of high income had higher college grades than those students from families of low income.
Parental level of education. Astin (1982) defined parental level of education as the number of years of schooling parents completed. According to Astin (1982), “the educational level of the students’ parents shows a pattern of relationships to various student outcomes that closely parallels the pattern found for parental income” (p. 95). Although Astin reported there is a positive relationship between parental level of income and grade-point averages of undergraduate students and a positive relationship between parental level of education and the grade-point averages of undergraduate students, he did not provide the correlation coefficients. It could not be determined from Astin’s work if parental levels of income and education referred to one or both parents. In summary, the higher the level of parental education, the more likely students are to persist and to have a high GPA. In terms of entrance to graduate school and scores on aptitude tests, Nettles (1991) offered that many students achieved because of the income and educational advantages provided by their parents and grandparents.

Institutional Variables

Institutional variables are centered around student supports provided by the colleges and universities that the students attend.

Financial aid. Gibbs (1988) reported that the college persistence rates of black students are associated with family financial status as well as grades and test scores. Gibbs reported that black and Hispanic students leave undergraduate school more frequently for financial reasons. Gibbs (1988) maintained that in the mid seventies 38% of black students withdrew compared to 23% of white students.

Faculty interactions with students. According to Williams (1989), undergraduate black students often express that they frequently use faculty advisors, especially when registering for courses, arranging their schedules, and for other general concerns such as academic guidance. Often, students preferred to interact with faculty outside of class because they had problems and concerns that were not related to academics. Williams (1989) reported that most students met with their advisors at least twice per semester and were satisfied with the results of the meetings. He also found that some students did not know their assigned advisors, felt that their advisors did not want to advise them, offered no help, advised them to take courses they did not need, or advised them to take courses
that were too difficult. Williams (1989) concluded that students with high grade-point averages at the end of their first semester or at the end of their second semester met with their advisors once per semester or not at all. However, they wanted to know that an advisor was available if needed. Students also reported that they felt that their advisors were necessary because of their counsel pertaining to academic load and schedule.

Climate and environment. Fleming (1984) found that in white institutions, “from a theoretical point of view, black students experienced feelings of disconnectedness and that a process of alienation could be observed” (p. 66). These students did not report that they experienced academic and social integration or feelings of belonging. These students were perplexed because they were admitted with good academic credentials and did not expect to experience feelings of an outsider. These negative experiences thwarted academic development because the environment was not inviting. Fleming concluded that faculty involvement could probably reverse these negative experiences by engaging the students in college activities that would utilize their intelligence, enthusiasm, and energy.

Dezmon (1995) in her study of school climate and academic achievement referred to climate as the students’ perceptions and satisfaction with the following factors--staff members, school facility, and the academic environment. According to Dezmon (1995) these factors are grounded in the “values, beliefs, and norms of a school … which together comprise the educational environment of a school” (p. 19). Dezmon reported that high-achieving students found the school’s climate unsatisfactory; whereas, the low-achieving students felt the climate was satisfactory.

Culture. Ogbu (1971) addressed culture in the context of socioeconomic background. In his ethnography of education, Ogbu (1971) asserted that non-anthropologists classified students born in the low-income class as culturally destitute. In other words, students of low-income culture did not subscribe to the behaviors, attitudes, and values of the majority society. For example, academic achievement was not a value of low-income students. Ogbu became concerned when cultural deprivation was defined in the context of low-income status. According to Ogbu (1971), “In the context of low-income, culture refers to negative traits such as poverty and academic failure. In the
context of middle-income, culture refers to positive traits such as mainstream culture and academic achievement” (p. 4).

Gibbs (1988) refuted that poverty is related to low academic achievement. She found that low academic expectations and low commitment of school officials impacted school performance to a greater degree than poverty. In light of Gibbs’ refutation, and with a renewed commitment of educational officials to academic performance of all students, would it remain necessary to implement programs to enrich a specific ethnic group? Can it be assumed that low-income translates into cultural deprivation? According to Gibson and Ogbu (1991), how students handle cultural differences depends on how school officials integrate those differences into the mainstream culture. As early as 1903, DuBois (1996) wrote:

It is too bad that we have to use the word “cultural” for so many meanings. But what it means in modern scientific thought is that 15,000,000 men and women who for three centuries have shared common experiences and common sufferings, and have worked all those days and nights together for their own survival and progress; that this complex of habits and manners could not and must not be lost. That persons sharing this experience formed a race no matter what their blood may be. (pp. 163-164)

Therefore, integrating cultures does not imply absorption and eradication but to co-exist and respect diversity within the educational environment. The question now becomes: What impact does culture have on academic achievement? Even though the salient points are addressed above, many researchers provided additional information on culture as it relates to academic achievement (Dezmon, 1995; Fleming, 1984; Seldacek & Brooks, 1976; Tyack, 1974).

In summary, there are a plethora of reasons for low academic achievement: cultural deprivation, low-income status, no motivation to achieve, low expectations from others, low expectations of self, and racism. Now the challenge is to uncover ways to increase academic achievement of African-American students and, more specifically, African-American males.
Summary of Pre-Study Theory

From this review of the literature, the following variables were associated with academic achievement at the undergraduate level--personal variables (non-cognitive and cognitive), demographic variables, and institutional variables. Each set of variables is summarized in turn, beginning with the non-cognitive, personal variables.

The non-cognitive variables were self-esteem, locus of control, expectancy of success, self-concept of ability, stigma, and social and academic integration. An issue is whether non-cognitive variables should be considered in the context of academic achievement. Fleming (1984) argued that non-cognitive variables should be considered. She found that there is association between institutional variables (such as academic advisors) and academic achievement of undergraduate African Americans.

The cognitive variables related to academic achievement were high school grade-point average (GPA), class rank, college entrance examination scores, and Scholastic Aptitude Test--Verbal scores.

The demographic variables were parental level of income and parental level of education. Astin (1982) found that students with parents of high levels of income and education tend to have higher grades and retention rates than students with parents of lower levels of income and education. It appears that economic and social advantages contribute to academic achievement of these students (Rosenberg & Simmons, 1971; Steele, 1992).

The institutional variables associated with academic achievement were financial aid, faculty interaction with students, climate, environment, and culture. In terms of financial aid and its relationship with academic achievement of black students, Nettles (1991) reported that students with financial problems achieved lower grades than students without these problems. When controlling for all other variables, Nettles concluded that academic achievement varied when correlated with the amount of financial aid received. Students with jobs performed better than students who were not employed (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980). Perhaps students with jobs managed their time to satisfy the demands of academic life and those of the job. Even if there were few financial needs, students did benefit from interacting with faculty in terms of receiving advice and in terms of believing that the faculty was interested in their academic progress (Fleming, 1984;
Students’ retention rates increased and their grades improved when the following institutional conditions were addressed:

- There were academic interactions between the faculty and students.
- The faculty had a vested interest in the students’ academic achievement.
- The curriculum and campus activities reflected students’ interests.
- The students experienced few financial needs.

The pre-study review suggests a theoretical relationship between personal, demographic, and institutional variables and academic achievement of undergraduate African-American males in four-year educational institutions. Perhaps Tyack (1974) summed it best: “Effective reform today will require reassessment of some cherished convictions about the irrelevance of ethnic differences. To create schools which reflect the pluralism of the society is a task which will take persistent imagination, wisdom and will” (pp. 290-291).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The findings of this synthesis are the results of 13 studies of the academic achievement of African-American males. These studies addressed the research question: What are the variables associated with academic achievement of African-American males in undergraduate four-year educational institutions? In this review, academic achievement is defined as college grade-point average.

This chapter includes the search sources of studies, limitations on the selection of studies, a list of studies included in the synthesis, a description of the community of scholars who are doing research and writing on the topic, and a list of the four-year institutions where the selected studies were conducted.

Search Sources

This section includes a description of how the researcher searched the literature for studies and what was found. A list of search sources is included in Table 2. For the purpose of finding studies related to the research question, descriptors such as blacks, achievement, and academic achievement of black males were used to conduct an ERIC search. There were many studies listed, especially on academic achievement of African-American males in secondary schools and in community colleges. There were nine studies on academic achievement of African-American males in graduate school. The ERIC search did not produce studies of the academic achievement of African-American males in undergraduate four-year colleges and universities.

A search of Dissertation Abstracts International was conducted to discover studies from 1861-1995. Nine of the studies in this synthesis are from this source. The literature search continued with a review of research journals published since 1960. For example, the Journal of Negro Education was searched from Winter 1932 to the Fall of 1995. Twelve studies were found in this source and two were selected for inclusion. Finally, a Boolean search (Virginia Tech Library System--VTLS) was conducted. A Boolean
Table 2

Search Sources of Studies in the Synthesis

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<th>Search source</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
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<td>Educational attainment</td>
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<td>Undergraduate black males and academic achievement</td>
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<td>Education, psychology and black studies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Black studies</td>
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<td><strong>Journals</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Issues in Higher Education (Biweekly)</td>
<td>Researcher reviewed the table of contents of volumes 9-13 (Mar. 12, 1992-Feb. 20, 1997) and volume 14 (Mar. 6 - Oct. 30, 1997)</td>
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<td>Challenge: A Journal of Research on African-American Men (Published by Morehouse College Research Institute); (404-215-2676); (Biyearly)</td>
<td>Researcher reviewed the table of contents of Volume 6 (2) (Dec. 1995), Volume 7 (1) (Feb. 1996), Volume 7 (2) (July, 1996), Volume 7 (3) (Dec. 1996),</td>
<td>10 studies</td>
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<th>Descriptor</th>
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<th>Studies selected for the synthesis</th>
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<td>Researcher reviewed the table of contents of volumes 16-25 (Jan./Feb. 1987 - Dec. 1996).</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal of Black Psychology (Quarterly), E185.625 J68</td>
<td>Researcher reviewed the table of contents of volumes 21-22 (Feb. 1995-Nov. 1996). No other issues available.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal of Higher Education (Bimonthly since 1930)</td>
<td>Researcher reviewed the table of contents of volumes 51-67 (Jan./Feb. 1980-Nov./Dec. 1996).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal of Negro Education (Quarterly since 1932)</td>
<td>Researcher reviewed the table of contents of volumes 1-64 (1932-1995).</td>
<td>12 studies</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal of Negro History (Quarterly since 1916)</td>
<td>Researcher reviewed the table of contents of volumes 72-78 (Winter, 1987-Fall, 1993).</td>
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<td>Negro Education Review (Quarterly)</td>
<td>Researcher reviewed the table of contents of volume 40 (Jan./Apr. 1989), volumes 43-46 (Jan. 1992-Oct. 1995). (No further issues were available.)</td>
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Table 2 (continued)

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<td>Research in Higher Education (Bimonthly since 1973)</td>
<td>Researcher reviewed the table of contents of volumes 30-37 (Feb. 1989-Dec. 1996).</td>
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<td>Review of Educational Research</td>
<td>Researcher reviewed the table of contents of volumes 50-66 (Spring, 1980-Winter, 1996).</td>
<td>2 studies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Researcher reviewed the table of contents.</td>
<td>30 citations</td>
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<td>8,069</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Boolean Search (Virginia Tech Library System)</td>
<td>African-American and male</td>
<td>4 studies</td>
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<td>Male and undergraduate</td>
<td>2 studies</td>
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<td>Blacks and achievement</td>
<td>5 studies</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduates and achievement</td>
<td>1 study</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of studies selected for the synthesis. 13
search is a pair of descriptors with a connector word. Some examples are blacks and achievement or male and undergraduate. As reflected in Table 2, no studies were selected from the Boolean search.

From the search sources--ERIC, Dissertation Abstracts International, research journals, books, and the Boolean search of VTLS--139 studies on educational attitudes of African Americans, higher education of African-American males, and academic achievement of African-American males were identified. From these studies, 89 were on African-American males at various levels of education such as elementary, middle-school, secondary, undergraduate, and graduate. Finally, 13 studies on the academic achievement of African-American males at the undergraduate level were selected for inclusion. These 13 studies were selected because their subjects were African-American males, the subjects attended four-year undergraduate institutions, and academic achievement was the dependent variable.

In summary, studies meeting the following criteria were selected for this synthesis: (1) the dependent variable was academic achievement, (2) the subjects were African-American males enrolled in four-year undergraduate colleges and universities in the United States, and (3) the data were quantified and disaggregated by race.

Limitations on the Selection of Studies Included in the Synthesis
The studies included in this synthesis were limited in the following ways:

1. Studies of African-American males in elementary, middle, and high schools and community colleges were excluded.

2. Studies of African-American males where academic achievement was not the dependent variable were excluded.

3. Studies that did not include gender-disaggregated data were generally excluded. However, a few studies did violate the gender-disaggregation criterion and were included because their findings could be applied to a broader population. This was the case when there were no significant differences in the academic achievement of males and females.
Criteria for Inclusion of Studies

According to Hunter and Schmidt (1990) the purpose of a synthesis is to contribute to cumulative knowledge in hope of furthering understanding and developing theory. In respect to this purpose, there are six criteria by which studies have been identified and included.

1. The study included academic achievement at the undergraduate level. There were many studies on academic achievement; however, the information did not include achievement at the undergraduate level.

2. The study’s findings were quantified. All studies contained a statistical analysis of results except one. This study was included because some phenomena are better addressed qualitatively (Noblit & Hare, 1988).

3. Academic achievement was the dependent variable.

4. Undergraduate, African-American males were the subjects.

5. The subjects attended four-year undergraduate institutions. Institutions were four-year colleges and universities in the United States of America.

6. The data were disaggregated by race and gender if the subjects included more than African-American males. Information on other subjects was included if it was useful for comparative purposes.

List of Studies in This Synthesis

The following studies used in this analysis were found in an extensive search of the literature. Studies were included according to the criteria listed above.


This study examined questions that addressed academic performance, racial attitudes, and college satisfaction of African-American undergraduate students on black and white campuses.

“This investigation explored the extent to which non-cognitive variables are related to the academic achievement of minority college undergraduates. The variables examined were perceived support from family, school and peers, as well as self-concept of ability, socioeconomic status (SES), and educational and occupational aspirations and expectations” (p. i).


This study examined “the relationship of values and self-concept to the academic performance of black undergraduate students at the University of Florida” (p. viii).


“There are non-cognitive variables related to the academic performance of African-American male university students. These variables include student background, racial congruency and college environment” (Abstract).


This study investigated “the extent to which selected personality factors and satisfaction with the college environment differentiated between the lower divisional [less than 57 credit hours] black students when classified according to high, average, and low academic achievers” (p. 7).


This study examined “the role of psychosocial variables, specifically emotional intelligence quotient (EQ), bicultural behaviors, locus of control and social support in facilitating academic resilience.” The subjects were “104 African American male college students ages 18-24 who were raised in urban areas” (Abstract).

This study identified differences in persistence and achievement among groups classified by race and gender, developmental program participation, and institutional types (by degrees granted and predominant race.) The subjects were 19,855 first-time freshman entering undergraduate institutions of Louisiana public higher education on a full-time basis in the fall of 1982 (Abstract).


The “study was designed to investigate whether and to what extent noncognitive and the traditional pre-college variables such as ACT scores and high school class rank predict first-semester grade point average (GPA) and enrollment status for ESP-admitted freshman students by ethnic and gender subgroup” (p. 12). The letters ESP represent Educational Services Programs.


This study examined “the assumption that factors across educational environments have comparable effects on student performance” (p. 128). “Black students in white environments have quite different experiences from those enrolled in Black environments” (p. 128). Are “the differences, assuming their existence, … relevant in terms of student performance” (p. 128)?


This study investigated the relationship of “non-cognitive variables--academic locus of control, self-concept, preference for long term goals, understanding of and the ability to deal with racism, leadership, experience, availability of support persons, community service, and knowledge acquired in a field … to the academic achievement of black students who have persisted for two years at a predominately white university” (Abstract).

“The … purpose of this research was to identify … factors in the academic success of African American male undergraduate students at the University of South Carolina” (p. vi). Question: “What factors contribute to the academic success of the African American male in American higher education” (p. vi)?


“Through narrative inquiry, this research … [was designed to identify] the factors that led to the successful achievement of 17 African-American male students at a 116 year old historically black college” (Abstract).


“Freshman mathematics courses have all-to-often been a burial ground for the aspirations of many minority students who have entered college with the goal of majoring in some area of engineering, medicine, or … science. The Professional Development Mathematics Workshop … provides … a novel honors program …” (Abstract).

The Community of Scholars

The authors of these studies are a community of scholars studying the academic achievement of African-American males. These authors were interested in variables that were associated with the achievement of those undergraduate males attending four-year institutions (see Table 3). Eight of the authors were doctoral students. Their samples were African-American males enrolled at the same institutions as the authors. These institutions were located in the Southwest, Southeast, and Northeast. The highest number of dissertations (three each) was conducted in New York, California, and Florida. The focal point of the dissertations was the effect of non-cognitive variables on academic achievement of black students, more specifically, the African-American male. Six of the doctoral authors were female and two were male. One of the males was African American and one was white. All of the doctoral candidates were employed at the institutions where they conducted their studies.
Table 3

Four-year Institutions Where Studies Were Conducted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, year</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Percentage of African Americans attending institution in 1992(a)</th>
<th>Gender of author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellis, 1974</td>
<td>Fordham University</td>
<td>Bronx, NY</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crutchfield, 1982</td>
<td>University of Florida</td>
<td>Gainesville, FL</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treisman, 1985</td>
<td>University of California</td>
<td>Berkeley, CA</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James, 1990</td>
<td>Virginia Commonwealth University</td>
<td>Richmond, VA</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen &amp; Haniff, 1991</td>
<td>University of Michigan</td>
<td>Ann Arbor, MI</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female and Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of North Carolina</td>
<td>Chapel Hill, NC</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of California</td>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arizona State University</td>
<td>Tempe, AZ</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memphis State University</td>
<td>Memphis, TN</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State University of New York</td>
<td>Stony Brook, NY</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Carolina Central Southern University</td>
<td>Durham, NC</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>HBCU**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Texas Southern University</td>
<td>Baton Rouge, LA</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jackson State University</td>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Carolina A&amp;T University</td>
<td>Jackson, MS</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morgan State University</td>
<td>Greensboro, NC</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Central State University</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Florida A&amp;M University</td>
<td>Baltimore, MD</td>
<td>94</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wilberforce, OH</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tallahassee, FL</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hargroder, 1991</td>
<td>Louisiana State University and Agriculture and Mechanical College</td>
<td>Baton Rouge, LA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jackson &amp; Swan, 1991</td>
<td>6 PWCU* &amp; 8 HBCU</td>
<td>(Not Given)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 Males</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hood, 1992</td>
<td>(Predominantly white mid-west)</td>
<td>(Not Given)</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appel, 1993</td>
<td>Hofstra University</td>
<td>Hempstead, NY</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Female</td>
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(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, year</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Percentage of African Americans attending institution in 1992</th>
<th>Gender of author</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johnson, 1993</td>
<td>University of South Carolina</td>
<td>Columbia, SC</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis, 1994</td>
<td>55% at HBCUs &amp; 45% at PWCUs</td>
<td>(Not Given)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross, 1995</td>
<td>University of Miami</td>
<td>Coral Gables, FL</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford, Okojie, &amp; Lewis, 1996</td>
<td>Michigan State University (10% of sample) &amp; an urban college in MS (90%)</td>
<td>East Lansing, MI</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Female and Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*PWCU Predominantly White Colleges and University

**HBCU Historically Black Colleges and Universities
The authors documented their purpose of study as a need to discover factors influencing academic achievement of African Americans. They looked at those factors in order to make the results known to African Americans, more specifically African-American males. Another purpose was to make a small contribution to reverse the low academic achievement and high dropout rates. They wanted information to help them make a difference in the academic achievement of African-American males, and finally, they wanted to raise the awareness level of faculty and staff.

Four of the authors were in higher education institutions on the East coast. Those authors’ studies were published in educational journals and books, namely the Negro Journal of Education, Challenge: A Journal of Research on African-American Men (A Morehouse College Research Institute publication), and College in Black and White: African American Students in Predominantly White and in Historically Black Public Universities.

The following published authors chose their samples from the National Study of Black College Students (NSBCS) database located at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor: Allen & Haniff (1991), Jackson & Swan (1991), and Davis (1994). This database included a list of predominantly white and historically black institutions and contained information on enrollments, race, gender, age, and graduation and dropout rates. These authors looked at variables associated with academic achievement of black students at mixed race colleges and universities.

These scholars centered their investigations on the following questions: (1) What variables are related to achievement, and how can these variables be integrated and sustained in the college environment? (2) How may these variables be used to improve academic achievement of African-American males? Their quests for responses to these questions gave birth to studies related to these concerns.