

**The Effects of Parent's Educational Attainment on
The Retention of African-Americans Students at Predominately
White Institutions**

By

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(ABSTRACT)

This study assesses whether parents' educational background positively affects the retention and graduation of African-American students who attend Predominately White Institutions (PWI). Studies that have compared successful African-American students to unsuccessful African-American college students at PWI (Allen, 1985) have suggested that an important factor in understanding these differences in outcome is parents' educational background. College-educated parents may have clearer expectations for their children's college experience and may have instilled different cultural or socialization messages in their children. Those messages could include Historical/Cultural, Black Identity/Self-Concept, Maladaptive, and Residual messages. These children may enter college with clearer ideas of college norms and expectations, and may have fewer adjustment and transition problems than first generation black peers (Pounds, 1987). The population of this study will consist of African-American respondents in the National Survey of Black Americans.

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CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

This study examines factors that affect African-Americans students at college. I will examine two major factors; parents' education and racial socialization messages.

Racial socialization is critical to overcoming obstacles to graduation for three reasons: Firstly, racial socialization involves the history of African-Americans which teaches that is important. Despite African-Americans enduring the brutal acts of slavery, killings, rapes and beatings they have nonetheless sacrificed and worked hard and have overcome these hardships. If African-Americans can understand how their ancestors overcame past injustices, it makes it possible to overcome current barriers.

Secondly, African-American history teaches an understanding the relationship with the dominant society. For centuries the dominant white society has sent negative, false, self-disruptive images of African-Americans that negatively affect their self-image. If African-Americans understand their history it will buffer them against the negative images put out by the dominant white society.

Thirdly, by understanding history African-Americans also understand the importance and value of education. Education is a means of liberation. African-Americans view education as a means to improve their economic and social status, but their expectations have not been fulfilled. So, African-Americans have

a special obligation to continue to overcome obstacles and achieve educational success for themselves and all African-Americans.

Pounds (1987) found that first and second generation black students appear to differ from each other in important ways, but as yet few studies have examined this phenomenon. Examining parent's educational attainment might explain the differences in graduation rates between first and second generation black students who attend PWI. Scott (1981) found differences between first and second generation African-American college students at PWI included : (1) interpersonal skills appropriate to the college academic environment, (2) an internalization and later transference of educational beliefs and values into appropriate behavioral expressions, and (3) functional peer and reference groups that are consistent with future personal, academic, and professional expectations.

Parents' educational background may help clarify the differences, regarding different generations of African-American students. One-way parents' educational attainment may influence learning and development needs in college is through cultural messages that they instill in their children. These cultural messages may influence what students learn to value and the actions that they use to implement them.

Thornton (1999) demonstrated that parents with more education were likely to provide racial socialization messages than less educated parents, therefore educated parents should give their children more positive cultural and self-efficacy messages. This will produce more successful students and lead to higher retention rates at PWI. Thornton's study also proposes that other intervening variables may prove fruitful in examining graduation rates of African-American

students at PWI. He suggested that parental experience regarding their education can bolster the child's ability to negotiate through problematic situations they may face at PWI. In addition it provides the student with a tool kit or strategic plan of action.

The primary questions I am asking concerns are : (1) Do African American parents' educational backgrounds positively influence graduation rates of their children? (2) Do the racial socialization messages that parents provide for children influence graduation rates of children? (3) Is the effect of parent's education on graduation rates explained by the nature of socialization messages they provide for their children? (4) Are the effects of parents education and racial socialization more important for African-American students who attended PWI than for those who attended HBCU?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Background

One cannot adequately understand the phenomenon of black students on white campuses without placing it in the proper historical context. The African-American community has always highly valued education, viewing it as the key to upward mobility in American society (Anderson, 1984; Ballard, 1973; Thompson, 1986). Since blacks have been denied equal education, gaining access to a predominately white educational institution has been part of the African-American struggle (Allen and Hall, 1989). African-Americans had to build their own institutions, in part, because they were excluded from mainstream institutions (Billingsley, 1992). In the era of racial segregation the struggle turned to legal challenges to gain access to the better equipped, predominantly white, schools (Anderson, 1984). Historically, most African-Americans have graduated from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Prior to the late 1970's, a majority of African-Americans students were enrolled in HBCUs. In 1973, 42% of all African-American College students were enrolled in 85 HBCU. By 1978, 7 in 10 of the 866,315 African-American college students were enrolled in a PWI (Lang, 1992).

Even though African-Americans are going to PWI at a higher rate, they tend to have lower grade point averages and retention rates than white students (Nettles, 1988). Studies show the attrition rates of African-American college students to be five to eight times higher than whites (Allen, 1985).

Obstacles facing African-American Students at Predominantly White Institutions

Attending Predominantly White Institutions creates new situations for African-Americans students. These students have to deal with four main issues: discrimination, alienation, stress and self-esteem. The problems, adaptations, changes, possibilities for development and needs of black students must be understood (Stike, 1984) in order to implement ways to assist them at PWI. One way towards understanding African- Americans at PWI is to examine the obstacles that they encounter.

African-American students at PWI have higher rates of alienation, mistrust, identity problems and feelings of inferiority than their white counterparts. One study by Loo and Rollison (1986) on a majority white campus in California found that African-Americans felt the greatest isolation and social alienation compared to other campus subculture (p.548). Another study by Suens (1983) found that African-American students on a predominately white campus had higher alienation scores and dropped out more often than white students.

At these universities the students sometimes feel the heavy burden of racial discrimination (Miller, 1981; Fleming, 1984; DiCesare, Sedlack and Brooks, 1972). Thompson, Neville, Weathers, Poston, and Atkinson (1990) demonstrated that African-American students at PWI had a higher degree of mistrust and felt singled out for differential, and inferior, treatment from European American faculty and students. Jackson and Swan (1972) found that African-American students at PWI had an increased tendency to suffer from identity problems.

Studies by Allen (1981, 1982, 1986) and Willie and McCord (1972) point to the isolation and alienation, as well as depressed academic aspirations and achievement experienced by African-Americans on white campuses. Also, there is high physical and emotional stress that the students undergoes in trying to sustain themselves in such hostile and alien environments (Gibbs, 1974; Fleming, 1984). Not surprisingly, the result for some is poor academic performance and even dropout.

Parental help in Overcoming Obstacles at PWI

Support

This may paint a gloomy and hopeless situation for African-Americans in PWI, but this is not the case. PWIs can be a hostile and non-supportive environment for African-American students. But many African-Americans have graduated from PWIs and still send their children to these institutions despite the obstacles of the white environment. When parents and children are assessing colleges, “the abilities, needs, and inclinations of the children are factored into the decision (of selecting a college) as are the academic social, and cultural environments of the college campuses” (Feagin, Vera, Imani; 1998:28).

An important factor in overcoming obstacles for African-American college students is social support. Davis (1991) demonstrates that social support does three things, 1) it is an effective buffer of life stress, 2) it is positively related to well being and health, and 3) it helps to solve social, mental, and academic difficulties of campus life. The social support a student relies on can be socioemotional (understanding, love) and/or instrumental support (money). The network of social support comes from peers, teachers, counselors, friends and

parents. For the purpose of this paper, I will be focusing on will be on parental support as the most influential support group.

For African -American students going to PWI, parental support is extremely important because it affects the influences, aspirations, and preparation of educational attainment that a student receives (Bowen and Bok, 1998). Jackson and Swan (1972) did a study comparing the factors that affect black undergraduates in white and black colleges and universities. They found that both forms of social support were more critical for African-Americans at PWI than for African-American students that attend HBCU. Jackson and Swan's study also showed that Black students at HBCU tend to solve their own problems versus black students at PWI who relied on family and institutional mechanisms to deal with their problems. Black students on HBCU campuses are not forced to cope with “unfamiliar, potentially, stressful situations of being a minority on entering college”(Davis, 1991:145).

Strategies

Parental support is very important for African-Americans at PWI but it isn't enough. Even with parental support some African-American students may not be prepared for the obstacles at PWI. The key factor for African-American students at PWI may not be the socioemotional or instrumental support that parents give but the strategies that they teach. Strategies give a person a model, a “script”, on how to deal with obstacles. Strategies provide the skills and knowledge for overcoming obstacles at PWI. The emotional and financial support a student receives does not lay out a plan of action or give a student survival skills. It is hard to pursue success, in this case higher education at a PWI

when “ the skills, style, and know how are unfamiliar to the person”(Swidler 1986: 275).

Socialization

So, where does a student learn strategies to overcome obstacles at PWI? The strategies may come from parents, particularly how they socialize their children. The family is the primary agent of socialization on a child (Stevenson and Siegel, 1984). Socialization is the process through which individuals learn societal norms and values. Both culture and social structure influence the learning process. Socialization enables people to fit into society. It is from socialization that people acquire skills, strategies, and knowledge about how to interact with the larger society (Corsaro and Elder, 1994).

For African-American parents ethnic culture is a key factor in the socialization process of children. From culture two important strategies emerge which are helpful for African –American students at PWI : 1) cultural messages and 2) self-efficacy messages.

Culture, A Key Factor for Socialization

As Ann Swidler points out, culture “consists of symbolic vehicles of meaning, including beliefs, ritual practices, and culture practices such as language. The symbolic forms are means through which social processes of sharing models of behavior and outlook within {a} community take place”(1986:273). But, Swidler also proposes three important alternative roles of culture that can explain differences in behavior. “ First culture is a “tool kit” of symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which people may use in different

ways to solve different kinds of problems. Second, to analyze culture's causal effects, it focuses on "strategies of action," persistent ways of ordering action through time. Third, it sees culture's causal significance not in defining ends of action, but providing cultural components that are used to construct strategies of action" (1986: 273).

According to this view, culture is capital, something that people acquire that can be useful at a later time. This form of capital is sometimes referred to as culture capital (Swidler, 1986 ; Bourdieu, 1984). DiMaggio (1982) noted that shared cultural meanings generated their own distinctive cultural traits, tastes, and styles. A person learns how to selectively draw out (use) the appropriate cultural style for a particular situation. Even though people may share common goals, the tools that they use to achieve those goals are very different. This shows that people with cultural capital affect better outcomes than those who don't have it. Based on this alternative definition of culture, culture shapes action by defining: 1) what has the most value to people, 2) the plan of actions people use, and 3) the strategies to implement them. The different educational backgrounds that parents expose their children to and the different socialization messages they provide, gives children different ways of handling the college situation (Bell and McGrane, 1999).

Racial Socialization and Racial Identity.

Parents are responsible for influencing how children filter and interpret the social messages from the larger society (Thornton, 1999). For African-Americans, cultural experience and history are important factors. Based on the history of African-Americans in the United States, how African-Americans parents prepare

children to understand and deal with issues of discrimination, racism, and prejudice is an important component of the parenting process (Phinney and Chavira, 1995). African-Americans socialize their children about issues of being an American and being an African-American. DuBois(1989) calls this double consciousness:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the type of a world that at looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness- an American, a Negro; two wary ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

From the socialization process, identity develops (Cross, 1995). Identity comes from childhood experiences, socialization patterns, and efforts to seek knowledge about culture (Sellers, 1997). The concept of group identity reflects “those meanings, expectations, or traits derived from the historical experiences, structural location and differential social interaction of the group members”(White and Burke, 1987: 312-313). Racial socialization provides information that relates to racial status as a component of relates to personal and group identity, intergroup and interindividual relationships, and position in the social hierarchy. Racial socialization also involves verbal behaviors, modeling of behaviors, and exposure to specific objects, contexts, and environments (Thornton et als, 1990).

Based on interaction, relationships, and history within white America, different African-American parents may use different messages in socialization that will lay out different plans or strategies of action. For example, Boykin and Toms (1985) cited three distinct realms of racial socialization among African-

American parents. They call it a triple quandary that includes- mainstream, minority, and cultural expression. In the mainstream strategy parents take the role of teaching life skills. “Conveying important personal qualities such as confidence, ambition, and respect is more meaningful than issues regarding race. These parents focus more so on human values and socializing “race-neutral” children. In the minority experience strategy, children are prepared for the non-supportive world by building self-respect and pride and learning to survive and cope. Parents either underscore or acknowledge racial restriction. Parents using the black cultural expression strategy usually recount historical events in their family’s life or speak of famous black/African historical figures” (Thornton, 1990: 401-402).

The content of racial socialization reflects a “strategy for enacting the message and valence (i.e., positive, negative, or neutral) that is attached to racial status” (Thornton, 1990:402). Some African-American parents place little or no emphasis on race in the socialization process. Ogbu (1990) suggest that some parents may instill ambivalent or negative attitudes about education and achieving success. African-American parents may not know how to instill positive racial socialization messages. Understanding the history, culture, and struggles of African-Americans in this country is an important tool to overcoming obstacles and restrictions in society. By knowing their history, African-Americans realize that they have achieved much in this country, but also know they still have more obstacles to overcome. Education is one way to overcome obstacles and prepare for the future. When children are deeply involved in learning and African-American culture they are able to keep negative messages (obstacles) at bay.

Social Learning Theory of Self-Efficacy

Another way culture is used as a tool kit for strategies of action is through self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief that a person can perform adequately in a situation. One important source of development for self-efficacy is the environment between family and child (Gecas, 1989). The parent and child environment provides strategies needed for efficacious action.

According to Bandura there are three ways that parents can create strong self-efficacy. Bandura notes that one of the most effective ways to create a strong sense of self-efficacy is through mastery experiences. Mastery experiences involves “acquiring the cognitive, behavioral, and self-regulatory tools for creating and executing appropriate courses of action to manage ever-changing life circumstances” (Bandura 1995: 3). This means that parents who graduated from college would have had experience in being in an all white setting. They would have learned the tools needed to adapt to obstacles (discrimination, isolation, and alienation) in order to obtain their degree. These tools can be passed along to their children. The tools might include certain cognitive strategies of adjustment. McAdoo (1997) notes that only through their achievements (students) and the support of the extended family that African-Americans have obtained advanced education.

Another way parent’s educational attainment may influences self-efficacy of their children is through vicarious experiences. A vicarious experience “raises the students belief that, they possess the capabilities to master comparable activities” (Bandura, 1995:4). A second or third generation African-American student would hear the stories and be around grandparents and parents who

graduated from college. Education would be something that is highly valuable. Even though African-Americans are economically and socially at the “low -end” of mainstream society, having a parent or grandparent getting their degree and overcoming the obstacles from the dominant society could be encouraging.

A third way parent’s education can influence self-efficacy is by social persuasion. Social persuasion is verbally persuading children that they have the abilities “to master given activities is likely to mobilize greater effort than if they harbor self-doubt and dwell on personal deficiencies when a problem arises” (Bandura, 1995: 4). A parents’ higher educational attainment has been linked to parental values encouraging self-direction, which may promote appropriate internalization of behavioral norms (Parcel and Menaghan 1994; Wright and Wright 1976; Schooler 1983; Luster, Rhodes, and Haas; 1989).

Summary

Parents’ education and racial socialization messages address four important questions pertaining to graduation of African-American college students: 1) Do African American parents’ educational background positively influence graduation rates of their children? 2) Do the racial socialization messages that parents provide for children influence graduation rates of children? 3) Is the effect of parent’s education on graduation rates explained by the nature of socialization messages they provide for their children? 4) Are the effects of parents’ education and racial socialization more important for African-American students who attended PWI than for those who attended HBCU.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

Sample

Data for this study are from The National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA). The NSBA is a national probability household survey of 2,107 black Americans, 18 years of age and older, conducted in 1979 and 1980 over a seven month period. The Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research at The University of Michigan, supervised and trained an all black, male and female professional interviewing staff, which conducted 2,107 face to face household interviews. “The multistage, national probability sample was based on the distribution of the black population indicated in the 1970 Census. The sample was self-weighting and every black American household in the continental United States had the same probability of being selected” (Jackson, 1991: 13-14).

The national sample is fairly representative of the black population as reported by the 1980 census, however, due to several factors, it is clear that the sample may not be completely representative. The survey had a response rate of 67 percent. There was a disproportionate representation in the sample of single black female-headed households. In addition, there was a disparity in the proportion of women to men and a slight tendency to underrepresent younger people of both sexes (Jackson, 1989). Also, low-income groups tended to be slightly over represented. Finally there is a slightly higher proportion of individuals from the South than their distribution in the population would indicate. These differences from expected census distributions are relatively slight in comparison with other large studies of the black population. The NSBA had a comprehensive questionnaire instrument. The questionnaire had several

broad categories that related to African-American life. The areas include neighborhood, religion, health, employment and unemployment, family and friendships, mental health utilization identity, and background.

In the present study, I do not use the whole NSBA sample. Because I am interested in explaining graduation from college, the sample is limited to only those respondents who indicated that they were at least 25 years old and had some college education.

Variables

Dependent Variable: The dependent variable in this study is graduation. Graduation is defined as graduating from college among all NSBA respondents who are over the age of 25 and report at least some college education. In the analysis, the graduation variable is coded 1 = graduated, 0 = did not graduate.

Gender: Respondent's sex is a dummy variable that is coded 1 = female, 0 = male.

Racial Composition of College. Concerning the college they went to, the NSBA asked respondents were asked “were there all blacks, mostly blacks, about half blacks, mostly white, or almost all white students there?” The racial composition of respondents college was coded by the NSBA; 1 = all black, 2 = mostly black, 3 = half black, 4 = mostly white, 5 = almost all white. I recoded the five responses into two categories. Coded 1 through 3 were classified into one

category and 4 and 5 into another category. These categories were recoded into a dummy variable, mostly or all white =1 and not mostly all white =0.

Parents' Education. The NSBA asked respondents “ how many years of school did your father complete?” and “how many years of school did your mother complete?” Responses to these questions were combined into a single variable which was used to create 4 dummy variables: both parents having a college education was recoded to = 1, others 0; one parent having a college education =1; others 0; both parents having some college =1, others 0; one parent having some education =1; others 0; neither parent having a college degree is the comparison category and was coded 0 throughout.

Racial Socialization Messages: Data on socialization messages were derived from responses to several open ended questions. The questions were:

1. In raising your children, have you done or told them things to help them know what it is to be black?
2. What are the most important things you've done or told them?
3. Is this different, in any way, from the way you were raised as a child-The things you were taught about what it is to be black?
4. How is it different-What did your parents teach you to help you know what it is to be black?
5. How about when you were a child? Were there things your parents taught you to help you know what it is to be black?
6. What were the most important things they did or told you?
7. Are there any things you've done or told your children to help them

know how to get along with white people?

8. What are the most important things you've told them about getting along with white people?

9. Is this different in any way from the way you were raised as a child-The things your family taught you about how to get along with white people?

10. How different—What did your family teach you about how to get along with white people?

The NSBA researchers classified responses to questions 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10, above, into the following categories.

1. White Prejudice/Hatred
2. Societal Racial Restrictions/Blocked
3. Things are Different/Better Now
4. Maintain Social Distance/Distrust
5. Rejection of Prejudiced Attitudes
6. Equality of Blacks and Whites
7. Importance of Deference to Whites
8. Fear of Whites
9. Peaceful Co-existence Without Deference
10. General Comments about Whites
11. Caution in Dealing with Whites
12. Standup for Self
13. Importance of Voting
14. Offensive/ Violent Posture
15. General Recognition of Race
16. Racial Pride

17. Black Heritage/ Historical Traditions
18. Help/Support for/Co-Act with others
19. Inferiority of Blacks Vis a Vis Whites
20. General Acceptance of Self
21. Positive Self-Image
22. Economic Survival of Self and Family
23. Necessity to Excel/Achieve/Work Hard
24. Character Building Emphasized
25. Get along in/Cope with/Deal with
26. Equality for All Individuals/Humans
27. Religious/Spiritual Principles
28. Citizenship/ Physical Appearance

Using information from responses to questions 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9, responses indicating what the respondent was taught were transformed into two variables: 1) what the respondent was taught about what it means to be black and 2) what the respondent was taught about how to get along with whites. For ease of analysis, the number of categories of messages was reduced. In order to do this, I looked at the literature for some guidance.

Researchers have classified racial socialization messages in various ways. For example, because there was little literature to guide them, Demo and Hughes (1990) used an ad hoc approach and classified the NSBA responses into four categories: 1) individualistic and/or universalistic, 2) integrative/assertive, 3) cautious/defensive, and 4) respondents who were taught nothing. Thornton et al (1990) used sociodemographic factors (i.e., age, gender, marital status, education, family income, region, urbanicity, and neighborhood racial

composition) to assess how parents used racial socialization messages. Bowman and Howard (1985) classified their race-related socialization variables into five categories: 1) racial barrier awareness, 2) self-development, 3) ethnic pride, 4) egalitarianism and 5) taught nothing. Other researches categorized racial socialization messages based on 1) sociodemographic and environmental factors, 2) motivation and academic achievement factors, and (3) racial identity factors (Flemings, 1984; Billingsley, 1992; Allen, 1992; McAdoo, 1997).

The categorization scheme used in the present study is based on two assumptions. Firstly, racial socialization messages influence the meanings people hold of themselves in social roles (Burke, 1991). Secondly, some cultural messages parents teach their children bolster the children's ability to negotiate through sometimes problematic situations they may face at PWI. Accordingly, I developed five categories of socialization messages: 1) Historical/Cultural Messages, 2) Black Identity/ Self-Concept Messages, 3) Maladaptive Messages, 4) Residual Messages and 5) no messages. The message categories classified under each of these headings are shown in Figure 1. Because the respondents were asked what parents taught them about 1) what it means to be black and 2) how to get along with white people; I assume that all the responses described here have some degree of racial or ethnic content. That is, the respondents interpreted the questions based on the memories of how their parents socialized them to deal with and comprehend racial and/or ethnic issues and problems as they affected the respondents personally.

Figure 1:

<u>Historical/Cultural Message</u>
2: Societal Racial Restriction/Blocked
33: Black Heritage/ Historical Traditions
<u>Black Identity/Self-Concept Messages</u>
4: Maintain Social Distance/Distrust
5: Maintain Social Distance/Distrust
21: Stand up for Self
22: Stand up to Whites
23: Importance of Voting
31: General Recognition of Race/Accept Race
32: Racial Pride/ Be Proud of Being Black
34: Help Support for/ Co-Act with Others
52: Positive-Self Image
53: Economic- Survival of Self or Family
54: Necessity to Excel/Achieve/Work Hard
55: Character Building Emphasized
56: Get Along in/ Cope With/Deal with Others
62: Religious/Spiritual Principles
63: Citizenship/Physical Appearance

<u>Maladaptive Messages</u>
1: White Prejudice/Hatred
3: Things are different/Better Now
7: Rejection of Prejudiced Attitudes
12: Importance of Deference to Whites
13: Fear of Whites
16: Caution in Dealing with Whites
24: Offensive/Violent Posture Directed at Whites
41: Inferiority of Blacks
<u>Residual Messages</u>
8: Equality of Blacks and Whites
9: Other inter group focus responses
14: Peaceful Co-Existence
15: General Comments about Whites
19: Other Accommodative Responses
29: Other Challenging or assertive responses
39: Other positive group images
49: Other negative group images
51: General Acceptance of Self
59: Other individual Responses
69: Other non group-Verbal Responses
61: Equality for All Humans

1). Historical/Cultural Messages. Our social and cultural experience of race has been socially constructed. Throughout the history of the United States the cultural meanings associated with race have played a central role (Hacker, 1995). This unique history has perpetuated a distinct situation for African-Americans as compared to other Americans (Thornton, 1990; Peters, 1985). This distinct situation has existed over 500 years of American history and has created a distinctive African-American culture. Amuzie Chimezie suggests that “several factors and realities have functioned to make black cultural distinctiveness” (1987:2). Some of these factors include African heritage, slavery experiences, isolation, and denial of formal education by law, and a generalize oppressive racism.

The unequal societal restrictions that have affected African-Americans originated in the past, but have continued into the present, and are based on racist, prejudicial, and discriminatory practices. These practices have resulted in serious economic, educational, and employment disadvantages for African-Americans. For example, the societal restrictions on the education made available to African-Americans in the past have had effects that continue into the present. As Hraba has noted “as the nation’s labor needs moved toward mental, white-collar work, African-Americans had to make up the tremendous gap between their educational levels and that of other groups” (Hraba, 377:1994).

When parents provide messages to their children emphasizing knowledge and awareness of past and present discrimination and blocked opportunity, their children can learn and understand the reasoning behind societal restrictions, negative attitudes, and discriminatory behaviors. This kind of learning provides a foundation and a framework for developing strategies for dealing with

obstacles to achievement. As shown in Figure 1, the messages in this category emphasizes the "why and how" of the unique situation of African-Americans, emphasizing, for example "societal restrictions and black heritage."

For many years, education in this country has embraced a Western cultural-historical perspective. The Western cultural-historical perspective is a "formal education process which contributes to the problem (of African-Americans) by emphasizing what to think, and especially what it is right to think" (Myers, 9:1993) according to a European cultural perspective. This perspective teaches false and negative stereotypes of African-Americans and positive stereotypes of Euro-Americans. This dominant perspective can not help African-Americans overcome obstacles and achieve success, since it encourages African-Americans to have a negative view of themselves. I hypothesize that having a foundation and framework of African-American history and culture counters the negative influence of the Western cultural historical perspective and provides African-Americans with the tools they can use to overcome obstacles and achieve success.

2.) **Black Identity/Self-Concept Messages**. William Cross developed a two-factor theory of black identity. Overall self-concept is how a person defines himself or herself. Two factors in Cross's theory of self-concept are personal identity (PI) and reference group orientation (RGO). RGO includes elements of identity such as racial identity, group identity, race awareness, racial ideology, race esteem, race image, and racial self-identification. PI includes self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence, self-evaluation, interpersonal competence, ego ideal, and personality traits. Elements of PI are some of the building blocks of

personality, with culture, class, and gender influencing how it is manifested across different ethnic groups (Cross, 1991). RGO includes the differences in values, perspectives, group identities, and worldviews that characterize each group (Cross 1991).

The responses I have classified in the Black Identity/Self-Concept category includes ways in which African-American have learned to deal with and explain their blackness (Thornton, 1990). As noted in Figure 1, some of the items in this category include having a “positive self image,” “stand up to whites,” and “be proud of being black”.

The messages in the Black Identity/Self-Concept category provide two things; (1) positive racial identity, and (2) specific ways of dealing with whites. Having a positive racial identity reflects recognition of ones group and self-esteem. Jackson, McCullough, and Gurin (1991) demonstrated that certain aspects of self (self-esteem) are related to positive feelings about the group (group identity). Parents who convey a positive racial identity teach their children about being black and being a black American. In addition, parents who teach the items in the Black Identity /Self-Concept category also instill specific routines and ways of dealing with whites. Some parents anticipate the hostile environment that their children will encounter. In order to combat this, parent's teach their children to be comfortable with their blackness when it comes to dealing with whites (Thornton et 1990; Harrison, 1985).

Another aspect with dealing with whites is based on how African-Americans presents themselves to the larger white society. Some might argue that such messages as “citizenship; physical appearance” are non-racial positive messages but concerning the racial content behind these messages, they challenge the false

and destructive stereotype of African-Americans as being dirty, unkempt, non-caring about the community, or being immoral people.

The Historical/Cultural category discussed above and Black Identity/Self-Concept category differ in terms of the content and function of the messages. The messages that were categorized in Historical/Cultural category give an understanding of the historical and continuing patterns of treatment toward African-Americans; while messages in the Black Identity/Self-concept category provide a set of positive self-definitions of African-Americans.

3.) Maladaptive Messages. The items in this category are messages that promote hatred, fear, resentment, and ignorance. Parents, who provide these messages, provide negative feelings towards oneself, one's group, and white Americans. These messages can be seen as self-destructive and non-helpful messages. Some of these items include "white prejudice/hatred," "inferiority of blacks" and "fear of whites." These messages are also negative notions of blackness (self-concept). Cross (1991) demonstrated that these negative attitudes and behaviors are linked to low esteem, hostility, tension, inadequate self-actualization, aggressive as opposed to nurturing social attitudes, and a propensity in a social behavior to commit violent crimes. The maladaptive messages give a distorted image of African-American history, culture, and the potential of other African-Americans (Cross, 1991).

4.) Residual Messages. The messages in this category were neither positive nor negative but were overall humanitarian messages. These items did not seem to have reference to ethnicity; and some of the responses were very general.

Examples of the responses in this category are “equality for blacks and whites,” “peaceful co-existence,” and “equality for all humans.” Parents who provide these messages provide their children with ideas about racial and ethnic issues that emphasize universalism and de-emphasize consciousness of racial and ethnic differences, problems, and politics. The residual messages are similar to the “mainstream” category of Boykin and Toms (1985). The other messages in this category were non-verbal responses or other group images responses, which were not explained by the respondent.

For each of the dummy variables created to represent the categories of messages, respondents who indicated that their parents had stressed that type of message either in regard to “what it means to be black,” or “how to get along with white people,” were coded 1, others were coded 0.

Form of the Analysis

Since the dependent variable is dichotomous the method of analysis is logistic regression. Logistic regression examines the relationship between a dependent variable and two or more independent variables. The importance of logistic regression “is its capacity to estimate the relative importance of several hypothesized predictors of the dependent variable” (Knoke and Bohrnstedt; 1994; 263). A measure of association that is generated by logistic regression and presented in the analysis below is the odds ratio. The odds ratio is the frequency of an occurrence relative to another category occurring or not occurring. In other words “the chance of being in one category of a variable relative to the remaining categories of that variable within a specific category of another variable” (Knoke and Bohrnstedt, 1994; 179).

Chapter Four: Findings

Regression analysis was used to address my research questions. Since the dependent variable (graduation) is dichotomous, logistic regression is the most appropriate analysis for the research questions that use this variable. When the dependent variable is regressed on the independent variables logistic regression provides information on the relative likelihood that an event will occur.

We do not report odds ratios (OR) that are unrealistically high and unrealistically low. Such coefficients result from there being a small number of respondents in particular categories. Using the findings in tables 4 and 5 as providing reasonable estimate of the size of the effects of independent variable we concluded that OR that were higher than 50.00 and lower than .020 were unrealistic and reflected low precision. OR that were higher 50.00 and lower .020 and not statically significant were not used.

The Effects of Some College or More Education

Table 1 shows the percentages and frequencies for all the variables. Over twenty (20%) percent had a parent or parents that had some college or more. Forty (40%) percent attended a college that was mostly or almost all white. Fifty-eight (58%) percent are females.

The analysis in Table 2 shows the percentages of respondents who graduated from college by categories of the independent variable. Also, table 2 shows several statistically significant ($p < = .05$) occurrence among the independent variables on the dependent variable. Parents' education has a significant relationship with graduation from college. These findings indicate

that African-American students that have both parents' that graduated from college have a (75%) chance at graduating from college. Both parents having some college was slightly higher (55.6%) than one parent graduating from college (52.2%). Among racial socialization messages, a Historical Cultural message has the strongest association with graduation. Parent's education and historical cultural messages have a positive significant association with graduation.

Table 1: Distribution of the Sample by Dependent and Independent Variables; Respondents with Some College or More Education

<u>Variable</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>
Graduated from college		
Yes	40.0%	205
No	<u>60.0%</u>	<u>308</u>
	100.0%	513
Parents' Education		
Both parents graduated from college	2.3%	12
One parent graduated from college	9.0%	46
Both parents had some college	1.8%	9
One parent had some college	8.0%	41
Neither went to college	<u>78.9%</u>	<u>404</u>
	100.0%	513
Racial Socialization Messages		
Historical Cultural		
Yes	17.5%	86
No	<u>82.5%</u>	<u>406</u>
	100.0%	492
Black Identity & Self Concept		
Yes	47.2%	232
No	<u>52.8%</u>	<u>260</u>
	100.0%	492
Maladaptive		
Yes	12.2%	60
No	<u>87.8%</u>	<u>432</u>
	100.0%	492
Residual		
Yes	25.6%	126
No	<u>74.4%</u>	<u>366</u>
	100.0	492
Nothing		
Yes	76.8%	378
No	<u>23.2%</u>	<u>114</u>
	100.0%	492
Racial Composition of College		
Mostly or almost all White college	43.0%	217
Not Mostly White College	<u>57.0%</u>	<u>284</u>
	100.0%	501
Gender		
Male	42.1%	216
Female	<u>57.9%</u>	<u>297</u>
	100.0%	513

Table 2: Percent of Respondents Who Graduated from College by Categories of Independent Variable

<u>Variable</u>	<u>% graduating</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>Chi-Square</u>
Parents' Education			
Both graduated from college	75.0%	4	11.293*
One graduated from college	52.2%		
Both parents had some college	55.6%		
One parent had some college	41.5%		
Neither went to college	37.1%		
Racial Socialization Messages			
Historical Cultural			
Yes	54.7%	1	10.695*
No	35.7%		
Black Identity & Self Concept			
Yes	35.8%	1	1.947
No	41.9%		
Maladaptive			
Yes	36.7%	1	.160
No	39.4%		
Residual			
Yes	34.9%	1	1.199
No	40.4%		
Nothing			
Yes	42.1%	1	.592
No	38.1%		
Racial Composition of College			
Mostly White College	38.7%	1	.412
Not Mostly White College	41.5%		
Gender			
Male	38.4%	1	.366
Female	41.1%		

* p< = .05

Socialization Messages

Table 3 shows the impact of parents' education, gender, and racial composition of college on socialization messages. Historical/ Cultural messages is related to parents' education. African-American students are more likely to receive these Historical/Cultural messages when both parents graduated from college. In sum, Historical /Cultural messages are enhanced by parents' education. Maladaptive messages are weakly significant with parents' education. Gender and racial composition of college are not significantly related to the kinds of messages a person receives.

Graduation

Table 4 presents the regression analysis that includes all the predictor variables (gender, parents' education, and racial composition of college) excluding socialization messages on graduation. The analysis reported in this table reveals a number of statistically significant ($p < = .05$) relationships. When both parent's graduate from college an African-American student is five times more likely to graduate than if neither parent went to college. If one parent graduated from college an African-American student is twice as likely to graduate than if neither went to college. There was no impact of gender and racial composition of college on graduation.

Table 4: Logistic Regression of Graduation on Gender, Racial Composition of College, and Parent's Education

Variable	B	<u>Odds Ratio</u>
Gender		
Female	.14	1.159
Male	—	1.000
Racial Composition of College		
Mostly White College	-.18	.833
Not Mostly White College	—	1.000
Parents' Education		
Both parents graduated from college	1.70	5.455*
One parent graduated from college	.66	1.936*
Both parents had some college	.66	1.939
One parent had some college	.21	1.244
Neither parent went to college	-----	1.000
Model Chi-Square	12.642*	
Pseudo R square	.032	

*p. < = .05 (Test for coefficients one-tail)

Table 5 presents the same analysis as in table 4, but socialization messages was added to the list of predictors. When socialization messages is introduced as a control, it reduces but does not eliminate the significant relationship of parents' education on graduation. Racial socialization messages have an impact but, only with Historical /Cultural messages are important. This effect is independent of

parents' education. African-American students who receive Historical/Cultural messages are twice as likely to graduate than those who receive no messages. Still, there is no impact of gender or racial composition of college on graduation.

Clearly, there is an established pattern here. Historical cultural messages and parents' education are the dominant significant indicators of graduation for African-American students. The following tables will not be focusing on significance because the sample sizes are smaller. The following tables will show the effects of parents' education and racial socialization messages are greater for one gender or another; and if they are greater for those attending a PWI vs. an HBCU.

Gender

Table 6 and 7 present regression analysis on graduation when gender is controlled. Gender indicates a weakly positive impact on graduation. Females are five times more likely to graduate when both parents graduate from college than if neither parent went to college. Males are four times more likely to graduate. Gender does not influence graduation rates.

Table 5: Logistic Regression of Graduation on Gender, Racial Composition of College, Parent's Education, and Socialization Messages

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Odds Ratio</u>
Gender		
Female	.240	1.271
Male	—	1.000
Racial Composition of College		
Mostly White College	-.196	.822
Not Mostly White College	—	1.000
Parents' Education		
Both parents graduated from college	1.557	4.747*
One parent graduated from college	.636	1.889*
Both parents had some college	.594	1.811
One parent had some college	.197	1.218
Neither parent went to college	—	
Racial Socialization Messages		
Historical Cultural	.734	2.083*
Black Identity & Self Concept	-.098	.907
Maladaptive	-.045	.955
Residual	-.338	.713
Nothing	—	1.000
Model Chi-Square	24.228*	
Pseudo R Square	.066	

* p. $\leq .05$ (Test for coefficients one-tail)

Table 6: Logistic Regression of Graduation on Parent's Education, Socialization Messages, and Racial Composition of College; Male Respondents only

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Odds Ratio</u>
Racial Composition of College		
Mostly White College	.318	.899
Not Mostly White College	_____	1.000
Parents' Education		
Both parents graduated from college	1.372	3.942
One parent graduated from college	.002	1.002
Both parents had some college	.199	1.220
One parent had some college	-.106	.899
Neither parent went to college	_____	1.000
Racial Socialization Messages		
Historical Cultural	.444	1.558
Black Identity & Self Concept	-.103	.902
Maladaptive	-.124	1.312
Residual	-.675	.509
Nothing	_____	1.000
Model Chi-Square	7.730*	
Pseudo R Square	.053	

* p. $\leq .05$ (Test for coefficients one-tail)

Table 7: Logistic Regression of Graduation on Parent's Education, Socialization Messages, and Racial Composition of College ; Female respondents only

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Odds Ratio</u>
Racial Composition of College		
Mostly White College	.172	.842
Not Mostly White College	_____	1.000
Parents' Education		
Both parents graduated from college	1.658	5.251
One parent graduated from college	1.245	3.474
Both parents had some college	.654	1.923
One parent had some college	.487	1.628
Neither parent went to college	_____	1.000
Racial Socialization Messages		
Historical Cultural	1.070	2.915
Black Identity & Self Concept	-.069	.933
Maladaptive	-.270	.763
Residual	-.112	.893
Nothing	_____	1.000
Model Chi-Square	23.914*	
Pseudo R Square	.107	

* p. ≤.05 (Test for coefficients one-tail)

Racial Composition of College

Tables 8 and 9 present regression analysis on graduation when the racial composition of college is controlled. In both tables, there was low precision due to the small number of respondents in these categories. The racial socialization

message an African-American student receives is the same if they attended a PWI or HBCU. There is no significant effect of racial composition of college. Historical cultural messages were shown to have a weakly positive impact on graduation if the college was mostly white or not.

Table 8: Logistic Regression of Graduation on Parent's Education, Socialization Messages, and Gender ; Respondents who went to Colleges that were Mostly White

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Odds Ratio</u>
Gender		
Female	.293	1.340
Male	—	1.000
Parents' Education		
Both parents graduated from college	1.384	3.122
One parent graduated from college	.662	1.938
Both parents had some college	**	**
One parent had some college	.067	1.070
Neither parent went to college	—	1.000
Racial Socialization Messages		
Historical Cultural	.581	1.787
Black Identity & Self Concept	-.062	.939
Maladaptive	-.568	.566
Residual	-.757	.757
Nothing	—	1.000
Model Chi-Square	12.206*	
Pseudo R Square	.078	

* p. $\leq .05$ (Test for coefficients one-tail)

** Low precision due to the small numbers of respondents in this category.

Table 9: Logistic Regression of Graduation on Parent's Education, Socialization Messages, and Gender; Respondents who went to Colleges that were not Mostly White

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>Odds Ratio</u>
Gender		
Female	1.740	1.190
Male	—	1.000
Parents' Education		
Both parents graduated from college	**	**
One parent graduated from college	.562	1.754
Both parents had some college	.374	1.453
One parent had some college	.355	1.426
Neither parent went to college		
Racial Socialization Messages		
Historical Cultural	.822	2.276
Black Identity & Self Concept	-.161	.851
Maladaptive	.276	1.319
Residual	-.366	.693
Nothing	—	1.000
Model Chi-Square	17.818*	
Pseudo R Square	.085	

* p. ≤.05 (Test for coefficients one-tail)

** Low precision due to the small number of respondents in this category.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The overarching goal of this research was to answer four questions:

- Do African American parents' educational background positively influence graduation rates of their children?
- Do the racial socialization messages that parents provide for children influence graduation rates of children?
- Is the effect of parent's education on graduation rates explained by the nature of socialization messages they provide for their children?
- Are the effects of parents' education and racial socialization more important for African-American students who attended PWI than for those who attended HBCU?

In theoretical terms, my findings strongly support the idea that parents' educational background and the racial socialization that parents provide for their children positively influence graduation. However, findings also indicate that the effect of parents' education on graduation rates is not explained by the nature of socialization messages, and that the effects of parents' education and racial socialization for African-Americans at PWI s and HCBU is similar.

Parents' Education

The findings of this study show that parents' educational attainment is strongly related to college graduation of African-Americans. The more years of college completed by parent(s), the more likely a child will graduate from

college. This is consistent with the other studies showing that students choosing to pursue a college education are greatly influenced by their college educated parent(s) (Freeman, 1999).

A parent graduating from college has more than just a piece of paper. Such parents have acquired experience, exposure, and have an in-depth feeling of education and the educational process. This is a process that not only broadens their minds (parent(s)) but it can be passed down. When parents achieve their college degree; it is often expected that their children will go to college. Because going to college is seen as an obtainable goal that the next generation will pursue and carry further. Each generation must re-create the educational cycle and improve on it (McAdoo, 1997). Parents have set the precedence for education and higher learning. Their educational experience is used as a guide and a model.

Parent(s) who did not graduate from college might have a hard time understanding the impact, exposure, experience, and knowledge that going through the educational process can bring; basically they have a hard time or can not relate to their children's college experience. Such things as "life circumstances, educational programs, and socialization practices within black families often make educational achievement very difficult" (McAdoo, 1997). For example, some parent(s) might feel jealous or convey negative emotions or messages because their child is succeeding and doing better than them (Bell, 1999).

Also, parents' education has the same effect for African-Americans attending a PWI or HBCU. From parent(s) education, a student learns to survive and maneuver through a college setting whether it is mostly white or not.

Educated parents might instill the importance of earning a college degree despite any obstacles that the student may or may not face. Parents realize that their children need to have the same educational attainment as whites, if not higher, in order to be competitive in the job market and society. Obtaining a college degree is the main objective, because parents have exposed their children to the benefits and necessity of a degree.

Racial Socialization Messages

The relationship of racial socialization messages only influences graduation rates when the messages are Historical/Cultural. I suggest three possible explanations for the significance of Historical/Cultural message versus the other messages.

First, Historical/Cultural messages are significant predictors of graduation because these messages provide an explanation of the past and present struggles of African-Americans. Historical/Cultural messages lay out the foundation of societal restrictions that have been placed on African-Americans. These restrictions, based on false ideas about “blackness,” have resulted in racism and discrimination; which has lead to unequal opportunity in the educational process. The other racial socialization messages do not offer an explanation of past injustices of African-Americans. They deal more with identity, attitudes, and emotions.

Secondly, a parent can not talk about societal restrictions without discussing black heritage and historical traditions. Understanding the history of how African-Americans of the past used their own skills and strategies to

overcome societal obstacles illustrates the importance of education and obtaining a college degree.

Thirdly, historical cultural messages do not explain the impact of parents' education on graduation but adds to it. Parents' education is a tangible example of how to overcome societal restrictions through education. When historical cultural messages are added, it reinforces the link of the past and present in which African-Americans have persevered in this country to obtain equality through education. Parents can teach their children about the struggles of the past but use their educational success as a first hand example of how they did.

As with parents' education, racial socialization messages are equally important at a HBCU and PWI. It may be, however, that the influence and impact of the messages would be differently implemented. At an HBCU, students thoughts and ideas could be validated, because students are immersed in African-American history, tradition and culture at the school. Messages that parents instilled in them could be reinforced by the HBCU. Whereas, at a PWI African-Americans Historical/Cultural thoughts and ideas are suppressed. The racial socialization messages that students receive are not reinforced by the PWI. Still the effect of messages at PWIs and HBCU are similar. This suggests that what students get from family maybe more important than the school they attend. However, given the data used in the present study it is impossible to conclude if the racial socialization messages from home or from college is the most important.

Gender

Barnes (1991) study found that African-American girls receive slightly more socialization messages and parents' education has a higher effect than among boys. Thomas and Speight (1999) demonstrated in their study that "African-American boys were given more socialization messages about overcoming racism, and girls were more encouraged to pursue a good education" (p.165). This could be based on the historical context that African-American women have to deal with racism and sexism. Therefore, African-American parents raise their daughters to be educated so that they can be independent and not dependent on men or white women. More studies need to be done to examine the different effects parents' education and racial socialization messages have on outcomes for male and female children.

Conclusion

The evidence presented here shows that parents' education and parenting practices are extremely important factors in graduation of African-Americans. The key for African-American success is how parents teach and socialize their children about the struggles and sacrifices of their ancestors, and of themselves (parents). This process is something that starts in early childhood and continues into adulthood. When parents' socialize their children at an early age, a foundation can be built. This foundation will equip the student with strategies about how to maneuver in a hostile environment. This foundation also emphasizes the value, power, success and liberating effect education has. African-American parents can reiterate this message as well as the African-American

community (teaches, preaches, community leaders) to be constant mentors, advisors, and support systems to teach and guide children; this might be especially important for children who come from backgrounds where parents do not have a college education. To the parent(s), sending an African-American student to college may be easier than helping the student obtain a college degree from a HBCU or PWI. These parents may not have the skills, strategies, experience, and exposure of going to college. If this were the case than, perhaps outside community involvement would be extremely vital.

To help overcome a lack of parents or parenting PWIs and HBCUs need to realize that programs for African-American students that are "one size fit all", does not always work for African-American students. Understanding the heterogeneous backgrounds of African-Americans these Universities can specify programs that would adjust to the students needs academically as well as personally.

Limitations to the Research

This study was limited in four major ways. First, the data was collected twenty years ago. In that time the college dynamics for African-Americans at HBCU and PWI has changed. Secondly, there was a small sample of African-American that graduated from college; a larger sample size might demonstrate a clear and more accurate picture of African-Americans students. Thirdly, there needs to be better measures of racial socialization than previously provided. Fourthly, there needs to be a questionnaire that specifically is suited for African-American college students and their parents.

Suggestions for Research

Research needs to be done to examine how parents' education and parenting practices effect African-American college students and their graduation rates. There need to be extensive cohort interviews of African-American College students and their parents. Most of the research dealing with African-Americans at college focuses on test scores, SES, and how African-Americans socialize with whites and other students. All of that information is important, but they are secondary issues. The main issue is retention. It seems that PWIs and HBCUs focus on the recruitment of African-Americans into their colleges but not retention. A way of retaining African-Americans students is to understand the backgrounds and reasons why they are at college. It's important to know what strategies, skills, and exposure a student has before they enter college, not when they are there. Because what happens before they enter college might have an important impact as to what they do when they get to a PWI or HBCU.

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