TROUBLE IN THE PIPELINE: UNDERSTANDING THE INFLUENCE OF ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION ON MINORITY STUDENT PERSISTENCE TO DEGREE COMPLETION AT FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

by

SAMAAD WES KEYS

(Under the Direction of Karen L. Webber)

ABSTRACT

The number of minority students enrolled in undergraduate degree programs at for-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs) has steadily increased over the last decade. Although increased college enrollment normally indicates greater access, FPCUs have failed to ensure that minority students, a growing population on campuses, successfully complete their degree programs. Scant scholarship exists concerning academic and social integration related to minority persistence to degree completion at FPCUs. This qualitative research study explores the influence of academic and social integration on persistence to degree completion for minority students enrolled in undergraduate degree programs at a FPCU. The findings suggest that academic and social integration are important factors in the persistence to degree completion of minority students enrolled at FPCUs. The findings also suggest that minority students enrolled in baccalaureate degree programs at FPCUs are influenced more by social integration than they are by academic integration. Findings of this study are critical to the development of policies and

practices to ensure the success of minority students who choose to pursue a postsecondary degree at a FPCU or in other sectors of higher education.

INDEX WORDS: persistence, for-profit colleges and universities; African American student success; Hispanic student success; degree completion; minority; student success

TROUBLE IN THE PIPELINE: UNDERSTANDING THE INFLUENCE OF ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION ON MINORITY STUDENT PERSISTENCE TO DEGREE COMPLETION AT FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

by

SAMAAD WES KEYS

BA, Morehouse College, 2008

MAED, Central Michigan University, 2009

A Dissertation Proposal Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2014

TROUBLE IN THE PIPELINE: EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION ON MINORITY STUDENT PERSISTENCE TO DEGREE COMPLETION AT FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

by

SAMAAD WES KEYS

Major Professor:	Karen L. Webber
Committee:	James C. Hearn
	Erik C. Ness
	James T. Minor

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2014

DEDICATION

This research and dissertation is dedicated to my family. To everyone who has come before me and who had a dream. To everyone who sacrificed their dream so that I can achieve my own, for everyone in my family who dealt with me on this journey during the good, the bad, the ugly and the uglier.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to dedicate this work to the little boy from Paterson, NJ who never stopped dreaming and whose determination and perseverance to find out what life was like beyond the trees that surrounded him in the housing projects of Paterson, NJ… This one is for you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank God for giving me the strength and mental capacity to complete this dissertation. He created a path for me that became clearer as I continued on this incredible journey of education. It all started with music and somehow, someway ended with a Ph.D. in higher education. As a young man, I never imagined going to college, not to mentioned earning a terminal degree. This is truly a dream come true. So it is most appropriate to give a heartfelt thanks to my dream team, which includes my mother Celeste Ghant, for both her direct and indirect encouragement; the closest thing to a father Rodney Keys, who never allowed me to forget where I came from; my loudest cheerleader Aunt Robin; my borderline militant, intellectually-challenging yet tiring Uncle Joel. Thank all you for what you have done to get me to this place. However, I would be remiss if I did not recognize the team leader, my heart and my rock, my grandmother, Mrs. Betty L. Keys. Grandma, none of this would have been possible without your many years of love, encouragement, and guidance and your consistent declining of my invitations to any kind of pity party. I love you. I would like to recognize my advisor Dr. Karen L. Webber for supporting and challenging me as I honed my skills as a researcher and to develop into what I think is a pretty strong scholar-practitioner. In addition, I would like to acknowledge my committee members Drs. James Hearn and Erik Ness for your unwavering support over the years and for seeing me through the dissertation process. I would like to thank my Southern Education Foundation family for their support with a special acknowledgement to Dr. James T. Minor, who became an advisor, mentor, confident, big brother and friend that helped me through this journey. I would also like to thank Dr. John Michael Lee, Jr. and my family at the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities for the opportunity to work for such a renowned organization while completing my dissertation. I would like to thank my

friends for their constant support and encouragement over the course of the dissertation process and for reminding me that “not finishing” was not an option. So thank you Jovan and Steven Jones; Norma Jean Hughes; Erika McDowell; Helen Vassallo; Troy Donté Prestwood; J. Omari Johnson; and Adante Harvey. Each of you has helped in so many ways – from being a listening ear on many occasions to editing my work. Finally, I would like to thank my partner Alan Cole and my two pups Lenox and Farnsworth for their unconditional love and support through this journey. Alan, thank you in particular for continuing to remind me of my dreams keeping me on the path to success and continuing to provide love and support during both the good and the bad times. And to Lenox and Farnsworth for the love you continue to provide no matter what type of day, week or month I have.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The number of Americans pursuing a postsecondary degree has steadily increased since the 1980s as more individuals have taken the step toward achieving the American dream. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (NCES, 2013), undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting, higher education institutions increased from 7.4 million students in the fall of 1970 to 20.6 million in the fall of 2012. Hussar and Bailey (2013) also projected that undergraduate enrollment at degree-granting institutions was expected to increase by15% between the fall of 2010 and fall 2021. However, the number of students who withdraw prior to degree completion also increased steadily during this period. Nationally, only 58% of students in the 2004 cohort graduated within six years (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Graduation rates in the 2004 cohort also varied by race and ethnicity. At four-year institutions, the six-year graduation rate was 69% for Asians/Pacific Islanders, 62% for Caucasians, 50% for Hispanics, 39% for African Americans, and 39% for American Indians/Alaska Natives (NCES, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Because of the increasing number of students who do not persist to degree completion, many scholars and policy-makers have questioned whether individuals living in the United States will have the education needed to meet future workforce demands and if the nation will reclaim its position as one of the most educated in the world. For the nation to address both of these challenges, higher education institutions must produce approximately 20 million new degrees within the next decade (Matthews, 2012). Given this push to meet this demand by way of the national degree-completion agenda, the nation must pay closer attention to the growing number of students who are falling through the cracks in the leaking higher education pipeline.

When addressing issues of degree completion, policy-makers and researchers must consider the demographic composition of the United States. Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population in the United States grew from 35.5 million to 50.5 million, an increase of 43% (U. S. Census Bureau, 2012). In addition, during those years, Hispanics accounted for more than half of the growth in the total population of the United States, comprising 16% of that population. During the same period, the African-American population increased at a rate faster than the total population. The total U.S. population grew by 9.7%, from 281.4 million in 2000 to 308.7 million in 2010; the African-American population during the same period grew by 12%, from 34.7 million to 38.9 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Despite this growth, African Americans and Hispanics remained the least likely to earn a college degree compared to their White counterparts. Individuals within the policy and research communities should take a deeper look at issues of persistence to degree completion because they relate to racial/ethnic demographic groups that may soon be the combined majority in this country.

Earlier research that explored persistence to degree completion of students in college degree programs noted academic and social integration was correlated to a students' success (Braxton & Lien, 2000; Braxton, Sullivan & Johnson, 1997). Academic integration occurs when students become engaged with and attached to the intellectual life of the college, while social integration occurs when students create relationships and connections outside of classrooms (Tinto 1975; 1993). These two concepts, although analytically distinct, interact with and enhance one another. While students must be integrated into the institution in both dimensions to increase their likelihood of persistence, they need not be equally integrated in the two (Tinto, 1993). Essentially, the greater the degree of students' academic and social integration, the greater their subsequent commitment to the institution; the greater the degree of a students' commitment to

their institutions, the greater the likelihood such students will persist to completion (Tinto, 2012). However, the majority of previous studies on college students' success has focused on White students and do not adequately address the population of neither minority students nor students at for-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs).

In the early 1970s, only one-fourth of minority individuals between 18 and 24 enrolled in college, compared to over one-third of Caucasians in the same age group. By 1992, the numbers of minorities in college had increased substantially: African Americans, 39.4%; Hispanics, 36.5%; and Caucasians, 43.2% (Hudson, Aquilino, & Kienzl, 2005). However, despite the substantial increase in the number of ethnic minorities enrolled in higher education, college completion rates for minorities continued to lag behind those of Caucasian students (Carey, 2004; Fry, 2002; Melguizo, 2003; Snyder & Hoffman, 2003). In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 20.6% of African Americans and 14.1% of Hispanics 25 and older had earned bachelor's degrees, compared with 34% of their Caucasian counterparts.

Imbalances also exist by institution sectors. African-American and Hispanic students comprise 28% of undergraduate students nationwide; yet they also represent nearly half of all students in the for-profit college sector (NCES, 2012). In the 2004 national cohort, 21% of African Americans and 29% of Hispanics attending FPCUs graduated within six years of their initial enrollment. A 2012 report commissioned by the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee indicated that 63% of students enrolled in associate degree programs at FPCUs, 53% of students enrolled in FPCU bachelor degree programs, and 38.5% of students enrolled in certificate programs during the 2008–2009 academic year failed to complete their programs.

The recent increase in FPCUs, the very limited knowledge of student success for minority students in general, and the growing enrollment of minorities combined with increasing attrition rates in the for-profit sector, warrant further exploration. In earlier studies on persistence to degree completion at FPCUs, researchers identified some positive characteristics and attributes of successful individuals (Pidcock, Fischer, & Munsch, 2001; Sleet, 2000; Zurita, 2004). However, they did not explore institutional factors contributing to the success and failure of students at these institutions. Additional exploration of attrition rates in the for-profit sector would lead to the development of policies, practices, and theories to improve the success of minority students within this sector. Although issues of postsecondary affordability and quality have important roles in the persistence to degree completion puzzle, understanding the following two areas is crucial in gaining a more holistic understanding of the growing number of minority students enrolling in postsecondary education and failing to persist to the completion of a degree. Attention must also be given to this emerging sector of higher education, which has the potential to change the academy as we know it.

For-Profit Institutions of Higher Education

Although FPCUs have a long history in the United States, they have grown substantially and received significantly more attention over the past decade. Developed in the early 20th century in response to student niche market demands and employer needs for programs in technology and business (Kinser, 2006), the for-profit sector has grown into a not so small, and significant, segment of the U.S. higher education system. As of 2011, the for-profit sector accounted for 40% of all degree-granting institutions and 12% of all post-secondary students enrolled in the United States (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2012).

Because profit-seeking enterprises, for-profit institutions represent a business model fundamentally different from traditional colleges and universities. Stockholders own and operate these institutions, seeking profits from growth and gross margins from all revenues earned after expenditures, not including taxes and depreciation in value (Wiesbroad et al., 2008). Traditionally, academic institutions measure their success by the percentage of students graduating within six years, student retention rates, and the number of students who enroll in graduate degree programs following graduation. For-profit institutions, however, measure a large portion of their success by the profits earned within a fiscal year (Kinser, 2007). However, institutions within the for-profit sector are not monolithic. Although all institutions within this sector are profit-seeking entities, they vary in size, scope, and business models. Kinser (2006) broke the sector into two categories: the main street for-profit institutions, which consist of many of the smaller, regional, "mom and pop" institutions (i.e., Ashford University, Henley Putnam University), and the Wall Street institutions, which consist of many larger, multi-campus institutions (i.e., The University of Phoenix, Argosy University, Strayer University).

Whether a FPCU has multiple campuses or a single campus, the federal government considers each one a single institution. Although public information on large multi-campus operations is generally accessible, that is not the case for smaller institutions. Thus, the focus of much of the current literature on these institutions has been on the growth and development of these larger multi-campus institutions. Smaller FPCUs have received little attention. In addition, the emphasis in the recent literature has been on advocating or criticizing the existence of the sector, with little information offered concerning factors that affect student success. Although some researchers (Lechuga, Tierney, & Hentske, 2003) have claimed the available literature provides a fundamental understanding of FPCUs, further research will yield a more

comprehensive understanding of the sector. The lack of research has resulted in significant gaps on knowledge about the sector, that is, the ways in which to assess its progress and its relationship to the traditional higher education sector.

Statement of the Problem

Scholars have confirmed that academic and social integration can greatly assist in student retention and overall success (Astin, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1989, 1991; Tinto, 1975). Most of these studies focused on majority student groups. In addition, the number of minority students enrolled at FPCUs in the past decade has increased dramatically, but so have attrition rates among African American and Hispanic students. Seemingly, the growth in minority enrollment has exacerbated the parallel growth in attrition rates. As the number of African Americans and Hispanics enrolled in these institutions has continued to grow, the rates of African American and Hispanic students who persist to completion has shown little, if any, increase. This problem has negative implications not only for students who withdraw but also for institutions and for society's goals of regaining economic strength and competitiveness (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010).

The most obvious implication is the opportunity costs to students who leave prior to completion. Opportunity costs include money spent on tuition and fees, accrued debt, time invested, and the loss of potential social and economic benefits gained from earning a bachelor's degree (Buchanan, 2008). In a conventional sense, opportunity costs also include unearned wages because students are typically out of the workforce while enrolled. However, this issue is less of a problem for FPCU students than for students at traditional not-for-profit institutions, because FPCUs design their programs for working adults.

In addition to individual costs associated with premature departure, other benefits from completion are compromised, including annual and lifetime earning potential. In 2011, the average annual income of a baccalaureate degree recipient was $45,000, 59% greater than that earned by an individual with only a high school diploma (NCES, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Other individual benefits of degree attainment include decreased rates of incarceration, unemployment, and poverty and greater academic preparedness of one's children (Baum et al., 2010).

Increased rates of departure before degree completion negatively affect the stability of institutional enrollments, budgets, and the public's perception of the quality of the particular colleges and universities (Braxton, Sullivan & Johnson, 1997; Swail, 2004). However, the increasing numbers of minorities who are gaining access to higher education but failing to persist to the completion of a postsecondary degree pose new threats to the stability of these institutions.

The withdrawal rate of minority students from FPCUs prior to degree conferral results in larger societal costs as well. Baum and Payea (2005) noted that individuals with lower levels of education are more likely to be incarcerated, unemployed, less prepared academically, and less engaged civically. Higher educational levels are associated with higher revenues earned through local, state, and federal taxes. In 2008, the average amount of taxes paid by a high school graduate was $7,000; individuals with baccalaureate degrees paid an average of $13,000 (Baum et al., 2010).

The costs and benefits experienced by individuals, institutions, and society show the various levels of harm that may be possibly caused by the continued growth in minority attrition levels at FPCUs. Such consequences are indicative of the value of studying this issue at this time

in the history of American higher education and the importance of focusing on students historically marginalized in previous analyses of student departure and persistence to degree completion.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study explores the effects of academic and social integration on African-American and Hispanic students' persistence to degree completion at FPCUs. The study is, in part, a response to recent calls by researchers in higher education to identify new approaches for studying student departure (Braxton, 2000; Tinto, 2012), to understand the conditions that foster the success of minority students (Carey, 2004), and to examine the culture of institutions (Kuh, 2005). The findings from this study fill a gap and contribute to the higher education literature, providing a varied perspective on minority student persistence and departure in the context of current issues. Such a perspective may be useful in informing policy and practices to promote success among ethnic minority students.

Guided by psychological and sociological theories of student success in college, this study seeks to answer a central question: How does academic and social integration affect the degree-seeking persistence of undergraduate minority students attending a degree-granting FPCU?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to an underdeveloped area of research on persistence to degree completion at FPCUs among minority students. This study results in increased communal knowledge concerning degree-seeking persistence among nontraditional students and empirical support for developing policies, programs, and practices to improve minority persistence to degree completion. In addition, this study helps both the research and policy community gain a

better understanding of the significance the concepts of academic and social integration at degree granting for-profit colleges and universities and how important these factors are to the success of minority students enrolled within this sector of higher education.

The primary significance of this study is its contribution to improvements in degree completion for a sector in which many minority students are enrolling. Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which these factors affect the persistence of minority students within the sector may reveal the reasons some students persist while others do not. Such understanding may also be useful in the development of innovative practices to ensure that students persist to completion.

Because FPCUs serve a disproportionate number of nontraditional students, this study may also be significant in addressing the challenges of persistence to degree completion beyond the traditional scope of students in higher education. Knowing the effects of academic and social integration on minority persistence to degree completion at FPCUs may be useful in developing programs and support services at such institutions. The results of this study may also be valuable to schools that serve large numbers of African American and Hispanic students. In addition, the findings may be significant in enhancing learning processes and in meeting the needs of minority students at FPCUs by exploring the plight of minorities who fail to persist to the completion of a college degree. Finally, results from this study may constitute a foundation for future research focused on understanding factors that influence persistence of minority students in this sector. Various studies have indicated the need for more qualitative research to explain the relationship among persistence to degree completion and a number of other variables, such as affordability (Dannenberg & Voight, 2013), college choice (Perna, 2013), institutional fit (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993), and academic preparedness (Long & Boatman, 2013).

Key Concepts and Definitions

The following terms are defined as they apply to key concepts used throughout this study:

1. *Academic integration* is a variable within Tinto's (1975; 1993) theory of student integration developed to assess the levels of academic performance and the academic and intellectual development students experience at the institution in which they are enrolled. Academic integration also includes the perceived level of faculty attention to student development.

2. An *African American* is a U.S.-born citizen of African descent, as self-identified by the student. In this study the term Black and African American are used interchangeably.

3. *Degree attainment* refers to completion of a baccalaureate degree within six years.

4. *Departure* refers to a student's decision to withdraw from an institution of higher education prematurely because of a mal-integrative experience within the postsecondary degree program (Swail, 2003). Departure information will be collected from data provided on the participant information form (Appendix A).

5. *Family background* refers to a group of variables that includes gender, race, annual household income, mother's formal education level, father's formal education level, and the individual's state of residence.

6. A *Hispanic* is any individual of Latin-American descent. In this study Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably.

7. *Institutional departure* refers to the act of discontinuing enrollment at a particular college or university (Tinto, 1993). This term differs from *stopping out* in that stopping out refers to a student discontinuing the pursuit of a degree and later continuing it.

8. *Goal and institutional commitment (initial)* refers to a student's highest expected academic degree, highest expected academic degree at a particular institution, and the pre-enrollment ranking of college choice.

9. *Institutional goal commitment (subsequent)* refers to a student's intention to re-enroll.

10. *Persistence* refers to the continued enrollment of an individual in higher education toward the completion of a baccalaureate degree program.

11. *Pre-college schooling* is a student's high school class rank (Tinto, 1975; 1993).

12. *Racial or ethnic minority* refers to a natural-born U.S. citizen who is not of Caucasian descent. For the purposes of this study, the term will refer to African American and Hispanic individuals.

13. *Skills and abilities* refer to performance as measured by standardized tests such as the ACT or the SAT (Tinto, 1993). Because the institutions addressed in this study largely allow open enrollment, many forego the requirement of a standardized test for admission.

14. *Social integration* refers to a student's extracurricular activities, peer group interactions, and interactions with faculty and staff (Tinto, 1975, 1993).

15. *Student of color* refers to a natural-born U.S. citizen who is not of Caucasian descent (Haney-Lopez, 2006). In this study, the term will refer only to African American and Hispanic individuals.

16. *Student success* in this study is defined as a student who (a) has graduated (persisted), (b) is currently enrolled beyond the first academic year (persisting), or (c) has departed from an institution or degree program without completing it (withdrawn).

17. *System departure* refers to the act of leaving the broader system of higher education (Tinto, 1993).

Overview of Study

This study is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the topic of minority persistence to degree completion at FPCUs. Additionally, it addresses the main problem, emphasizing the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature used to frame this study. It includes a review of research studies on persistence to degree completion in its broad sense and includes research that explores African-American and Hispanic degree-seeking persistence. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research methods used and includes a delineation of the research design, sample selection, data collection, and procedures of data analysis and limitations. Chapter 4 describes the participants in this study. Chapter 5 provides and explanation of the results and findings. Chapter 6 concludes the study by providing an overview of the findings and the implications for both research and practice.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature and Conceptual Framework

Higher education scholars have attempted to understand the complexities of student departure and persistence to degree completion for many years (Braxton, 2000). The current literature on student departure consists of many empirically isolated but conceptually interrelated pieces, all aid in establishing a holistic understanding of the factors affecting persistence to degree completion. A number of those studies included examinations of the effects of experiential and financial factors on student departure. Researchers have also explored the effectiveness of programs and initiatives to decrease premature student departure from college campuses (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005).

The focus of much of the previous empirical research on student persistence to degree completion has been on a disproportionate sample of traditional students (i.e., Caucasian, middle-class, 18–24-year-olds). Understanding the value of the experience of minorities in the degree departure puzzle, a few scholars have recently attempted to highlight the importance of new perspectives, such as minority student departure (Swail, Perna, & Redd, 2003). As a consequence, more researchers have explored institutional–environmental factors and their role in affecting, positively or negatively, the success of minority students (Hurtado & Carter, 2003).

Earlier Models Used to Explore Persistence to Degree Completion

The use of theoretical perspectives in guiding research and practices for improving persistence to degree completion is important. Currently, there is no single theoretical perspective that is comprehensive enough to address the different elements of the persistence to degree completion issue. Studies dating back to the early 1970s built an initial theoretical base on

persistence to degree completion and student departure. Four broad theoretical categories encompass these perspectives: economic, organizational, psychological, and sociological.

Economic perspectives. Analyzing the costs and benefits of attending college is the core of the economic approach to student persistence. In economic theories, an individual's investment in education, training, or personal development should generate a return to the individual in terms of time, money, or energy (Becker, 1964, 1993). Braxton (2003) noted that departure from college might occur if a student believes that the cost of attending a particular school exceeds the benefits of attending. In this case, cost includes tuition, fees, and the loss in income because the student is enrolled. Benefits include future earnings, knowledge gained, and an increased quality of life (Goldin, Katz & Kuziemko, 2006).

Such perspectives are consistent with Becker's (1964, 2009) human capital theory which suggests that education motivates individuals because it increases the likelihood of greater economic gains for both them and society. This theory is useful in understanding both the economics and factors of student success. Becker argued that a much richer set of values and preferences are the driving forces for individual behavior. Human capital theory, like other economic theories, makes rational choice an essential element (Melguizo, 2011). Melguizo defined rational choice as human behavior that is the result of a series of rational individual decisions. Becker (2009) argued that, despite criticisms from individuals in the other social sciences because of his use of assumptions used in economics, before the development of human capital theory, no one had developed an approach of comparable generality to compete with rational choice theory.

Organizational perspectives. Organizational perspectives emphasize the institutional structures and processes that may affect student performance. Among the more important

features from these perspectives are institutional size, selectivity, resources, and faculty-student ratios. The most frequently citied organizational perspective, Bean's (1983) student attrition model, posits that beliefs shape attitudes, attitudes shape behaviors, and behaviors signal intents. A student's beliefs are affected by experiences within the institution, which then evolve into attitudes about the institution, which ultimately determine a student's sense of belonging or "fit" with the institution. Thus, students' perceptions of such things as the fairness of institutional policies and the responsiveness of faculty and staff affect decisions to persist or leave the institution. Similarly, the leadership and decision-making approaches favored by senior administrators are having an effect on student satisfaction and adjustments (Berger & Braxton, 1998). Pike and Kuh (2005) lent some support to this view by suggesting that negative perceptions of the campus environment are associated with a variety of general institutional characteristics, including size, control, mission, and location. Nonetheless, the link between features of institution functions and student behavior have not been well explicated (Braxton, 2003).

Over time, researchers who have sought to explain student success have moved away from theories emphasizing organization and economic factors toward theories focusing on psychological and sociological factors (Tinto, 2006). Much of the departure from organizational and economic theories to theories focusing on psychological and social factors has been because of what Tinto (1993) referred to as a weakness in both organizational and economic theories' ability to consider the motives of a student's withdrawal.

Psychological and sociological theories. A growing number of theories explaining student attrition have been based on psychological and sociological principles and processes. Psychological factors include academic aptitude and skills, motivational states, personality traits,

and student development (Bean & Eaton, 2000). From a sociological perspective, researchers argued that social structures and social factors are the main drivers of college student attrition (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Kuh & Love, 2000). According to these theories, a student's peers, family socioeconomic status, and support of significant others are important factors that affect a student's decision to persist or withdraw. From a psychological perspective, processes and characteristics distinguish between students who remain enrolled and those who depart prior to the completion of a degree. Essential theorists in the psychosocial framework include Astin (1984), Bean & Metzner (1985), Tinto (1975, 1986, 1993), and Braxton (2000).

Theoretical Framework Used for this Study

Theories of Student Involvement

Astin (1984) argued that a student's level of involvement affects the decision to persist in college. He described student involvement as the amount of physical and psychological energy students put into their institutional experiences. Essentially, he posited that a student who is more engaged in the institutional environment is more likely to participate in activities that enhance academic performance, be involved in clubs and organizations on campus, and engage with other students and peers more frequently. Students who are disconnected from the social atmosphere of the institution, perform poorly academically, and lack contact with faculty and peers are less likely to persist.

Astin's (1984) theory includes five basic claims. First, student involvement is either highly generalized or very specific. Second, all involvement occurs along a continuum. Because students experience situations differently, individual responses to the same experience (e.g., preparing for and taking a comprehensive examination) may differ. Third, every experience may be examined both quantitatively and qualitatively. Fourth, student outcomes are directly

correlated to the type and amount of involvement students have within their institutions. Fifth, the effectiveness of any policy or practice is directly correlated to its ability to increase involvement, which will ultimately increase degree attainment. Astin's five claims, which at first broadly address the level and type of involvement a student experiences while enrolled on a college or university campus, go on to specify how to define and assess the relationship between student involvement and factors of success and then conclude with how policy and effective practices should be informed by these relationships.

Tinto's Student Integration Theory

Spady's (1970) sociological approach to college-student departure indicated that the relationship between students' attributes and the college environment affects student attrition. Spady (1970) noted that when a clear fit exists between students and institutions, students are more likely to have better academic and social experiences, increasing their likelihood of persisting and completing. A poor fit increases the possibility of a student abandoning previously established goals and leaving the institution prior to degree completion.

Expounding on Spady's (1970) work and on Durkheim's theory of suicide (1950), Tinto (1975, 1993) argued that student departure from college is the result of a longitudinal process in which students assign meaning to their interactions with all aspects of the institution. Tinto (1975, 1993) posited that three types of pre-entry attributes (i.e., academic preparedness, family background, and previous academic experiences) are significant influencers in students' decisions to persist (see Figure 3). Two additional factors are also significant predictors of persistence to degree completion: the student's initial commitment to the institution and the student's commitment to the goal of graduating. Both affect the students' levels of integration with the academic and social components of the institution.

The academic components of an institution enhance students' commitment to the institution and to graduating. Achieving academic integration can be both normative and structural. Tinto (1975) stated that structural integration involves the meeting of explicit standards of the college or university, whereas normative integration refers to an individual's identification with the normative structure of the academic system. According to Tinto, normative integration manifests itself in student intellectual development because such integration reflects a student's appraisal of the institution's academic system (1975). Social integration pertains to the degree of congruency between the social system of a college or university and the student. Tinto indicated that mechanisms of social integration include informal peer group associations, extracurricular activities, and interactions with faculty and administrators (1975).

Students' individual pre-entry characteristics, in addition to their social and academic integration, create what Tinto (1993) called an interactive cycle. This cycle includes student commitment to the institution and to graduating. The more academically integrated students are, the more likely they will persist to graduation. Likewise, the more socially integrated students are, the more likely they are to commit to the institution and to the goal of graduating. Since the development of this theory, other researchers have incorporated additional factors such as gender, race and ethnicity, academic intensity in high school, family education background, and socioeconomic status into this paradigmatic theory concerning student degree departure (Braxton, 2000; Pascarella & Chapman, 1997).

Nontraditional Student Degree Departure Framework

Although the majority of previous literature on student retention has focused on traditionally aged students, Bean and Metzner (1985) proposed a retention model focused on

older, nontraditional students. They argued that one or more of the following factors guide nontraditional students: academic performance, intent to leave, previous educational performance and goals, and other environmental factors. In their nontraditional student model, Bean and Metzner (1985) did not support claims that academic performance is a better predictor of student success than environmental factors. In fact, the researchers claimed that environmental variables are so significant to the adult learner that, often, individuals who find ways to compensate for academic deficiencies are less likely to do so for environmental factors. However, this varies across subgroups of nontraditional students (i.e., minorities, part-time, and the academically underprepared). Bean and Mezter's (1985) model of student attrition differs from other models in that it considers the student's interaction with both environmental variables (i.e., finance, hours of employment, outside encouragement, and opportunities to transfer) and psychological variables (i.e., utility, satisfaction, goal commitment, and stress).

Theory of Student Departure from Commuter Colleges and Universities

Braxton (1997) noted that only a few studies whose outcomes supported Tinto's (1975, 1993) theoretical constructs were conducted at commuter colleges and universities. In support of his claim, he cited the research of Bean and Metzner (1985), which indicated that students attending commuter institutions differed from those attending traditional residential institutions. Bean and Metzner noted that social integration variables should have minimal effects on retention, partly because of the way nontraditional students were defined and because social variables from the outside environment were expected to be of greater importance than college social integration variables. In addition, Bean and Metzner highlighted how other environmental variables, such as family responsibilities, can play a significant role in attrition for nontraditional students.

According to Braxton's (1997) model, a number of factors affect student persistence at commuter institutions, some of which are consistent with Tinto's factors (1975): background characteristics, internal and external environmental elements, psychological and sociological influences, and the academic environment. Braxton's (1997) refinement and expansion of Tinto's (1975, 1993) earlier work on student departure is relevant to this study because of the many factors explored that may affect student persistence for nontraditional students.

Summary

Although helpful individually, these theories together form a more holistic approach to understanding the issues of persistence to degree completion at FPCUs. In terms of this study, these theories will be useful for the following reasons:

- Braxton's (1997) framework focuses on persistence to degree completion at commuter institutions, and the majority of for-profit colleges are commuter institutions.

- The emphasis in Bean and Metzner's (1985) study was nontraditional students. Because many of the students who attend FPCUs are older than traditional students, they are often not considered first-time full time students. Therefore, this study will affect the way in which academic and social integration is explored.

- The emphases in both Astin's (1985) model and Tinto's (1975, 1993) interactional model is on (a) the importance of interaction and engagement in persistence to degree completion and (b) the success of students enrolled in postsecondary degree programs.

Astin (1985), Bean and Metzner (1985), Braxton (1997), and Tinto (1975, 1993) described four models of the dropout process for traditional student and nontraditional students that share many elements. The structure of the models are very similar to Tinto's (1975) model of student integration, however, the content differs markedly. Three of the four models of traditional student attrition emphasize the importance of a student's social interactions with other members of the campus community. However, in Bean and Metzner's (1985) model, social variables have a minimal effect on retention at commuter institutions, which could be attributed partly to the way nontraditional students were defined.

Using these combined theories allows for a better understanding of how to approach and understand persistence to degree completion in minority students attending for-profit colleges. Combined, provide a lens to analyze how we explore the influence of academic and social integration on undergraduate minority persistence to degree completion. Each individual theory represents characteristics of both the student and the institutional environment and provides a more comprehensive picture of the students attending FPCUs.

Further Exploring the Tenets of Tinto's Theory on Student Departure

Although the theories previously presented all affect this study, Tinto's works (1975, 1993) have the greatest salience to this research study. Therefore, the components of this theory of student integration are explored more completely in the following sections.

Pre-Entry Attributes

In Tinto's (1973, 1975) model, three subcategories of the students' pre-entry attributes exist: family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling. Family background includes gender, race, parents' combined annual income, parents' educational levels, and the student's state of residence. Skills and abilities are measured by standardized test scores. Prior schooling

refers to a student's high school class rank. Tinto's model purports the importance of all three areas, and a number of scholars have confirmed the relationship between these categories and student success. For example, pre-entry attributes have been found to affect students' levels of initial commitment to higher education institutions (Adelman, 2006; Bridgall & Gordon, 2002), initial commitment to the goal of graduation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), and the likelihood that students' will persist in college (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002; Wilkinson, 2005).

Gender. Although gender can affect persistence to degree completion, previous research on differences between male and female persistence to degree completion has yielded conflicting results. Ramist (1981) suggested no differences in dropout rates exist between men and women. Hilton (1982), using data collected from a national longitudinal study on retention, reported little, if any, variance between male and female dropout rates. Other studies (Feldman, 1993; Murtaugh, Burns, & Schuster, 1999) also revealed no significant differences in attrition by gender.

However, other researchers have claimed differences in attrition by gender. Randall (1999) reported that female students were more likely to re-enroll after two-years than male peers. In addition, after examining cohort groups for six years, Randall (1999) discovered that female students had higher graduation rates than their male counterparts. Socio-demographic variables as predictors remain important, however, because between-group differences in rates remain (Heller, 2002; Kuh et al., 2005). Furthermore, the use of socio-demographic characteristics such as age allows for a greater understanding of the conditional effects of interventions aimed at increasing persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998). In their 2005 review of empirical literature, Pascarella and Terenzini noted that there was still much to discover about how student characteristics interact with college experiences to influence persistence to degree completion.

There remains a great need for retention research that explores these same factors with students at for-profit institutions.

The effect of race on attrition has also received significant attention since the 1980s. These studies revealed that minority students, especially African Americans and Hispanics, were more likely to drop out than their Caucasian counterparts. Randall (1999) found that the 6-year graduation rate for the entire 1992 cohort was 56% percent but only 40% for the African-American cohort. Earlier studies (Carroll, 1989; Feldman, 1993; Porter, 1990) also noted African Americans and Hispanics had higher dropout rates than their White counterparts. Using a different approach, Astin (1975) examined the persistence to degree completion of students by race and institution type. African American students were more likely to drop out of predominately-White postsecondary institutions than they were to drop out of historically Black colleges and universities (Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Thomas, 1981). African American students who attended historically Black colleges and universities were more likely to graduate because they were better integrated academically and socially than their African-American peers attending predominantly White institutions. Similarly, in their study of Hispanic student persistence to degree completion in undergraduate programs, Reyes and Nora (2012) found that Spanish-speaking students dropped out more frequently than students in any other group. Inadequate high school preparation often led either to high dropout rates or low college-going rates, which has affected the Hispanic baccalaureate pipeline (Garcia, 2001; O'Brien & Zudak, 1998). In addition, Hispanic students have faced challenges in college that include academic under-preparedness, vestiges of racism, status as first-generation, and culturally significant messages that might cause tensions between pursuing an education and maintaining familial obligations (Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez, & Plum, 2004; Ortiz, 2004).

Race, Income, and Family Background. When race is combined with socioeconomic and ability factors, the persistence puzzle becomes more complex (Hossler, 1984), with the gap between Caucasian and African American dropout rates becoming even wider (Hilton, 1982; Ramist, 1981). Although race and socioeconomic status have been found to influence the persistence to degree completion of minorities, Johnson and Molnar (1996) discovered that race had little effect on attrition when other variables were factored into the analysis. Johnson and Molnar found three measures of academic success (first-year cumulative GPA, number of earned credits, and enrollment at the start of the second year) are positively related to one another even after controlling for socioeconomic factors such as race. These findings are consistent with other studies that have shown that non-traditional students are at greater risk of dropping out (Aud, Wilkinson-Flicker, Kristapovich, Rathbun, Wang, & Zhang, 2013; King, 2003; Windham, 1995) and that grades are positively related to persistence to degree completion (Zajacova, Lynch & Espenshade, 2005).

Much of the research conducted to define the relationship between family income and persistence to degree completion has been relatively consistent. Astin (1975) posited that as family income levels decrease, the number of individuals dropping out of higher education increases. Tinto (1975) found a significant relationship between individual income levels and dropout rates. More recent studies by Collins (2012) and Bailey and Dynarski (2011) similarly concluded that students with lower-income families are more likely to leave college than students from affluent families. In an analysis of data from the High School and Beyond national survey, Dynarski and Scott-Clayton (2013) reported that students in the highest socioeconomic quartile dropped out at a much lower rate than students from the lowest socioeconomic quartile, attributable to the fact that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have limited access

to pre-college resources that ensure academic preparedness and success after enrollment.

In terms of parental education levels, Pantages and Creedon (1978) reported that the education level of the parents had little or no bearing on student persistence. On the other hand, Astin (1975), Ramist (1981), and Tinto (1975) argued that students with educated parents tended to value education and thus were more likely to persist. Astin (1975) added, "It seems likely that the more educated parents exert stronger pressure to stay in college than the less educated parents" (pp. 35–36).

The final family background characteristic is the student's state of residence. Ramist (1981) reported that data consistently showed students from out of state or from states that were not contiguous to the state in which they are enrolled in school had the highest dropout rates. He found that the lowest dropout rates were among students in contiguous states and that dropout rates for instate students were balanced.

Skills and Abilities

Educators and higher education personnel use scores from the ACT and SAT college admission tests to predict a students' abilities to achieve academic success in college. Numerous studies have shown links between scores on such tests and persistence to degree completion in higher education. Ramist (1981) noted that first-year students who scored above 600 on the mathematics portion of the SAT had a dropout rate of 9%; those with scores below 300 in the same category had a dropout rate was 27%. Furthermore, a study by the Oregon State Higher Education System (1994) revealed a clear and consistent linear relationship between SAT scores and college persistence. Porter (1989) concluded that "low ability students have little likelihood of completing a degree in a timely manner and a high probability of dropping out" (p. 24). York (1993) noted that as SAT scores increased, so did the percentage of students earning degrees. In

analyzing data on students at the University of Minnesota, Desjardins (1999) found that students who scored below the class average of 22 on the ACT accounted for a disproportionate number of dropouts in the academic cohort studied. These studies revealed consistent findings that academic achievement contributes to student success.

Prior Schooling

High school GPA and class rank are also factors associated with postsecondary persistence to degree completion. GPA is indicative not only of a student's ability but also of the student's work ethic and attitude toward education. Thus, GPA is an accurate predictor of both success and persistence in higher education (Adelman, 1999, 2006; Adelman, Daniel, & Berkovits, 2003). Martaugh et al. (1999) also found that attrition decreased with increased high school GPAs. Based on a longitudinal study of 39,243 students from over 1,000 institutions of higher education, Astin (1993) found that students with a C- average in high school and an SAT score below 700 were five times more likely to drop out than were students with an A average in high school and an SAT score of 1300 or above. Similarly, in a study examining the effects of pre-enrollment variables at a community college, Feldman (1993) found that the lower the high school GPA, the greater the chance of the student dropping out. York (1993) tracked 1,722 students for 5 years and found that high school GPA affected degree outcomes. Finally, in a study conducted by the Oregon State University System of Higher Education (1994), researchers found a direct relationship between high school GPA and college graduation rates.

Like standardized test scores and high school GPAs, high school class rank has been shown to be linked to persistence to degree completion and attrition in higher education. Desjardins (1999) discovered that students in the bottom half of their cohorts were less likely to persist than their counterparts in the top half of the cohorts. House (1994) also reported a

significant correlation between class rank and persistence to degree completion.

Institutional Goal and Commitment (Initial)

The second stage of Tinto's model (1975, 1993) includes students' institutional and goal commitment. Institutional commitment refers to the students' relationship to the institutions in which they are enrolled (Tinto, 1993):

> Institutional commitment may arise in a number of different ways. It may arise before entry as a result of the impact of family traditions upon college choice (e.g., the father or mother having attended the same institution), from family and/or peer pressure, or from the perception that graduation from a specific institution enhances one's chances for a successful occupational career (e.g., graduating from one of the elite colleges). It may also mirror the manner in which graduation from a particular institution is seen as an integral part of one's occupational career (e.g., graduation from a military academy or from an institution with a specific professional mission or program). (p. 44).

Little research has been conducted that examines a students' commitment to their institutions and their goals partly because of the difficulty in quantifying such a concept. However, Terenzini, Lorang, and Pascarella (1981) noted that knowledge of a student's commitment might provide information useful in identifying the varying levels of commitment, particularly among transfer students. In addition, researchers have shown that individuals with strong institutional commitment are more likely to graduate from their institutions than students identified as having low or no institutional commitment (Terenzini et al., 1981).

In addition to institutional commitment, Tinto (1975, 1993) pointed out that a student's commitment to educational goals is a crucial component in the student integration process. Previous research confirmed the importance of student goals in persistence (Lenning et al., 1980;

Pantages & Credon, 1978). Tinto (1993) noted that the higher one's level of educational or occupational goals, the greater the likelihood of one completing college. Waggner and Smith (1993) and Zhang and RiCharde (1998) supported Tinto's claims. In their study analyzing factors in retaining students, Waggner and Smith (1993) found that students' goals to obtain their degrees and a solid commitment to those goals were important factors in retention. Similarly, Zhang and RiCharde's (1998) study of over 400 first-year students found that students who dropped out of college identified three main reasons for doing so: inability to handle stress, lack of commitment, and mismatch between expectations and college reality. Given the information derived from previous studies, it may be concluded that a student's commitment is quite important to the student's ability to persist. However, given the confounding variables that can also influence students' commitment levels, further research that analyzes the combination of factors that influence the goal commitments of students and how this affects undergraduate persistence to degree completion must be conducted.

Educational goals such as declaring a college major, aspiring to higher degrees, and vocational goals have also been shown to affect persistence. Levitz and Noel (1989) reported that being uncertain about a major is one reason many high-ability students drop out prior to earning their degree. In a study based on admissions test data, Ramist (1981) concluded that students who do not expect to obtain 4-year college degrees were more likely to drop out during their first year. Somewhat similarly, Hossler (1984) reported that students with plans to attend graduate school were more likely to persist. Other scholars also found institutional and goal commitments indicative of initial commitment to graduation, thus affecting the level of academic integration (Braxton et al., 1988; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980), the level of social integration (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Pascarella, Terenzini, & Wolfe, 1986; Terenzini et al., 1985); and the

subsequent level of commitment to graduation (Pascarella et al., 1983; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Stage, 1988; Terenzini et al., 1985).

Institutional Experiences

Tinto (1993) divided institutional experiences into two categories: academic and social. The foci in the academic system were on academic performance and student interactions with faculty and staff members. Tinto (1975, 1993) hypothesized that, within the academic system, the result of student's academic performance (formal) and interaction with faculty and staff (informal) will be either a positive experience that integrates the student into the intellectual community or a negative experience that isolates the student. Within the social system, the student's involvement in formal extracurricular activities and informal peer-group interactions will also result in positive experiences that lead to integration or negative experiences that lead to disconnection.

Studies of academic integration indicated that students with greater levels of integration into the academic systems of institutions had more subsequent goals and greater levels of institutional commitment (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hegstler, 1992; Cabrera, Nora, & Casteneda, 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Terenzini et al., 1985). Students reporting greater levels of integration into the academic systems of their institutions were more likely to persist in college (Cabrera et al. 1992; Cash & Bissel, 1985; Fax, 1986; Getzlaf et al., 1984; Pascarella et al., 1983; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Terenzini et al., 1981). Similarly, researchers analyzed social integration and found that students reporting greater levels of integration had greater levels of subsequent goal and institutional commitment (Allen & Nelson, 1989; Cabrera, Castaneda, et al., 1992; Cabrera, Nora, et al., 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Stage, 1988). This study may show that students who persist have had positive experiences

within the social components of their institutions.

Institutional and Goal Commitment (Subsequent)

Institutional commitment refers to students' obligation to the institutions in which they are enrolled; goal commitment, on the other hand, refers to students' obligations to their educational goals, such as the desire to graduate from college or the desire to obtain a certain degree level. Tinto (1993) posited that experiencing positive social and academic integration strengthens institutional commitments and educational goals. These, in turn, result in students who are more likely to stay enrolled. If students' experiences in the academic and social systems are negative, their goals and commitment are weakened, and they are less likely to remain in their institutions. Researchers who tested subsequent institutional and goal commitments directly found that subsequent commitment to the goal of graduation increases the likelihood of persistence in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980, 1983; Terenzini et al., 1981; Terenzini et al., 1985). In addition, studies indicated that subsequent commitment to the institution positively affects levels of academic integration (Allen & Nelson, 1989; Braxton et al., 1988; Brower, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Stage, 1988; Terenzini et al., 1981; Terenzini et al., 1985).

Empirical Studies on Persistence to Degree Completion

Given the results of previous studies that have explored persistence to degree completion and the retention of undergraduate students we know the following: 1) students reporting greater levels of integration into the social systems of their institutions have greater levels of subsequent goal and institutional commitment (Allen & Nelson, 1989; Cabrera, Castaneda, et al., 1992; Cabrera, Nora, et al., 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Stage, 1988) ; 2) students with greater levels of integration into the academic systems of institutions have greater levels of subsequent goals and institutional commitment (Cabrera, Castaneda et al., 1992; Cabrera, Nora et al., 1992;

Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Terenzini et al., 1985); and 3) students who shared the attitudes, values, beliefs, and goals of their institutional peers were more likely to persist than students who did not share the values of their peers (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Tierny, 2000; Tinto, 1993). The following sections describe research on the populations that are the focus of this study.

African-American Student Persistence

A limited number of studies have revealed the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful African-American college students in regard to graduation. The foci in these studies have been on completion rates on the first year of study and graduation. Masson (1998) reported that African-American students were more likely to persist if they had clear ultimate goals. In addition, Sleet (2000) found that African-American undergraduates who persist to graduation had established support systems to help them cope with academic and social challenges. Allen (1997) found that African American students who engaged in social activities and reported that they were part of the institutional social environment were more likely to persist than students who remain isolated. Watson and Kuh (1996) and Berger and Milan (1999) replicated these findings. Their studies analyzed the value of internal and external supports and their influence on self-efficacy in students and eventual college graduate. In a study of African-American students in a predominately-Caucasian institution, Littleton (2001) determined that students who persisted were thoroughly involved in the academic and social culture of the institution. This was determined by exploring the persistence of African-American students through character traits such as motivation, resilience, adaptability, openness, and faith. The study also showed how caring faculty and administrators often had significant influences in the daily lives of African-American students.

Hispanic Student Persistence

The focus of the majority of the studies on Hispanic students was on the characteristics, experiences, and behaviors associated with Hispanic success in college. These characteristics and behaviors included academic performance, educational goal commitments and aspirations, perceived mentorships, classroom validation, support and encouragement, engagement with campus activities and programs, financial concerns, family responsibilities, and campus climate (Hernandez & Lopez, 2007; Nora & Crisp, 2009). However, despite the wide scope of the research conducted (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Gloria & Castellanos, 2003, 2006; Gonzalez, Figueroa, Marin, Moreno, & Navia, 2002; Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996, 1997, 2008; Nora, 2001, 2004; Nora et al., 1990, 1996; Oliva,1995, 2005; Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, & Trevino, 1997; Rendon, 1994; Solorzano, 1995), specific areas in the literature were not investigated fully in neither a theoretical or empirical manner (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Torres, 2003). For example, within the new and theoretically sound notions of Hispanic student success, researchers have not conducted an exhaustive study of Hispanic undergraduate students (Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000).

Along with identification of student characteristics, perceptions of college and coping styles also affect the persistence to degree of Hispanic students. Lester (2004) found the strongest predictors of college student persistence to be an active dispositional style, planning, and acknowledgment of progress. Lester (2004) concluded that the coping styles of denial and the use of alcohol or drugs while enrolled were negative predictors of college persistence, which was consistent with the findings of Hurtado and Ramirez (1994) in their study of 201 Hispanic students. Hurtado and Ramirez's study indicated that Hispanics who persist until graduation use student services more than students who did not persist. The students in this study proclaimed

that student services were beneficial in smoothing the transition into the unfamiliar terrain of the college environment.

When examining how Hispanic students' persistence to degree completion had been affected by their ability to finance their college degrees, Rendon and Nora (1994) found financial resources; academic integration; commitment to educational goals; poor academic preparation in high school; absent role models; and lack of preparation in reading, writing, and mathematics to be factors in the persistence to degree completion of Hispanics. Although the authors of this study use more of a theoretical analysis to support their conclusion versus an empirical approach, many of the factors they cited affect not only Hispanic students but also students of other ethnic backgrounds. In a study examining persistence to degree completion at a Texas community college, Rendon (1983) found that family socioeconomic status, student age and gender, high school grades, the father's employment status, the student's perception of college services, the number of Hispanic peers, and the student's perception of encouragement and support from faculty and staff to be factors affecting persistence.

Hernandez (2000) studied the retention of 10 Hispanic students (five men and five women), ranging in age from 21 to 25 years old. The analysis and interpretation of the interviews resulted in 11 major elements affecting retention. The primary reason for persistence as expressed by all participants was their beliefs in their potential to succeed in college. Possessing a positive mental outlook was associated with having the desire to succeed. Support from friends, family, and peers also positively affected the students' ability to stay in school. All participants mentioned the importance of having positive relationships with faculty and staff. Although their level of involvement varied and the type of organizations with which they chose to interact were diverse, all students felt their involvement in their school communities was an important reason

they stayed in school. Not surprisingly, lack of financial aid was a critical factor for not staying in school.

Interviewing 11 successful Hispanic undergraduate students, Butner, Carter, and Brown (2004) identified the importance of students realizing that they possess the potential to succeed; that they belong in college, which results in increased self-esteem; and that they are responsible for their success. Butner et al. (2004) noted that successful students have strong desires to make their families proud and to become role models for others in their families in terms of education.

Zurita (2004) analyzed the experiences of 10 Hispanic undergraduate students at a large Midwestern university to discover factors that differentiated Hispanic students who persisted to graduation from those who did not. Participants had received special needs-based scholarships aimed at increasing the number of traditionally underrepresented groups at the university. Persistence was defined graduating from a program of study. Five of the participants graduated; five did not. Zurita (2004) conducted semi-structured interviews concerning five areas identified from the literature: (a) differences between the student's home and school cultures; (b) financial issues; (c) academic issues; (d) institutional issues; and (e) personal issues. The investigator noted that both groups of students reported similarities in their home environments (working families with both parents at home), a lack of social integration, and feelings of academic unpreparedness. Differences among groups involved academic difficulties, home-to-school transitions, high school segregation, anticipatory socialization, first contact with the university, and education and career goals. The findings suggested several approaches that may be used to increase the persistence of Hispanic students in postsecondary degree programs.

For-Profit Institutions and Persistence to Degree Completion

For-profit institutions of higher education are not generally well represented in the research literature on student success (Lechuga, Tierney, & Hentchke, 2010; Ruch, 2001). The majority of literature on this sector contained examinations of either organizational or economic structures. Few studies were examinations of student outcomes or the academic experiences of students within the for-profit sector.

Sauchuk (2003) suggested that because of the pressure generated by shareholders and outside parties, many for-profit institutions are now investing in resources to improve student persistence to degree completion. Sauchuk (2003) theorized that factors in the institutional environment either negatively or positively affect student persistence. After developing a case study to explore the issue in two different academic programs at the same for-profit institution, he concluded that three factors were mainly responsible for the differences in retention rates of the two programs. The first factor was the prior academic preparation of the students. Students with strong backgrounds in mathematics and science were more likely to persist than students who needed remedial course work in these areas. The second factor was faculty-student relationships. Students who had stronger relationships with their professors and other faculty members were more likely to persist than students who had little or no interaction with faculty and staff. The third factor was employment criteria and future work potential. Students were more likely to stay enrolled if they perceived believed a job after completion was possible. Students withdrew if they realized the degree was not necessary to progress in their major area.

Piazza (1996) was the first researcher to examine Tinto's (1975, 1993) student integration model in FPCUs. Focusing on FPCUs in Georgia, Piazza (1996) collected self-report surveys to mine for data from 742 students and institutional data to test the model in this sector. He

concluded that, of all the components in Tinto's (1975) theory, a student's level of commitment was the most significant predictor of persistence to degree completion. Piazza also developed support for the link between faculty–student interactions and student persistence. Demographic factors such as age and gender were found to be forces that positively affected retention; older female students were more likely to persist than the younger students and male counterparts. Piazza (1996) did not find the race to be a significant factor for retention.

In a study exploring persistence to degree completion at DeVry University, Chicago, Clehouse (2000) developed a predictive instrument with data from over 100 survey items to explore persistence to degree completion within the for-profit sector. Findings from his study revealed a locus of control to be the most significant predictor of persistence to degree completion among FPCU students. In addition, coping skills and the expectation-disconfirmation quality were found to be the best predictors for students who needed to complete developmental coursework before beginning college courses.

While these studies provide information on the rarely explored population, they and others on FPCUs contain methodological weaknesses that limit their utility. For example, because of the small sample, Sauchuk (2003) limited the generalizability of the findings concerning the differences between students that persisted and those that withdrew. Piazza (1996) utilized a self-developed survey instrument, but failed to test the instrument for reliability and validity in assessing the intended research issue. Clehouse (2000) employed a fragmented theoretical framework not grounded in prior research. The mixed findings from these studies limit our understanding of the effects of academic and social integration on minority student outcomes at FPCUs and provides added rationale for the current study.

Summary

The conceptual frameworks and review of literature described in this chapter reveal a great deal of research on persistence to degree completion using multiple research methods and a variety of samples. In general, previous studies have shown that students who are academically prepared, who have adequate finances for college, and who are engaging in both the social and academic components of their campuses were more likely to persist to the completion of a college degree. However, the review also revealed noteworthy gaps for which more research is required to ensure that persistence to degree completion is adequately addressed in both theory and practice. While most of the persistence to degree completion research on African American and Hispanic students was often only an effort to identify the characteristics and qualities of students who persist, additional work needs to expand the general understanding of the situation and delve more deeply into underrepresented student groups and institution types that have not been represented.

CHAPTER 3

Research Method

To explore the influence of academic and social integration on undergraduate minority student's persistence to degree completion at FPCUs; this dissertation follows a qualitative research design. The researcher used semi-structured interviews to gain a more in-depth understanding of the academic and social experiences of minority students at FPCUs and of how these experiences influence minority students' persistence in pursuit of an undergraduate degree. This study contributes to the research community by providing accounts and examples to further understand student perceptions of their college experience and how that affects their success. The central research question for this study is: How does academic and social integration affect the persistence to degree completion of undergraduate minority students attending a degree-granting FPCU? Specific questions are as follows:

1. How does academic integration contribute to the experience and perceptions of undergraduate minority students at a degree-granting FPCU? Does this academic integration influence their ability to persist?
    - Academic integration refers to behaviors in which students engage related to an academic issue, such as meeting with faculty and advisors, using the library, or attending out-of-class academic activities.
2. How does social integration contribute to the experience and perceptions of undergraduate minority students at a degree-granting FPCU? Does this social integration influence their ability to persist?

- Social integration refers to behaviors related to social involvement, including meeting other students, making friends in extra-curricular activities, and attending social and cultural events on campus.

Because of the lack of literature on minority student persistence to degree completion and the emerging nature of research on FPCUs, a qualitative research design is appropriate for exploring the effects of academic and social integration within this sector. Creswell (2004) defined qualitative research as "a process of understanding a social or human problems based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting" (p. 2). Denzin and Guba (2005) added that:

> qualitative research involves the studies' use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case studies; personal experiences; introspection; life story; interview artifacts; cultural text and production; observational, historical, interaction and visual text that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives (pp. 3-4).

This section outlines the broad research strategy, sample selection strategy, data collection and analytical techniques, and limitations of this study.

Research Strategy

The primary research strategy for this study follows a narrative approach. Qualitative methodologists (Creswell, 2007; Manen, 1990; Moustakas, 1994) have suggested the use of phenomenological research when there is a need to explain the meaning of several individuals' lived experiences a phenomenon. Qualitative researchers identify a phenomenon as a human experience (e.g., insomnia, anger, grief, being left out) (Moustakas, 1994). When using this type of research, data comes from persons who have experienced the phenomenon, and the researcher

develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all the individuals. A phenomenological approach allows the researcher to gain a deep understanding of a phenomenon as experienced first-hand by several individuals. Learning about some common experiences can prove valuable to both individuals within the higher education community and policy makers.

Participant Recruitment and Ethical Considerations

To ensure that prospective participants met the criteria to participate in the study, individuals were selected by purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select individuals who can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). This study explored the influence of academic and social integration on the persistence to degree completion of minority students enrolled in bachelor's degree programs at for-profit colleges and universities. It was necessary to select individuals who fit specific criteria and who could provide rich data directly related to the research questions.

Potential participants were recruited through referrals obtained by professional colleagues within the field of higher education and through social media venues such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. The individuals who provided initial recommendations for potential participants served as gatekeepers, establishing initial contact with other potential participants and providing leads (Creswell, 2007). Once initial participants were identified, the snowball method was incorporated; a technique in which participants provide leads to other individuals who fit the research criteria (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Using gatekeepers and incorporating the snowball technique were two methods used to ensure that potential participants fit the research design criteria.

Inclusion criteria were as follows: (a) having attended a degree-granting FPCU within the past 5 years for a bachelor's degree, (b) 18 years of age or older, (c) identify as either

Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino. Using these strategies, the sample in this study eventually consisted of 17 individuals, eight males and nine females.

Another method used to ensure that potential participants fit the research design and to obtain a vivid portrait of the participant pool was the use of a participant information questionnaire (Appendix A). From the participant information questionnaire, the researcher found that the17 participants were predominately Black/African Americans (76%) and Hispanic (24%) and consisted of individuals from six states within the Mid-Atlantic and Southern regions of the United States. The average age of individuals in the participant pool was 32 years (SD = 7.18). The majority of the participants (53%) noted that they previously attended a public or private not-for-profit college or university for an undergraduate degree prior to becoming a student at a degree-granting FPCU. The majority of the participants (88%) were single, and 47% of the participants noted having, on average, 2.25 children.

Qualitative research studies focus on a few individuals, but collect extensive details about each participant studied (Creswell, 2007). The purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize the information gained from conducting the research, but to focus on specific details provided by the participants (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Using this rationale, a sample size of 15 participants was the initial target for this study, and participants were recruited until saturation was reached.

In this study, the research used a number of methods to recruit study participants. Of the 17 participants, 11 % were referred through a colleague, 50% were identified through the use of social media (i.e., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter), and the remaining 39% were identified through snowball sampling. To identify participants via social media, the researcher posted a request for participants on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. This request noted the need for willing

individuals who identify as either African American/ Black or Hispanic/Latino and who attended a for-profit institution within the last five years for a bachelor's degree. Once contact was made via these sites a formal request for participation (Appendix D) was sent via e-mail. Participants were also identified through the use of a snowball method. At the end of each interview participants were asked to recommend someone who they felt met the qualifications for participation in this study. Each recommending participant was asked to make initial contact with the person they recommended to inform them that I would be contacting them. Once contact was made, between the recommender and the recommended, each recommended individual received a formal e-mail request for participation in this study.

In selecting sites for data collection, the researcher sought environments that were conducive for interviewing participants. Sites included, but were not limited to, conference rooms, library study rooms, and offices. Upon making initial contact, participants were asked whether they preferred a specific interview location. Sites were selected that were quiet, clean, and comfortable, which allowed for extensive exchanges between the researcher and participants (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007). After making initial contacts with each potential participant, the researcher scheduled a time before the interview to discuss, in detail, the research study and the participant's role. After this conversation, each participant was scheduled for an interview. Ensuring the privacy of participants was an important aspect of this study. Participants had the opportunity to share stories or experiences related to the academic and social environment at their institutions. Participants had the opportunity to select a pseudonym, which assisted in protecting their identity throughout this study. In cases where participants did not select a pseudonym, one was selected for them. Each participant received and completed a consent form (Appendix C). The consent form stated the individual's rights as a participant and provided

specific details about the voluntary nature of this study. Prior to contacting potential interviewees, an application was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for each research site to ensure that all aspects of the study met the ethical standards of a project grounded in social science research.

Data Collection Methods

Interviewing, in qualitative research, offers the researcher the opportunity to enter into the world of the participant by accepting their insights as meaningful and knowable (Patton, 2002). Conducting one-on-one interviews instead of group interviews created a safe space for participants, making them feel comfortable to share their experiences at FPCUs. In qualitative research, interviewing consists of either a structured, semi-structured, or unstructured format, which provides the opportunity for intentional dialogue to take place between the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2007). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated, "The interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subject's own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some pieces of the world" (p. 103). Unstructured or semi-structured interviews provide a greater breadth of dialogue and information than more structured types of interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2008). As a method of inquiry, the semi-structured interview poses neither questions nor answers about the predetermined categories but relies rely on social interaction between the researcher and the informant (Minichello, Aronia, Timewell & Alexander, 1990). According to Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora, and Mathis (2007): "the semi-structure interview is designed to cover a common set of themes but allows for changes in the sequencing of questions and the forms of questions, enabling the interviewer to follow up on the interviewees' answers" (p. 311). A semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix B) was useful in uncovering how the experiences of minority students during academic and social integration at

a for-profit institution affect their abilities to persist to the completion of a degree. This led to further areas of interest that were not considered by the researcher when designing the interviews. Using interviews as the primary source of data collection, the researcher gave participants the opportunity to go into great depth about specific experiences and the meaning they constructed from these experiences. Incorporating constructs from conceptual frameworks that focused on student degree persistence assisted in developing the interview protocol for this study.

In qualitative research, interviews may be used as the dominant strategy for data collection or in conjunction with participant analysis, observation, or other techniques (Bodgen & Bikken, 2007). Although interviews were used as a primary source of data collection for this study, descriptive data was also collected from participants to provide a more thorough understanding of their experiences and to provide context about participants' experiences at for-profit institutions. Additionally, these methods were used to enhance the description of events in the narratives shared by participants.

Data Analysis

The transcriptions created after the data collection process consisted of information gathered from the questions posed during the semi-structured interview process. The data collected from the participant interviews were used to analyze participants' experiences in the academic and social cultures of the for-profit institutions they attended and how these factors influenced their ability to persist to the completion of bachelor's degree programs.

A narrative analysis helped reveal the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. Narrative analyses consist of a range of techniques for interpreting the meanings of texts with the structure of stories (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). Personal narratives reveal patterns through the lens

of individual experiences (Patton, 2002). Narrative analysis has been extremely important in understanding how the social and academic experience of minority students has influenced their persistence to degree completion at FPCUs.

There are numerous approaches to analyzing narratives or stories (Ricoer, 1985). According to Watson (2005), the selection of an analysis approach depends on what the researcher wants to examine and why, which in turn, influences the way texts are selected and analyzed. For the purposes of this study, a thematic method of analysis was adopted. Boyatzis (1998) described thematic analysis as a process of encoding qualitative information. When using thematic analysis in a qualitative study, the researcher develops codes or themes made up of words or phrases to serve as labels for sections of data. Themes can come in many variations and can be derived from the researchers or other existing theories, or the researcher can take a more organic and inductive approach and mine themes from the bottom-up. Themes that arise from using a more inductive approach are developed from the researcher's reading of data and prior research-driven themes. This study developed themes and codes using Tinto's (1975, 1993) student departure theory to explore the influences of academic and social integration on the persistence to degree completion of minority students enrolled at FCPUs.

Data analyses relied on both deductive and inductive strategies. The pattern matching techniques were applied to interview and archival data to deduce themes from data collected from individuals. At the same time, an analytical framework that consisted of operationalized analytical dimensions used to test Tinto's (1975, 1993) interactionalist model of student departure induced the data with an analysis of how the dimension of the theory relates to the data collected from each interview (Yin, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data analysis also involved the development of a detailed description of each type of participant (i.e., persisted, persisting, or withdrawn) and their interaction with the social and academic environment of their respective institutions. During the analysis, the researcher placed each case within its context to allow case descriptions and themes related to the individual participant groups and the institutional environments to offer a more robust portrait (Creswell & Maitta, 2002). The pursuant analysis was rich in context of the setting and the participant's interaction with the social and academic tenants of the institutional setting (Merriam, 1998). Based on these analyses, the researcher developed a detailed narration to address the research questions of this study.

Validity and Reliability

Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research requires that attention to issues pertaining to internal validity, external validity, and reliability (Creswell, 2007). Often, internal validity is defined as "the true causes of the outcomes that you observes in your study" ("Validity: Internal & External", 2013). External validity "address the ability to generalize your study to other people and other situations" ("Validity: Internal & External," 2013). Joppe (2004) defined reliability as follows:

> The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability, and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered reliable. (p. 1)

These definitions are not easily transferable to the rigor and purpose of qualitative research and were developed to serve the purposes and intents of quantitative research, which is focused on generalizability. The qualitative research world has experienced much criticism for the lack of

ability to ensure the validity and reliability of research methods, design, and results based on positivist perspectives (Creswell, 2007). Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and Steinmetz (1991) asserted that using quantitative terms tends to be a defensive measure that muddies the water and that "the language of positivistic research is not congruent with or adequate to qualitative work" (p. 95).

To ensure trustworthiness in this study, various methods were incorporated, including the use of maximum variation strategy and member checks. The use of maximum variation strategy for purposeful sampling aims to capture and describe the central themes or principal outcomes that cut across a great deal of participant or program variation (Patton, 1990). Participants in this study were from various institutions and were identified by different means; this aided in ensuring that the findings were congruent with reality. Participants were also asked to participate in a member-check process by reviewing transcripts developed from their recorded interviews. The researcher attempted to increase internal validity by submerging himself in the current data and literature on the topic and by spending an extended period of time in the data collection phase, seeking to obtain substantive feedback from participants.

Ensuring external validity was accomplished by providing rich, detailed descriptions of the accounts shared by participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). With detailed descriptions, the reader will be able to transfer information to other settings to determine whether findings are transferable (Creswell, 2007). The uses of multiple interview sites, data collection methods, and scholarly perspectives were incorporated to increase the transferability of the study. By using diverse sources and a variety of perspectives, the study provides a comprehensive view of the phenomenon, allowing readers to develop a broad understanding of the topic through various lenses.

The reliability of the study was strengthened by peer examination. Using peer review of debriefing provided an external check of the research process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined the role of the peer reviewer as a devil's advocate, an individual who keeps the researcher honest and asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations. In conducting this study, I also shared my role within this research study. Providing readers with the role of the researcher in the beginning of the study is important so readers understand the researcher's position and any biases or assumptions that may affect the study (Merriam, 1998). In this clarification, the researcher comments on experiences, biases, prejudices, orientation, and other factors that may influence the interpretation and approach to the study (Creswell, 2007).

Incorporating these methods ensured the transferability and credibility of this study and provided readers with a scholarly understanding of the phenomenon. Even though the purpose of this research was not to generalize the topic, readers should be able to identify areas of familiarity that relate to the population being studied, hopefully affecting their own underlying knowledge or perception about the needs of minority students attending for-profit colleges and universities.

Limitations

This study is limited in two respects: (1) due to the research design, this study offers no generalizability to the full group of students at for-profit institutions and (2) the data collected reveals the experiences and perception of academic and social integration of participants through self-reporting.

Generalizability of this research study is bounded by the qualitative research methods that do not provide the empirical results that would be gained when conducting quantitative research. Although the use of a purposive sample increased transferability, this study explains the

phenomena of undergraduate minority persistence to degree completion as it relates to the academic and social environment of degree-granting FPCUs. Although the findings of this study may become a model to assess the effects of academic and social integration on African American and Hispanic persistence to degree completion at other FPCUs, the qualitative nature of this study is not generalizable. However, the design, methods, and themes of this investigation may be transferable to other FPCUs or to African-American and Hispanic students in general, regardless of sector.

Depending on the length of time since their withdrawal or completion, participants may have had difficulty with recall, which may have affected their reporting of certain events and of the frequency with which those events occurred. In addition, the participants in this study were self-selected. The individuals that chose to participate in the study may have had very strong negative or positive views of their interactions in the academic and social components of their institutions.

Role of the Researcher

Creating and providing meaning for the lived experiences of the participants in a research study is the goal of qualitative researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Thus, qualitative researchers "stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape it" (p. 8). McMillan and Schumacher (2006) supported this claim: "Qualitative researchers become immersed in the situation and the phenomenon to be studied" (p. 16). This is especially true in studies for which interviews are the source of data. The intense connection developed between the researcher and the research participant requires openness.

The researcher in the study is an African American male pursuing a doctoral degree at a large, predominantly Caucasian, public research university. The researcher's interest in this subject began while working as a public high school teacher. He noticed many of his African-American students, their parents, and his fellow teachers choosing to enroll at FPCUs in pursuit of undergraduate or advanced degrees. They had individual reasons for doing so, including the increased likelihood of admission, short program lengths, and potential pay increases as result of earning a degree. However, the outcomes tended to be the same in every case: premature withdrawals from the program, increased student debt, and inability to obtain employment. The researcher's concerns and questions about the factors affecting the success of minority students in this sector served as a catalyst to pursue this research. As the researcher, I recognize that my experiences and perspective comes with possible bias, as outlined in the previous section, I have taken steps to increase the trustworthiness of this study.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research methods used in this study. This qualitative research study used a narrative research strategy to perform a thematic analysis of the data collected in participant interviews. Incorporating the use of semi-structured interview protocol to uncover how academic and social integration influences persistence and to degree completion of minority students at FPCUs. Seeking to uncover the true nature behind the experience, purposeful sampling was used to recruit potential participants. Detailed rich description, and peer examinations were introduced as methods of increasing research validity and reliability. Incorporating the use of data triangulation and member checks was also helpful as methods used to improve and increase the trustworthiness of the study.

CHAPTER 4

Participant Profiles

A demographic questionnaire was used to assist in the selection of participants to interview. The 17 demographic questionnaires were reviewed prior to the interviews to determine eligibility for participation within this study. As indicated in Table 4.1, 52% of the interview participants were females, 76% were African Americans, and 59% completed their degrees at a degree-granting FPCUs. Sixty-five percent of the participants noted that their enrollment at the for-profit institution was not their first attempt toward obtaining an undergraduate degree.

Table 4.1.

Demographic Questionnaire Participants

	Gender		Enrollment Status			Race/ Ethnicity		1st Attempt at an U.G. degree	
Criteria	M	F	Enrolled	Graduated	Withdrawn no plans to return	African American	Hispanic	Y	N
Raw No.	8	9	3	10	4	13	4	6	11
Percentage	47%	52%	16%	59%	24%	76%	24%	35%	65%

Table 4.2 offers an overview of participant demographics. Fictitious names were assigned to all participants and used throughout this study. Of the 17 participants, the majority were enrolled in business-related degree programs (i.e., business administration/ management, finance or accounting); the remainder of participants enrolled in programs ranging from health care management to microbiology and psychology. Participants within this study were representative of five different for-profit institutions. All institutions fit into what Kinser (2006) refer to as "Wall Street" for-profit institutions: large, multi-campus, publically traded corporations.

Individual Participant Profiles

As shown, all 17 participants were currently enrolled, graduated, or withdrawn.

Table 4.2.

Participant List

Name	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Enrollment Status	Major	First Attempt Toward an Undergraduate Degree
Liam	M	Black	Graduated	Business Admin.	No
Emma	F	Black	Graduated	Graphic Design	No
Olivia	F	Black	Graduated	Graphic Design	No
Noah	M	Black	Graduated	Finance	No
Sophia	F	Black	Enrolled	Psychology	No
Ava	F	Hispanic	Graduated	Business Admin.	No
Jacob	M	Black	Graduated	Business Admin.	No
Jack	M	Black	Withdrawn	Fashion Marketing	No
Lucas	M	Black	Withdrawn	Microbiology	Yes
Jackson	M	Hispanic	Graduated	Management	No
Logan	M	Black	Graduated	Business Mgmt.	Yes
Isabella	F	Black	Graduated	Business Admin.	Yes
Mia	F	Black	Graduated	Accounting	No
Emily	F	Black	Withdrawn	Health Care Mgmt.	No
Charlotte	F	Hispanic	Enrolled	Business Mgmt.	No
Aiden	M	Hispanic	Withdrawn	Business Mgmt.	No
Amelia	F	Black	Enrolled	Business Mgmt.	Yes

Liam

Liam, a 28-year-old African American male, graduated from a for-profit institution with a bachelor's degree in health care management. Liam completed his degree in 3 years and used all

federal grants and loans to pay for his education. Prior to enrolling at a for-profit institution, Liam attended a two-year college where he earned a degree in hospitality management. After graduating with his associate's degree from a 2-year college, he changed his career path to the field of health care. He currently works as a health care program manager, where he feels he utilizes the bachelor's degree he earned from the for-profit institution. Liam described a relationship he had with a professor who later became a great mentor as "the big brother I never had." This relationship provided him with support and guidance academically, personally, and professionally, and he feels this relationship contributed to his success while enrolled in a degree program.

Emma

Emma is a 28-year-old African American female who graduated from a for-profit institution with a bachelor's degree in graphic design. While enrolled as a full-time student, Emma also worked full-time as an administrative assistant. Prior to enrolling at a for-profit institution, Emma attended two other "traditional" institutions of higher education but withdrew prior to completing her degree. A year after completing her bachelor's degree, Emma enrolled in a master's degree program in human resources management. Emma found solace in dealing with challenges during matriculation by talking to people both within and outside of her academic program. In the past, Emma viewed talking to people about her challenges with school as a form of complaining; however, by taking advantage of opportunities to vent, she was able to create lasting bonds with her peers, which she found to be therapeutic and technically helpful.

Olivia

Olivia is a 29-year-old African-American female who graduated from a for-profit institution with a bachelor's degree in graphic design. While enrolled full-time, Olivia also

worked full-time as an accounting clerk. Prior to enrolling at a for-profit institution, Olivia attended a "traditional" university but did not complete her degree program. At the time of the study, Olivia was enrolled in a master's degree program at a for-profit institution majoring in human resources management. Olivia emphasized how maturity was an important factor that led to her completing her bachelor's degree. Olivia credits her ability to successfully graduate to growth and maturity and to the support she received from members within her cohort.

Noah

Noah is a 25-year-old African-American male who graduated from a for-profit institution of higher education with a degree in finance. Noah currently works as a personal banker at a large retail bank; while enrolled in school Noah worked as a bank teller. Prior to enrolling at a for-profit institution, Noah attended a "traditional" institution of higher education where he also majored in finance; however, he withdrew because of conflicts between his personal life and school. After withdrawing from school the first time, Noah aspired to go back to school eventually and earn his degree. When his current place of employment began to downsize because of the turbulent financial market, Noah decided it was the proper time to return to school and earn his degree. In his interview, Noah declared, "I always said I wanted to go back to school and get my bachelor's degree, but this was kind of like a big motivator." Given his previous experience in banking, Noah felt that having a bachelor's degree would allow him to market himself better when applying for other positions within his company. Noah did not find the coursework at the for-profit institution he attended academically rigorous and said that although much of what he learned has never appeared in his day-to-day activities, just having a degree has meant a lot in his industry.

Sophia

Sophia is a 29-year-old African-American female who has been pursuing her bachelor's degree in psychology at a for-profit institution for the past 2 years. Prior to enrolling at a for-,profit institution, Sophia attended a "traditional" institution of higher education; however, she withdrew prior to completing her degree because "life happened." Sophia feels tremendous internal pressure to complete her degree this time around because of her age and because she knows she cannot reach her life's goal of becoming a psychologist without earning a bachelor's degree. Sophia credits her drive to complete her degree to the large amount of motivation and encouragement she received from individuals outside of school (e.g. fellow church members). When she graduates, Sophia aspires to continue her education and plans to enroll in a graduate degree program in clinical psychology. However, as Sophia approaches graduation, concerns are developing about how "traditional institutions" will perceive her degree. These concerns about what type of institution she will be able to attend once she graduates and what this means for her future career aspirations continue to grow.

Ava

Ava is a 31-year-old Hispanic female who graduated from a for-profit institution with a bachelor's degree in business administration. Prior to enrolling at a for-profit institution, Ava attended a "traditional" institution of higher education and withdrew prior to completing her degree. Ava, the second of eight children, credits her desire to complete her degree program to wanting to do something different; of her seven siblings, Ava is the only one to earn a college degree. In her interview, Ava stressed her relationships with other students as something that helped her to progress to the completion of her degree. Ava explained how because she has a lot of siblings, communication and relationships with peers was something that she found to be important while she pursued her degree. In her interview, Ava highlighted how it was difficult to

connect with faculty members at her institutions because the institutional culture did not promote those types of relationships. However, she does not feel that this affected her experience while enrolled in a for-profit baccalaureate degree program. Since graduating with her degree, Ava admits that she has struggled finding a career path that best fits her degree and wishes that her institution had spent more time providing career advisement, but she acknowledges that having a degree provides her access to a world that having a high school diploma did not.

Jacob

Jacob is a 29-year-old African-American male who graduated from a for-profit institution with a bachelor's degree in business administration. Prior to enrolling at a for-profit degree program, Jacob attended a "traditional" university for 2 years but withdrew because of financial and family obligations. Jacob, an entrepreneur, founded and operates a full-service event planning business. Prior to becoming an entrepreneur, Jacob worked as a bank teller at a retail bank; however, he left to pursue his passion. Jacob credits the successful completion of his degree program to his own will and desire to do better. In his interview, he made it clear that he interacted very little with his peers and that his interactions with faculty were limited to the classroom setting. Jacob's will to finish his degree was guided by an internal pressure to complete something that he started. In addition, Jacob felt that having a bachelor's degree made him more appealing to potential clients of his event-planning business.

Jack

Jack is a 27-year-old African-American male who attended a for-profit institution; he did not complete his bachelor's degree program. Jack attended two different for-profit institutions after graduating high school. In his first attempt at earning a degree at a for-profit institution, Jack majored in computer science. In his second attempt at earning a bachelor's degree from a

for-profit institution, Jack majored in fashion marketing. He is currently working as a personal shopper for a large retail clothing business. When asked why he thinks he never finished his degree program at either for-profit institution, Jack noted not having a desire to earn a degree. He highlighted that his attempts at earning a degree were more about his family's desire for him to have a degree and less about his desire for a degree. Jack felt that earning a bachelor's degree would have very little effect on his success in fashion retail. When asked about his social and academic experience while enrolled, Jack felt he had great relationships with both faculty and students and recalls the coursework as being "okay, for what it was worth.". Jack has no plans to go back to school to earn a bachelor's degree in the future.

Lucas

Lucas is a 26-year-old African-American male who attended a for-profit institution for 2 years but did not complete his degree program. While enrolled in a bachelor's degree program at a for-profit institution, Lucas majored in elementary education. Prior to enrolling at a for-profit institution, Lucas attended a "traditional" institution of higher education in which he majored in microbiology. Lucas felt that his first attempt at a college degree was cut short because his social life distracted him from his academics. When asked what influenced his decision to withdraw from his degree program at a for-profit institution, Lucas described a lack of internal motivation and the disconnect from the institution. While enrolled in his bachelor's degree program at a for-profit institution, Lucas worked in the U.S. Army.

Jackson

Jackson is a 42-year-old married Hispanic male who graduated from a for-profit institution with a degree in management. After earning his bachelor's degree in management in 2008, Jackson began working as a program manager. Before that, he worked various customer-

service related jobs. Prior to enrolling at a for-profit institution, Jackson attended a community college where he graduated with a degree in management. When asked to describe what factors helped influence his success as a student at a for-profit institution, Jackson credited his internal drive and desire to provide for his family. He also found that having a degree helped provide access to career opportunities that he otherwise would not have access to without a degree.

Logan

Logan is a 40-year-old African-American male who graduated with a bachelor's degree from a for-profit institution. This was Logan's first attempt at earning a bachelor's degree. While enrolled at a for-profit institution, Logan majored in business management. Logan chose to attend a FPCU because it allowed him to keep his job in the financial service industry and work on his coursework toward his degree simultaneously. When asked what factors he felt influenced his successful completion of a bachelor's degree at a FPCU, Logan credited his inner desire for more in life.

Isabella

Isabella is a 48-year-old African-American female who graduated from a for-profit institution with a bachelor's degree in business management. While enrolled as a full-time student, Isabella worked as a local municipal court clerk, a position she has held for over 10 years. This was Isabella's first attempt at earning a college degree. Isabella decided to attend a for-profit institution for her bachelor's degree because it offered her the convenience of pursuing a degree full-time while also working full-time. Isabella's desire to earn her bachelor's degree stemmed from a lifelong dream of earning a college degree. When asked what factors helped contribute to her success as a student at a FPCU, Isabella described the family-like environment her peers and she created that helped motivate everyone to do well. Isabella also felt that because

of her age, she did not have the option to not finish and that remained a constant reality check for her whenever she thought about not finishing.

Mia

Mia is a 33-year-old African-American female who graduated from a for-profit institution with a bachelor's degree in accounting. Prior to enrolling in a for-profit degree program, Mia attended three other "traditional" institutions of higher education; however, she did not earn a degree from any of them. Before enrolling in an FPCU, Mia worked as a quality assurance engineer, a position she continues to hold post-graduation. Mia's interest in attending a FPCU was piqued by the advertised amount of time it would take to complete her degree program and the convenience of the coursework. As a single mother of three children, it was important that she find an institution and degree program that would allow her to work and raise her family at the same time. Mia notes the content-centered coursework as one of the factors she most appreciated about her academic experience. She despised taking coursework that she felt was not relevant to the job she currently has or positions she desired to have in the future. In her interview, Mia also noted that the relationships that she developed with her peers and instructors as drivers in her success as a student.

Emily

Emily is a 27-year-old African-American female who did not graduate from a for-profit institution. Emily completed 2 years of coursework toward a bachelor's degree in health care management. Her interest in pursuing a bachelor's degree in this field stemmed from her current work at a local hospital; Emily has worked as a record clerk since graduating high school. Because Emily worked, she found it important to find a degree program that she felt allowed her to keep her job while earning a degree; as a result, she decided to enroll at a local for-profit

institution that many of her friends and colleagues attended. When asked to share about her experience and why she withdrew, Emily explained that the amount of convenience that was advertised and expected was not what she experienced and that she realized she did not need a degree to do what she is doing. At the point of this study, Emily had no desire to return to this school or any other school to earn a degree.

Charlotte

Charlotte is a 29-year-old Hispanic female who withdrew from her degree program in business management after being enrolled 1 academic year at a for-profit institution. Charlotte has never attended any other type of institution of higher education and has worked a series of customer-service-related positions since she graduated from high school. Charlotte notes her academic experience as being a major influence in her decision to withdraw from her academic program at a for-profit institution. She felt that while enrolled her bachelor's degree program, there were many fundamental pieces missing which made it difficult for someone with no business knowledge to catch on. After completing a year of coursework, Charlotte decided to withdraw and has no plans to re-enroll at this or any other FPCU in the future. However, Charlotte is currently considering enrolling into a bachelor's degree program at a "traditional" four-year institution but is deciding on how to pursue this while working.

Aiden

Aiden is a 28-year-old Hispanic male who completed two years of coursework toward a bachelor's degree in business management at a for-profit institution. Prior to enrolling at a for-profit institution, Aiden attended another institution of higher education in which he majored in music; however, he withdrew because of family circumstances. When asked what prompted his interest in pursuing a bachelor's degree at a for-profit institution, Aiden noted a desire to

complete something that he had started. In addition, Aiden's desire to earn his bachelor's degree was also an attempt to fulfill the wish of his deceased mother. When asked why he felt he did not finish, Aiden admitted that his heart was not all in it. He felt that by earning a bachelor's degree in anything he could make both his mother and himself happy but realized otherwise after taking a year and a half of business courses. In addition, while enrolled a for-profit institution, Aiden's sole source of income came from performances that conflicted with course offerings. At the time of this study, Aiden stated that he had no plans to re-enroll into any bachelor's degree program.

Amelia

Amelia is a 45-year-old African-American female who at the time of this study is still enrolled in a business management degree program at a for-profit institution. This is Amelia's first attempt at a bachelor's degree since graduating from high school. Amelia has worked a number of different support-staff positions and felt that having a degree would help her transition into other types of roles. Amelia felt that given her age and the fact that she no longer has children living with her, this was the right time to pursue something that she has always wanted. When asked about her experience at her for-profit institutions and the factors that she feels has influenced her success thus far, Amelia noted that the interaction between faculty and students is very surface level. She feels like that this has nothing to do with her success as a student; however, she feels that her own personal drive to finish is what is motivating her. Amelia's goal is to finish her degree program within the next 2 years, and she is very optimistic about the doors that will open up for her once she earns her bachelor's degree.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to explore whether academic and social integration influenced the persistence to degree completion of minority student enrolled in a bachelor's degree programs at FCPUs. The goal of this research study is to collect specific, in-depth, information that would assist policy-makers, higher education researchers, and practitioners in gaining a better understanding of the factors that influence the success of this population of students. The findings from this study are presented in this chapter in the form of excerpts from participant interviews. Once interview data were collected and analyzed, interview excerpts were categorized into themes of academic integration and social integration consistent with Tinto's (1975, 1993) student departure theory. In addition to academic and social integration, interview data were also analyzed for any reoccurring or emergent factors that were present throughout participant interviews. The two research questions this study addressed were:

1. How does academic integration contribute to the experience and perceptions of undergraduate minority students at a degree-granting FPCU? Does this academic integration influence their ability to persist?
    - Academic integration refers to behaviors in which students engage related to an academic issue, such as meeting with faculty and advisors, using the library, and attending out-of-class academic activities.

2. How does social integration contribute to the experience and perceptions of undergraduate minority students at a degree-granting FPCU? Does this social integration influence their ability to persist?

- Social integration is defined as behaviors related to social involvement, including: meeting other students, making friends in extra-curricular activities, and attending social and cultural events on campus.

From 17 verbatim transcripts, 28 thematic statements were extracted. The major themes relevant to academic integration presented in the participant interviews focused on issues related to (a) academic and intellectual development, and (b) individual goals and institutional commitments. The major themes relevant to social integration were, (a) faculty relationships, and (b) peer relationships. In addition, other supporting themes emerged that were directly and indirectly related to academic and social integration. Those themes were (a) organizational support, (b) family support, and (c) internal pressure to do better.

Academic Integration

Academic & Intellectual Development

During their interviews, participants each described their academic journey and their experiences within the courses taken while enrolled in an undergraduate degree program. Some of the participants detailed how they felt the rigor in their academic program influenced their persistence to completion of the degree.

For example, Jack described his experience with the coursework at a for-profit institution as an extension of high school, and this experience made him question his decision to attend a for-profit institution:

> It was almost like being in high school again. We were all full-time students straight out of high school and some people clearly weren't taking their education as serious . . . People were coming to class late, the professors sometimes seemed like they didn't care; folks would come into

> class in the morning and go straight to sleep . . . it was a mess. I didn't really make friends with anyone because it was clear everyone wasn't there to learn . . . It was pretty bad; about three semesters in, I began to questions whether going to [institution's name] was even a good idea.

From a different perspective, Sophia also described her experience with coursework; contrary to Jack, she found her coursework to be challenging and it helped her to think critically and outside of the box, something she notes she never felt while enrolled at a "traditional" institution of higher education:

> I've been in school before, but this time around because I am working with professors who are also experts in the field of psychology, it seemed like they challenged me to think a little more. It is not like before when you would go home and do the reading for class and then come back and the professor would come and test you on how much you memorized . . . One of my professors would bring in cases from her actual practice and have us try to figure out what was going on . . . I never got that at [former university].

Another participant who provided an account of his academic experience and course rigor was Noah. In his interview, Noah noted that the coursework he took while enrolled at a FPCU did lack rigor; however, he also admitted that that is the reason why he chose to attend this type of institution of higher education:

> When I chose to go back to school, I knew I needed to find a school that would allow me to work and go to school at the same time. Going back to [former university] was out of the question because I knew the coursework

> would be to demanding . . . I knew some people who went to [for-profit university] and I saw how easy it was for them, so I decided to give it a try . . . If the coursework had been difficult I probably wouldn't have completed . . . Between work and church, I couldn't spend the same amount of time on schoolwork like I did at [former university].

Individual Goals and Institutional Commitment

In Tinto's (1975, 1993) discussion of his theory of student departure, he noted how a student's individual goals and institutional commitment factor into academic integration. Individual goals can be described as the student's ambitions and personal goals and the student's commitment to achieving these goals; while institutional commitment reflects the student's personal connection to the institution and how committed that student is in completing their degree from a particular institution. In her interview, Sophia described how her goals about completing a degree program has kept her on pace to completing her undergraduate degree:

> My job was to come in and get this degree . . . I know it sounds bad, but I couldn't really care about coming in and getting to know people. I have to finish this or else all of this will be in vain.

Jack noted how he felt having not establishing a clear set of goals affected him while enrolled a for-profit institution:

> So I came into college knowing that I wanted to get into the fashion industry . . . But I knew what I wanted to do didn't require me to have a degree and I found it to be a waste. Here I am taking these courses that had nothing to do with the fashion industry . . . I got more experience and

> training from my retail job . .. So I decided to leave and I haven't looked back since.

Olivia also described how her determination to complete her degree was based on the fact that this was her second attempt at an undergraduate degree:

> This is my second chance, I cannot mess this up . . . Life happened the first go-round and but I have to complete this degree. Once I graduate, I plan to pursue psychology at a regular university . . . not graduating is not an option to me.

Lucas described his journey without having set any goals:

> So I started at a traditional school, but I left because I didn't really have a desire to go to school . . . I only went because my mom pressured me into going the first time. After I flunked out there, I waited three years and I decided to go to [institution's name], I stayed for about two years and then just got tired and left. Now looking back at it . . . I wasn't ready then. I just went because I noticed all of my friends had degrees and I didn't. I would advise anyone who goes to school to have an idea of what you want to do before you go spending all that money . . . I probably would have stayed if I done that from the beginning.

Social Integration

Information in the participant interviews revealed themes consistent with Tinto's second key variable in his theory, social integration. Tinto (1975, 1993) developed the social integration variable to assess the level of engagement that took place between the student and faculty, students' and their peers, and outside social factors that influence the persistence to degree

completion of students. The themes derived from participant interviews relevant to social integration were faculty relationships and peer relationships.

Faculty Relationships

Having positive relationships with instructors was an essential factor to many of the interviewed participants, as it was echoed numerous times. In their interviews, participants noted the importance of supportive instructors while enrolled at the for-profit institutions.

Liam reflected on his experience with a student-friendly professor and how he felt his relationship with the professor contributed to his success as a student.

> I would have to say that my relationship with Professor [--] was probably the most meaningful to me, and I owe a lot of my success to him . . . He took the time to get to know the students and understood our struggle . . . Many of us worked and he seemed to realize that. He graduated from a similar program, so he knew what we were going through. Professor [--] also provided great advice on getting through the program . . . He was more than a professor, he was an advisor, and now I call him a friend. Even though I have graduated, I still keep in contact with him and value his input as I move forward in my career.

In my interview with Jacob, he described his relationship with faculty members and their supportiveness:

> They treated us like colleagues instead of students . . . I felt they genuinely believed in us. I heard so many bad things about professors at these schools coming in and not really caring about their students, but that

> wasn't my experience. I honestly feel that my relationship with my professors helped me a lot.

Mia discussed how the amount of time she spent with her professors allowed her time to get to know some of them and built lasting positive relationships that she felt contributed to her success as a student.

> I had some professors who could care less if you passed or failed, but I also appreciated those that would go the extra mile. I had a few professors who would stay after class to meet with you, others would meet you before class, and some would have dinner with us during our breaks. I think that this allowed us to build relationships, and I felt they were really concerned with my success as a student. Because of that, you really didn't want to fail because you wouldn't want to let them down.

Amelia found value in the fact that her professors not only seemed concerned with her academic progress but also wanted to know about her life.

> They would talk about the academic stuff, but they would also talk to me about general stuff like life, and I like that. It lets me know they care about my overall progress in life.

Other participants described the faculty at their institutions as nurturing and supportive. Emma described her experience with a faculty member whom she felt supported the students in her class and empowered them to be leaders.

> I can remember one of my professors who was a graphic designer during the day and professor at night . . . he made us feel like we were

> professionals and took the time to challenge us. I always appreciate those types of professors who challenge you to think outside of the box.

Peer Relationships

Participants in this study were asked to describe their interactions and relationships with their peers while attending a for-profit institution of higher education. Each participant was also asked to explain how he or she felt these relationships and interactions influenced their persistence while enrolled.

During his interview, Liam likened his experience to the aphorism "let each one teach one" because of how everyone in his peer group taught and learned from each other.

> Whenever I interacted with my peers, I think of that saying let each one teach one . . . You hear so many negative experiences about these types of school, but in my experience, we were really concerned about each other's progress and success . . . If we saw someone who was down, we would reach down to make sure they were pulled up, especially if they were Black.

Participants in the study also reported feelings of loneliness and isolation while enrolled in their degree programs. Charlotte expressed how she would oftentimes go through periods when she felt lonely because there were no other Latino students or faculty members to connect with.

> To the best of my knowledge, there are no other Latinos at my institution . . . For the most part, I am the only one among students and faculty . . . I feel like I can't really talk to people . . . This really makes me feel

> uncomfortable, and I have been thinking about transferring to another institution.

Olivia also reported feeling a different form of isolation in her interview. When asked to describe her experience with other students, Olivia reflected that she was oftentimes older than most of her peers.

> I was starting to get tired of being in class with all those kids . . . I was one of the oldest in the class and those kids didn't seem to take their education seriously . . . I mean. I graduated, but there were many times I asked myself: What are you doing here?

Jackson noted feelings of isolation when it came to how everyone understood the course content and when group projects were assigned.

> I mean, I know I ain't the smartest person in the world, but some of those folks were just plain ole dumb. I hated group assignments, because it seemed like I always got stuck in a group with people who just never had a clue . . . Some folks might like that because it makes them feel smart . . . I hated it because I felt like I was the only smart person and wasn't challenged at all by my peers.

Emergent Factors and Themes

In addition to factors related to the themes of academic and social integration, there were other emergent factors presented during participant interviews. The following three factors arose during the participant interviews and were found to influence the persistence to degree completion of minority students enrolled at FPCUs: (a) organizational support; (b) family support; and (c) an internal pressure to do better. These themes, while not directly related to the

theoretical framework that guides this study, were presented in a number of participant interviews and thus, determined to influence the persistence to degree completion of minorities enrolled in undergraduate degree programs at FPCUs. Other categories emerged, but were not salient across a number of the participants.

Organizational Support

Many participants noted having been influenced by members of outside organizations (e.g., church, fraternity, or sorority). Four participants felt that the encouragement that they received from members of their churches helped to motivate them and influenced their persistence to degree completion at a for-profit institution.

Sophia expressed how going to a church full of educators helped keep her motivated, and they often reminded her of her goal of graduating. Sophia felt that the encouragement and the recognition she received from the members of her church helped to motivate her to stay until she completed her degree.

> I am at a church full of educators, and they stay on me whenever they see me on Sunday they ask me how things are going with school and makes sure that I ain't playing around.

Similarly, Noah expressed how his involvement with church is what helped him to persist to the completion of a degree.

> Everyone in church knew I was in school, and everyone was also so encouraging of me and my pursuit . . .When I graduated, I felt like my degree wasn't only for me but it was for church family as well.

Jackson noted how his relationship with members of his fraternity was something that helped him stay motivated to complete his degree.

> So I pledged when I was in school the first time, even though I dropped out, many of my fraternity brothers still went on to finish . . . Even though I had left, we kept contact with each other, and many of them were excited to know that I had decided to go back and finish my degree and were very encouraging while I was in school.

Family Support

The support of family was echoed by many of the study participants as something that aided in their desires to persist. Participants stressed how important it was to have people outside of school to encourage them throughout their studies at a for-profit college or university. Charlotte expressed how the support she received from her family not only influenced her decision to go back to school to earn her degree, but also kept her motivated to finish.

> My parents were like if you need to do this . . . do it . . . and we will support you . . . I am spoiled, so it meant a lot to get the support of my mom and dad.

Jackson also felt that his family served as a major influence on his success as a student. He credited the support that he received from his wife and his children as inspiring him to persist to the completion of his degree.

> My family pushed me extremely hard. My family was extremely supportive. Having a good support system at home from my wife is what I feel contributed to my success. Man . . . my wife through it all was very supportive . . . she made sure that we had home taken care of as well as me having the time to be able to work on coursework toward my degree. She always encouraged me when times got hard and when I felt like I

> couldn't do it no more. She would tell me, "You can do this, you can do this . . . I know you can that is why I married you . . . Don't nobody want no quitting man . . . You need to push yourself like you always do . .. if not I will push you."

Participants also discussed how not having family support also affected their decision to persist. Aiden discussed how not having the support of his family influenced his decision to leave school the second time.

> I left college the first time because my mother died. It was just too much to take on, the one person who supported me all the way through was no longer there. When I decided to go back the second time, it was weird because my siblings weren't really supportive; they kept questioning me about why I wanted to go to school and how I was in school for all of my life . . . I feel like I needed that support, but I wasn't getting it from my family anymore.

Charlotte noted that she did not receive any support from her family partly because they did not know anything about college but also because the most important thing to them was for her to finish high school. She felt that with more support from her family, she might have been more motivated to persist to the completion of her degree.

> Nobody in my family went to college, and because of that, nobody understood what I was going through or how to help me . . . To be honest, they would have been happy if I had just decided to graduate from high

> school and called it a day. I really feel that if I had a stronger support system that I would have been more likely to graduate.

Internal Pressure to Do Better

The majority of the participants who persisted to the completion of their degree or who are currently enrolled noted having an internal desire for more. Many of these individuals attempted to earn a bachelor's degree before or are above the average age for an undergraduate student. It seems that intrinsic motivation to do better propelled these individuals to persist to the completion of their degree program.

Sophia noted that before she decided to go back to school she questioned her ability to handle college level work because she had been out of school for a while and because of her age. However, she felt that at this point in her life, failure was not an option.

> I did feel pressure because this was my second time at earning a degree . . . . I wasn't getting any younger so I have to stay there and I had to do this . . . and I am.

Jacob recalled feeling as if he had to make up for the disappointment he brought himself and his family when he decided to leave without earning a degree the first time. He professed,

> I think I felt like I had to complete this degree, especially since I let my family down when I dropped out of school the first time.

Similarly, Amelia admitted to feeling like she had to do better in life.

> I felt a certain type of way raising my sons and trying to tell them how important college was and how they needed to go, and I ain't even gone myself . . . I want this degree to show my sons the value a degree offers and to make sure they know how much better life can be with one.

Liam described how his determination stemmed from the idea of completing something that he started.

> It was important that I received that piece of paper saying that I finished this . . . Whenever I would think about quitting, I just thought about the value that one piece of paper had and how much it could change the rest of my life . . . So I had to finish what I started.

Summary

The factors that contributed to the persistence to degree completion of minority students at degree granting for-profit institutions can be divided into three categories: (a) academic factors that encompass the academic and intellectual development and the individual goals and institutional commitment of the minority student; (b) social factors that include behavior related to social involvement of students and their peers and student and faculty; (c) emergent factors such as external support systems, familial support, and a desire to do better. Figure 1 depicts these themes and their relations to persistence to degree completion. The findings indicate that based on the experiences of the individuals included in this study, the academic and social culture of a for-profit institution does influence the persistence to degree completion of students. However, the concepts of academic and social integration must be broken down from the broad sense and related to the culture and environment of the for-profit institution. Even though academic and social integration relates to some parts of the experience at for-profit institutions, it does not encompass the entire experience and the issues faced by students enrolled within this sector of higher education. With this in mind, it is important to remember that institutions of higher education are not a monolith, and although previous theories and frameworks have been successful in exploring issues of persistence to degree completion in more traditional settings,

research must continue to explore how factors such as academic and social integration can be adapted to address the growing population of non-traditional student groups and non-traditional institution-types.

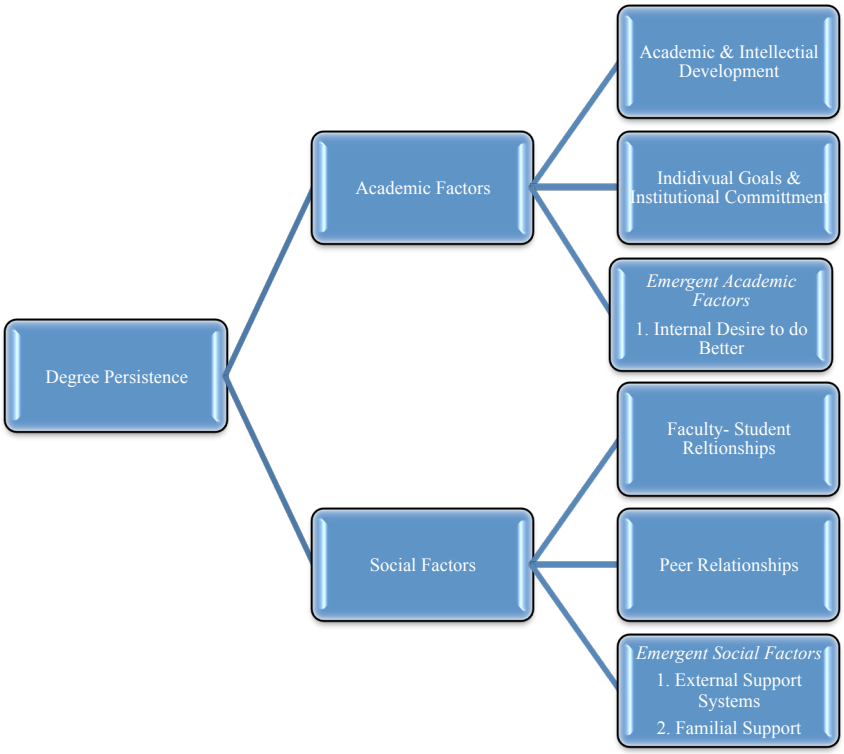

Figure 1. Factors influencing minority persistence to degree completion at for-profit colleges and universities.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explores the influence of academic and social integration on persistence to degree completion of minority students enrolled in bachelor degree programs at FPCUs. This study seeks to fill the void in research that focuses on minorities and postsecondary persistence to degree completion and, more directly, the persistence to degree completion of minorities at FPCUs. All 17 participants in this study attended for-profit colleges within the last five years and at the time of the interviews were categorized as enrolled, graduated, or withdrawn. In this chapter, the major findings are summarized, and a descriptive model, conclusion, and recommendations are presented.

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

There is no single answer to the question of how academic and social integration influences the persistence to degree completion of minorities enrolled in bachelor's degree programs at FPCUs. It is a complex answer and based on the information gathered in this study, each participant had his or her own experience integrating into the social and academic domains of their respective institution. Previous studies that have explored academic and social integration at traditional public and private postsecondary institutions as well as nontraditional institutions found integration to play a significant role in persistence to degree completion of students. In researching the perception of individuals in this sector, the researcher gained a better understanding of how minority students' social and academic experiences influenced their successes as students and their abilities to persist to degree completion.

Relation to Previous Literature on Persistence to Degree Completion at For-Profit Colleges and Universities

When compared to previous research studies that have explored persistence to degree completion at FPCUs the findings of this study parallel the research findings of Baughman (1997), Clehouse, (2000), Piazza (1996), and Sauchuk (2003). For example, similar to Piazza (1996) and Sauchuk (2003), this study found positive relationships between students and faculty to influence student retention. This study also supports the findings of Baughman (1997) and Clehouse (2000), who found high levels of efficacy and locus of control as being strong predictors of persistence to degree completion.

Academic Integration

Academic and Intellectual Development

Based on their responses, a number of participants in this study felt that the rigor of the coursework taken influenced their academic experience in the for-profit bachelor's degree programs. Jack negatively described his academic experience as an extension of high school. Because his courses lacked the rigor he expected for college-level work, he questioned his choice of attending a for-profit institution. Jack felt his negative academic experience with course rigor was one reason he withdrew before completing his degree. Jack also knew that that his coursework was not adequately preparing him for the workforce, and he found his classroom experience to be a waste of time and money. Noah admitted that part of the reason he decided to attend a for-profit institution was because he heard the coursework was easy. He knew that attending a "traditional" institution would not have been the easiest thing to do while working full-time. He admitted if his coursework had been more difficult, he may not have been able to finish while continuing to work a full-time job.

On the contrary, Sophia found coursework to be challenging and valued how applicable it was to her desired field of study. Sophia felt that what continued to keep her engaged during coursework was the fact that it was relevant to what she wanted to do in life. She noted having an issue with taking courses that were not relevant to what she wanted to do professionally and felt that taking courses that were career-focused was what was keeping her interested and enrolled. This provides evidence of a connection between the persistence to degree completion of minority students and their academic and intellectual development and growth, which, in this case, is a result of the coursework taken during their academic experience.

Individual Goals and Institutional Commitment

The participants in this study were fully aware of the time, effort, and energy needed to successfully complete their bachelor's degree program, but few were aware of the changes or adjustments that they would have to make to complete the program. Liam decided to become his own best friend to decrease the internal pressure he placed on himself. Emma modified her speaking and writing skills, and Jacob began to open himself up to consider diverse viewpoints on various topics and subjects. From an academic standpoint, Lucas employed new reading strategies, and Charlotte began using flash cards to study course information while commuting on public transportation. Professionally, Jacob used the information he gained in class and applied it to his own small business; however, the findings from this study revealed that participants who withdrew failed to make these adjustments. The findings also revealed that an ability to adjust to the non-traditional environment of a for-profit institution was critical for the success of minority students who enroll at FPCUs.

Tinto (1975, 1993) noted that in order for students to successfully integrate into their academic environment, there has to be a strong commitment to both individual goals and to their

institution. In this study, most of the students, in general, did not necessarily exhibit a strong sense of commitment to their for-profit institution. Rather, students exhibited a strong commitment to their goal of completing. Many participants noted that they were committed to doing whatever was necessary to achieve their goals of graduating, which often included changing their work, study, and personal habits. The findings of this study parallel that of Tinto's (1975, 1993) in that students' commitment to their individual goals played an integral role in their success. However, the findings of this study do not support Tinto's (1975, 1993) claim that for students to persist they need to have a strong commitment to both individual goals and their institutions. Instead, the minority students in this study were more influenced by their commitment to achieving their personal goal of graduating.

Social Integration

Faculty Relationships

Twelve participants attributed a positive and constant relationship with their professors as essential pieces in their success as a student. While enrolled, Liam and his professor communicated at least three times a week. Amelia's and Sophia's professors provided information to improve both their study and writing skills and offered professional advice about life after they earned their degree. Lucas felt his professors expected excellence from him. Data revealed that the participants who had professors who showed an interest in them academically, professionally, or personally successfully completed their programs or have been enrolled for more than one semester. The responses in this study mirror the findings by Golde (2000), who indicated that a positive relationship between the student and faculty can predict the successful completion of their program. These findings suggest that students and faculty should meet regularly to establish stronger relationships. However, it is important to remember that FPCUs

differ from most traditional institutions in that, a large portion of their faculty are part-time or adjunct. It will be important for for-profit institutions to assess how the increased in adjunct and part-time faculty members can negatively impact the success of students and limit the amount of student-faculty contact these participants felt contribute to their success.

Peer Relationships. The main source of peer support for interviewees in this study was cohort members. Ten participants cited cohorts as valued support. Five participants established their own cohort groups, while five other participants participated in cohorts that were established by their programs. Whether cohorts were established by the institution or by groups of students, having a connection with other classmates was paramount to the persistence to degree completion of minority students who participated in this study. Liam's, Emma's, Olivia's, and Charlotte's cohorts were organically created, but evolved purposefully, when cohort members began taking courses together and creating study groups, which allowed the person with the most expertise in the area of study to lead. Noah, Jacob, Isabella, and Mia were placed with their cohort members, and the same encouragement and connection were evident. The results from this study substantiate the findings by Bair and Haworth (1999), who indicated the significance of student-to-student interaction.

The influence that peer relationships have on the persistence to degree completion of minority students enrolled at for-profit institutions extends the applicability of Bean and Metzner's (1985) Conceptual Model of Nontraditional Student Attrition to the successful academic integration of minority students who attend for-profit bachelor degree programs. Bean and Metzner's model refers to a compensatory interaction effect, similar to the compensatory effect between social and academic integration in Tinto (1975, 1993) and Pascarella and Chapman (1983). This compensatory effect is between environmental variables and academic

variables. In Bean and Metzner's (1985) study of nontraditional students, the authors posited that environmental variables had a great impact on the departure of nontraditional students in comparison to academic related variables. Therefore, the model suggests three scenarios. First, students are more likely to remain in school when both academic and environmental variables are good but would likely leave school when both variables are poor. Secondly, students are more likely to leave school when academic variables are good but environmental variables are poor and the academic variables on retention will not be prominent. Third, students are more likely to remain in school when environmental support is good and academic support is poor. The environmental support will compensate for low scores on academic variables. An example of this is a student deciding to withdraw because he or she cannot find adequate childcare and cannot maintain proper work-life balance. However, students with good environmental support such as encouragement to stay in school by family, employers, and peers will more than likely remain in school despite poor academic support (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Emergent Factors

External Support Systems

A combination of external support systems promoted persistence among participants in this study. Data herein indicated that minorities who established external support systems successfully completed their degree program. This twofold support system included home and work.

The major source of outside support was from family and friends. Fifteen participants commended their husbands, wives, parents, and friends as factors in their success. Jackson, Ava, Sophia, Lucas, and Emily credited their parents or children for believing in them and pushing them when they needed encouragement to continue during the challenging times. Sophia and

Jacob credited the support they received from their extended church family as helping them to persist and stay focused on their goals of earning a college degree. Lucas praised his wife for taking care of their home and their children and sacrificing her own time to provide him with the time and environment that was conducive to study. The majority of the participants acknowledged that family and friends were unaware of the specific details of their academic experience, but data indicated having that knowledge was irrelevant and the general support and encouragement received was an important factor in the success of students. The majority of interview participants that withdrew prior to completing their degree did not speak positively about having a strong support system that helped to motivate them and to positively influence their persistence to degree completion.

The main source of encouragement at work was from colleagues. Work colleagues served as sources of support for six participants. Data revealed that this type of support was different from the other two forms of support. In Sophia's case, her supervisor encouraged her to find a balance between work and school responsibilities. Charlotte noted how her colleagues would occasionally cover her work duties, and Jacob's supervisor was completing a degree at a for-profit institution as well. Essentially, this twofold support system involved having people who believed in the participant's success in two major areas of their lives and was a crucial factor to the persistence to degree completion of minorities enrolled at for-profit institution. These findings suggest that African Americans and Hispanics should begin to create support systems in these two areas early in their degree programs. This is not to say that other types of students would not benefit from the establishing of early support systems. However, previous work such as Steel and Aronson's (1995) study of stereotype threats have suggested that minorities most

benefit when given extra support to combat stereotypes of being subpar academically when compared to their White counterparts.

Loneliness and Isolation

Feelings of loneliness and isolation were experienced by all four of the individuals who withdrew prior to the completion of their degree and by one individual who is still enrolled. Charlotte felt isolated because she was the only Hispanic student in all of her courses and because she never had a Hispanic professor. Jack, Lucas, Charlotte, and Aiden felt disconnected from their peers and, because of this, failed to create any type of relationships with them. The experience of these participants echoed the importance Bean and Metzner (1985) and Tinto (1975, 1993) place on peer relationships in the persistence to degree completion of students in postsecondary degree programs. In Littleton's, (2001) study, the students felt as though they were invisible on campuses, and because of their inability to form lasting relationships on campus, the failed to persist to the completion of their degree programs. These findings suggest that officials in for-profit institutions should make a special effort to recruit and retain students and instructors from diverse backgrounds and that leaders in for-profit institutions should strive to create an environment that promotes student-student and faculty-student engagement.

Effective Coping Mechanism

Coping effectively with various challenges related to their academic process was a factor in the persistence of minorities at FPCUs. Interview comments show that minority students who possessed a perseverant attitude were more likely to persist than those students who did not have such an attitude.

Having an attitude of perseverance establishes an outlook that quitting is not an option, despite the obstacles that arise. This was echoed by the majority of the participants who

completed their degree program. Liam experienced many challenges while enrolled in his bachelor's degree program at a for-profit institution. He was concerned about how to balance the demands of his work with the new demands of school, alongside his responsibilities at home. "I found a way to make it work. I still got through and preserved, and I have the degree to prove it."

Isabella described her perseverance to complete her degree program at a for-profit institution as having "stick-to-it-iveness." While enrolled in her degree program, Isabella remained employed and gave birth to twins, which delayed her completion but did not stop her from completing her program. Through all of these life changes, she admitted that her motivation to complete did dwindle. She stated: "I would take a few courses and then get busy with life and take a break and then go back and take a few more . . . Keeping the end goal of graduating in mind was a task when juggling work and becoming a mother to twins . . . It was a challenge." Yet, Isabella preserved and completed her degree program with the support and understanding of her academic advisor and her family. Similarly, while enrolled, Lucas lost his job and began a new one, so completing his degree program became less of a priority. He disclosed, "I understood the value of getting my degree, but I needed my job to survive . . . So it really became a balancing act. Sometimes I thought about leaving, but I couldn't do it . . . I had to keep persisting and get this done.

Ava's commitment to completing her degree program was evident when her goal to graduate was delayed an entire year and a half: "I couldn't quit, I am not a quitter, I wasn't going out like that . . . I was raised to finish things through."

Considerations for Future Studies

Based on the findings, this research study is mostly consistent with previous theories that have explored student persistence to degree completion and student departure. Similar to

previous research that explored academic and social integration, the minority participants within this study articulated and experienced many of the same thoughts and feelings as participants in previous research studies. It should also be noted that the findings in this study did not present any major differences by race/ethnicity. This could be partly attributed to the total number of African American and Hispanic participated in this study. Future research studies should explore these groups individually to capture if and how academic and social integration influences persistence to degree completion at FPCUs.

Even though this study supports the findings of previous research that explored academic and social integration, this does not negate the fact that earlier theories of student departure are in need of updates that reflect the issues of today's diverse students. With this in mind, there are several recommendations that can be made for future research. First, additional persistence to degree completion studies should be conducted that further explore the persistence to degree completion of minority students and those from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds enrolled in the for-profit sector of institutions. Related to persistence to degree completion, student success and degree completion are all topics of importance to the success of all students. However, it is important that research continue to capture the unique voices and experiences of historically underrepresented and underserved students. Given the demographic shift this nation is currently experiencing with minority racial and ethnic groups becoming the majority, there is value in understanding how professionals in the higher education community can better serve these individuals and how we can help these individuals anticipate how to be proactive in their success.

Second, additional persistence to degree completion studies should be conducted that explore how organizational factors (e.g., institutional size, selectivity, institutions resources, and

faculty-student ratios) influence minority persistence to degree completion at for-profit institutions. Having this understanding will provide research and higher education professionals with a clearer understanding of what, on an organizational level, positively and negatively influences the persistence to degree completion of minorities enrolled at for-profit institution. Berger and Braxton (1998) noted that the leadership and decision-making approaches favored by senior administrators have some effect on student satisfaction and adjustment. This is also supported by more recent research by Pike and Kuh (2005), who suggested that negative perceptions of the campus environment are associated with a variety of general institutional characteristics, including factors such as size, control, mission, and location. Given the dearth of literature that is currently available about this sector of higher education, having this knowledge could offer value to more traditional sectors of higher education. In addition, this study focuses on students within the general universe of the for-profit sector of higher education from the Mid-Atlantic, Southern, and Northern regions of the United States and does not focus on any specific institution. Because of this the findings of this study's generalizability is limited; therefore, additional studies that include more universities, programs, and disciplines from more states are recommended.

Third, it was evident from interviews that the social experience played an influential role in the persistence to degree completion of many of the participants that either successfully persisted to the completion of their degrees or who are currently enrolled beyond their first academic year. Additional studies should explore the significance of various social indicators on minority students enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program at a for-profit institution. Having such knowledge would allow policy and research professionals to identify parts of the social experience that are more significant than others for ensuring the persistence to degree completion

of students at for-profit institution. In addition, very few participants within this study made mention of factors such as cost and affordability and how these factors influence their success as students. This contradicts the publics concerns about the increasing education debt many Americans are acquiring for the sake of a postsecondary degree, in particular at FPCUs. Future studies should be conducted that assess how such factors affect students and their ability to persist to the completion of their degree at a for-profit institution. In addition, these studies can explore whether there are differences in persistence to degree completion based on how much a student invests in their individual post secondary education.

Fourth, a comparison study should be conducted that explores the experience of students who have attended an institution prior to enrolling at a FPCU versus those individuals who enter into a for-profit institution with no prior postsecondary experience and how this may differ for African Americans and Hispanics separately. This study could examine the exchange students have with the academic and social tenants of the institution. Such a study could also examine how minority students from different backgrounds interact with faculty and peers, how they engage support services at their institutions, and how these students respond to the institutional environment. In addition, a follows up study should be conducted decade later that assess how the study's participants thrive in their careers following the completion of their degree and how attending a FPCU has impacted their personal and professional life. Such a study would also allow the higher education community to gain a better understanding how many students who drop out go back to complete their degree and what are the characteristics of that students.

The findings of this research are, in fact, consistent with previous theories that have explored student persistence to degree completion and student departure. However, there is a need for more updated theories that address the challenges faced by today's students. There is a

possibility that participants in this study were socialized, similarly to majority students and thus did not present any noticeable differences. In addition, because the experiences of participants in this study were self-reported it could be the case that participants provided responses that they felt were socially correct. Lastly, though these findings support the claim that social integration influences persistence to degree completion, it does not fully align with the traditional notion of academic integration and how that influences the persistence to degree completion for minority students.

Recommendations for Future Practice

The findings of this study suggest several possible courses of action that will aid in improving minority persistence to degree completion at FPCUs. First, to improve the academic experience of minority students, for-profit degree programs must develop an interconnected network of essential officials in institutional offices who will assist in alerting advisors, faculty, and students early when a student is at risk of failing or dropping out. Second, in an effort to improve the academic experience of minority students, for-profit institutions should further develop or implement new strategies that can be used to assess student risk factors earlier than later within a student's matriculation. Having such strategies in place will allow crucial players at institutions to develop intervention strategies that can ultimately prevent minority students from dropping out because of negative academic experiences.

In an effort to improve the academic experience of students attending for-profit institutions, a third recommendation is for these institutions to develop sounder methods of assessing a prospective student's readiness for college level work. In addition, for-profit institutions must take the proper steps to ensure that the current curriculum is in fact strengthening the analytical and critical thinking skills needed in today's workforce. One of the

advantages, noted by an interview participant, of attending a for-profit was that the course curriculum focused specifically on career-related materials and less on superfluous things that did not relate to the participants' ultimate goals in life.

Because results of this study revealed that students found their social experience to be of great importance, my fourth recommendation would be that for-profit institutions develop institutional programs and structures that allow students to interact with faculty and other students both in and outside of the classroom. This supports previous research (Tinto, 2004; Tinto, Love, & Russo, 1995) that has noted interactions between students and their peers and students and faculty as influential to student learning and the development of values.

In an effort to increase students' commitment to their personal goals and institutions, the fifth recommendation is to develop opportunities that involve minority students in meaningful activities that have effects on institutions. Kuh et al. (2005) provided examples of how involving students in institutional activities and decisions influenced their experience and in turn influenced their success as a student. When students were required to take responsibility for activities that required daily decisions and tasks, they became invested in the activity and more committed to the college and their studies. A sixth recommendation for improving minority student persistence to degree completion at for-profit institutions is to regularly assess the social and academic experiences of students. Many institutions currently have great strategies for tracking students when they first enter higher education as first-year students and when they graduate. To better understand the factors that happen in between these two milestones, officials in for-profit intuitions must take an even closer look at the students who leave college without completing their degree. The goal of such an assessment is to determine the characteristics of students who are failing with the aim of intervening to assist in persistence to degree completion

completion. Having this knowledge would allow institution officials to tailor persistence to degree completion programs and initiatives targeted to the exact needs of students.

A seventh recommendation for practice is that officials participate in the cross-sharing of data beyond what is federally mandated. The use of credible data is at the center of most transformational change efforts. Using and sharing data beyond what is federally required would allow institutions to share more comprehensive stories of students' educational experiences at FPCUs. The for-profit sector alongside the private and public sector must also start to more effectively track student cohort groups. The collective use of student cohort data can assist in the development of institutional policies and practices that can improve persistence to degree completion. Choosing not to work collectively in the sharing of student data can ultimately limit recent successes in increasing student accomplishments among at-risk students populations within all sectors of higher education.

The eighth and final recommendation is for for-profit institutions to develop better strategies for assessing a students' abilities to complete college-level coursework. Because there is no evidence of for-profit institutions using traditional metrics to predict whether a potential student is capable of doing college-level work before they begin coursework, it is important that for-profit institutions invest in alternative ways to measure analytical skills, creativity, and the practical skills of the students they serve to ensure their academic success. It is possible that traditional assessment measures used in college placement offices misidentify the academic skills of nontraditional students.

Conclusions

This study explored how academic and social integration influenced the persistence to degree completion of minority students enrolled in baccalaureate degree programs at FPCUs.

Seventeen individuals provided details of their academic and social experiences while enrolled at for-profit institutions and explored how these experiences contributed to their persistence to degree completion. As study results detailed, there were seven factors that contributed to the academic success of minority students enrolled in baccalaureate degree programs at FPCUs. Two main academic integration factors contributed to the persistence to degree completion of minority students at FPCUs: (1) academic and intellectual development and (2) individual goals and institutional commitment. Many participants were highly motivated to complete their degree program despite the challenges they faced. All students entered their programs with a strong sense of confidence that they would complete the programs successfully. While in the programs, many participants recognized that they would have to modify their behaviors and academic strategies to succeed.

The data collected in this research study also supported the notion of social integration. The data revealed two supporting social integration factors that influenced the persistence to degree completion of minority student enrolled at for-profit colleges or universities. These factors were (1) faculty relationships and (2) peer relationships. Most participants in this study noted the importance of peer relationships and faculty relationships as a major influence in their successes as a student. Specifically, students noted how the relationships they formed with faculty members affected how they felt about class. In some cases, students continued to interact with faculty members once coursework had been completed, and they still relied on these individuals heavily for career advice and guidance. When it came to peer-to-peer relationships, many of the participants reported participating in an institution-created or individually created cohort group. Many participants noted that their involvement in these cohort groups and their individual relationships with other students created a supportive institutional environment that

made it easier for them to persist. In addition, participants also noted the difficulty in persisting in an academic environment with no peers with which to connect. Although some participants were able to persist without having relationships with their peers, this was a common issue among participants who withdrew prior to the completion of their degrees.

Data analysis revealed three emergent factors that contributed to the persistence to degree completion of minority students at for-profit institutions: (1) organizational support; (2) familial support; and (3) an internal pressure to do better. The findings indicated that participants who were successful in persisting to the completion of their degree received external support from organizations or social groups external to their institutions. During the interviews, participants noted how the support they received from individuals from others such as their fraternity, sorority, or church members helped them to persist to completion of their degree. In many cases, participants reported that knowing that someone cared about their success motivated them to keep going. In addition, many of the participants shared how individuals within these external organizational and social groups randomly checked on them during their academic pursuits. Participants in this study also noted how important familial support was in their ability to persist. Many participants noted how having the encouragement and support of their families helped them to keep going when things became difficult. Other participants who were married discussed how the support they received from their spouses played a tremendous role in their abilities to succeed; and without such support, they would not have been successful. Participants also cited desires of wanting more and wanting to do better in life influenced their successes as students. Participants used both their positive and negative childhood and adulthood experiences and made these situations motivators in their journey toward success.

We have come a long way in our understanding of the factors that influences a student's ability to persistence to degree completion, further work must be done to gain a better understanding of what factors influence the persistence to degree completion for the growing number of post-traditional students entering into higher education. Though the findings of this study supports Tinto's (1975,1993) theory of student departure, this and other theories do not allow use to completely understand degree persistence issues of the 21st century. Without updated theories, we are limited in our understanding of what about FPCUs affect issues of degree persistence and whether rising minority student attrition rates are a result of the type of students that attend for-profit institution or a result of institutional factors within the for-profit sector. Having such a limited understanding prohibits use from pointing the finder of blame in any one direction; which may not necessarily be bad thing. However, it limits our understanding to how institution within the for-profit sector differs from the traditional (public, private-Not-For-Profit) sectors of higher education. Thus, limiting the effectiveness of research and policy interventions that address issues of degree persistence within this sector and how we address the trouble we see brewing in the pipeline.

REFERENCES

Allen, D. (1999). Desire to finish college: An empirical link between motivation and persistence. *Research in Higher Education*, *40*(4), 461–485.

Allen, W. R. (1992). The color of success: African American college student outcomes at predominantly White and historically Black public colleges and universities. *Harvard Educational Review, 62* (1), 26-44.

Allen, D. F., & Nelson, J. M. (1989). Tinto's model of college withdrawal applied to women in two institutions. *Journal of Research and Development in Education. 22,* 1–10.

Alon, S. (2007). The influence of financial aid in leveling group differences in graduating from elite institutions. *Economics of Education Review*, *26*(3), 296–311.

Altbach, P. G., Gumport, P. J., & Berdahl, R. O. (Eds.). (2011). *American higher education in the twenty-first century: Social, political, and economic challenges*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Alwin, D. F., & Otto, L. B. (1977). Higher school context effects on aspiration. *Sociology of Education, 50*, 259–273.

Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*(5), 518—529.

Astin, A. W. (1977). *Four critical years: Effects of college on beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Attinasi, L. C., Jr. (1989). Getting in: Mexican Americans' perceptions of university attendance and the implications for freshman year persistence. *Journal of Higher Education, 60*, 247–277.

Attinasi, L. C., Jr. (1992). Rethinking the study of the outcomes of college attendance. *Journal of College Student Development, 33*, 66–70.

Aud, S., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Kristapovich, P., Rathbun, A., Wang, X., & Zhang, J. (2013). *The condition of education 2013* (NCES 2013-037). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch.

Bailey, M. J., & Dynarski, S. M. (2011). *Gains and gaps: Changing inequality in US college entry and completion* (No. w17633). Washington, D.C.: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Baum, S., & Payea, K. (2005). Education pays: Update 2005. *The College Board.* Retrieved from http://www. collegeboard. com/prod_downloads/press/cost05/education_pays_05. pdf.

Baum, S., Ma, J., & Payea, K. (2010*). Education pays 2010: The benefits of higher education for individuals and society.* New York, NY: The College Board

Bean, J.P. (1990). Why students leave: Insights from research. In D. Hossler (Ed.), *The strategic management of college enrollments,* (pp. 147-169). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bean. J.P. (1980). Dropouts and turnover: The synthesis and test of causal model of student attrition. *Research in Higher Education, 12*, 155–187.

Bean, J.P. (1985). Interaction effects based on class level in an exploratory model of college student dropout syndrome. *American Educational Research Journal, 22*, 35–64.

Bean, J. P., & Bradley, R. K. (1986). Untangling the satisfaction-performance relationship for college students. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 393–412.

Bean, J. P., & Eaton, S. B. (2000). A psychological model of a college student retention. In J.M. Braxton (Ed.). *Reworking the student departure puzzle*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Bean, J.P. , & Metzger, B. S. (1985). A conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. *Review of Educational Research, 55* (4), 485–540.

Becker, G. (1967). *Human capital and the personal distribution of income: An analytical approach.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Becker, G. S. (2009). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Berger, J., & Milem, J. (1999). The role of student involvement and perceptions of integration in a causal model of student persistence. *Research in Higher Education, 40*(6), 641–664.

Boesel, D., & Fredland, E. (1999). College for all? Is there too much emphasis on getting a 4-year college degree? *Research Synthesis*.

Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods*. City: Publisher.

Bowen, H. R. (1997). *Investment in learning: The individual and social value of American higher education*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Bowen, W. G., Chingos, M. W., & McPherson, M. S. (2009). *Crossing the finish line.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Boyatzis, R.E. (1998) *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. London, & New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Braxton, J. M., Shaw Sullivan, A. V., & Johnson, R. M. (1997). Appraising Tinto's theory of college student departure. *Higher Education*, *12*, 107–164.

Braxton, J. M. (2000). *Reworking the student departure puzzle*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Braxton, J. M. (2003). Student success. In *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (pp. 317–335).

Braxton, J. M., & Lien, L. A. (2000). The viability of academic integration as a central construct in Tinto's interactionalist theory of college student departure. In J.M. Braxton (Ed.). *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 11–28). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Braxton, J. M., Hirschy, A., & McClendon, S. (2004). *Understanding and reducing college student departure*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Braxton, J. M., Sullivan, A. S., & Johnson, R. (1997). Appraising Tinto's theory of college student departure. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory andresearch* (Vol. 12, pp. 107–164). New York, NY: Agathon.

Braxton, J., Hirschy, A., & McClendon, S. (2004). *Understanding and reducing college student departure.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brower, A. (1992). The "second half" of student integration. *Journal of Higher Education, 63*(4), 441–462.

Butner, B. K., Carter, L. R., & Brown, T. (2004, March). From obligation to promise: A pilot study of Hispanic student persistence. Presented at the meeting of the Texas Association of Student Special Services Programs (TASSSP) 31st Annual Conference, Lubbock, TX.

Cabrera, A. F., Deil-Amen, R., Prabhu, R., Terenzini, P. T., Lee, C., & Franklin Jr, R. E. (2006). Increasing the college preparedness of at-risk students. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *5*(2), 79–97.

Cabrera, A. F., & La Nasa, S. M. (2000). Three critical task America's disadvantaged face on their path to college. In A.F. Cabrera and S. M. La Nasa (Eds.). *Understanding the college choice of disadvantaged students*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey- Bass.

Cabrera, A. F., & others. (1999). Campus racial climate and the adjustment of students to college: A comparison between white students and African American students. *Journal of Higher Education, 70*, 134-160.

Cabrera, A. F., Castaneda, M. B., Nora, A., & Hengstler, D. (1992). The convergence between two theories of college persistence. *Journal of Higher Education, 63*, 143–164.

Cabrera, A. F., Nora, A., & Castaneda, M.B. (1993). College persistence: Structural equations modeling test of an integrated model of student retention. *Journal of Higher Education, 64* (2), 123–139.

Cabrera, A. F., Stampen, J. O. & Hansen, W. L. (1990). Exploring the effects of ability to pay on persistence in college. *Review of Higher Education, 13*, 303-336.

Carey, K. (2004). A matter of degrees: Improving graduation rates at four-year colleges and universities.

Carroll, C. D. (1989). College persistence and degree attainment for 1980 high school graduates: Hazards for transfers, stopouts, and part-timers. Survey report.

Cash, R., & Bissel, H. (1985). *Testing Tinto's model of attrition on the church related campus.* Portland, OR: Annual Meeting of the AIR.

Castellanos, J., & Gloria, A. M. (2007). Research considerations and theoretical application for best practices in higher education Latina/os achieving success. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *6*(4), 378–396.

Chase, S. (2005) Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (eds) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. 3rd edition (pp. 651-679). London, & New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Clandinin, D.J. & Connelly F.M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Clehouse, R.E. (2000). Determining persistence indicators for students enrolled in for- profit postsecondary institutions (Doctoral dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 2000). Dissertation Abstracts International, 61, 295.

Clopton, A. (2009). Student as spectators: Their academic and social integration. *New Directions for Higher Education, (148), 83—89.*

Coleman, P. T. (2003). Characteristics of protracted, intractable conflict: Toward the development of a metaframework-I. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, *9*(1), 1–37.

Collins, S. R. (2012). *Bridging the gap between access and success: A study of the impact of an access and success program on academic outcomes of low-income college freshmen* (Doctoral dissertation, University of North Texas).

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2002). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative approaches to research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Pearson Education.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Maitta, R. (2002). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice, 39* (3), 124–130.

Dannenberg, M., & Voight, M. (2013). Doing away with debt: Using existing resources to ensure college affordability for low and middle-income families. *Education Trust*.

Dayton, B., Gonzalez-Vasquez, N., Martinez, C. R., & Plum, C. (2004). Hispanic-serving institutions through the eyes of students and administrators. *New Directions for Student Services*, 105, 29–39.

Deil-Amen, R. (2011). Socio-academic integrative moments: Rethinking academic and social integration among two-year college students in career related programs. *The Journal of Higher Education, 82*, 55–91.

Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

DesJardins, S., & Toutkoushian, R. (2005). Are students really rational? The development of rational thought and its application to student choice. *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research*, 191-240.Durkheim, E. (1951). Suicide (J.A . Spaulding & G. Simpson, Trans.) Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Dwyer, R. E., Hodson, R., & McCloud, L. (2013). Gender, debt, and dropping out of college. *Gender & Society*, *27*(1), 30–55.

Dynarski, S., & Scott-Clayton, J. (2013). *Financial aid policy: Lessons from research* (No. w18710). Washington, D.C., National Bureau of Economic Research.

Feldman, K. A. (1993). College students' views of male and female college teachers: Part II—Evidence from students' evaluations of their classroom teachers. *Research in Higher Education*, *34*(2), 151–211.

Fleming, J. (1984). *Blacks in college*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Flowers, L. A. (2006). Effects of attending a two-year institutions on African American males' academic and social integration in the first year of college. *Teachers College Record, 108*, 267-286.

Fox, R. N. (1986). Application of a conceptual model of college withdrawal to disadvantaged students. *American Educational Research Journal*, *23*(3), 415–424.

Fries- Britt, S. (1994). A test of Tinto's retention theory on the Meyeroff-Scholors: A case study. (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1994). Retrieved from proquest. (UMI 741287711).

Fry, R. A. (2002). *Latinos in higher education: Many enroll, too few graduate* (Vol. 5). Washington, D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center.

Gloria, A. M., & Castellanos, J. (2006). Sustaining Latina/o Doctoral Students. *The Latina/o pathway to the Ph. D.: Abriendo caminos*, 169.

Guiffrida, D. A., Lynch, M. F., Wall, A. F., & Abel, D. S. (2013). Do reasons for attending college affect academic outcomes?: A test of a motivational model from a self-determination theory perspective. *Journal of College Student Development*, *54*(2), 121–139.

Hagedorn, L., Maxwell, W. Rodriguez, P., Hocevar, D., & Fillpot, J. (2000). Peer and Student-faculty relations in community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 24*(7), 587–598.

Hagerdorn, L., Maxwell, W., & Hampton, P. (2002). Correlates of retention for African American males in community Colleges. *Journal of College Student Retention, 3* (3), 243–263.

Hagerdorn, L., Maxwell, W., Rodriguez, P., Hocevar, D., & Fillpot, J. (2000). Peer and student-faculty relation in community colleges, *Community College Journal of Research and Practice.(24), 587—598.*

Hall, C. (1999). African American college students at predominately White institutions: Patterns of success. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Institutional Research (39th). Seattle, WA.

Halpin, R. L. (1990). An Application of the Tinto model to the analysis of freshman persistence in a community college. *Community College Review, 17*, 22-32.

Hentschke, G. C., Lechuga, V. M., & Tierney, W. G. (2010). For-profit colleges and universities in a knowledge economy. In Hentschke, G. C., Lechuga, V. M., & Tierney, W. G (Eds). *For profit colleges and universities: Their markets, regulation, performance, and place in higher education* (pp. 1 –22). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing LLC.

Hernandez, J. C. (2000). Understanding the retention of Latino college students. *Journal of College Student Development 41*, 575–588.

Hernandez, J.C., & Lopez, M. A,. (2004). Leaking pipeline: Issues impacting Latino/a college student retention. *Journal of College Student Retention, Research Theory and Practice 6*, 37 –60.

Herzog, S. (2005). Measuring determinants of student return vs. dropout/stopout vs. transfer: A first-to-second year analysis of new freshmen. *Research in Higher Education*, *46*(8), 883–928.

Hilton, T. L. (1982). Persistence in higher education. College Board Report No. 82-5.

Hossler, D. (1984*). Enrollment management*. New York, NY: College Entrance Examination Board.

Hossler, D. (Ed.). (1991). *Evaluating student recruitment and retention programs*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hossler, D., Braxton, J.M., & Coopersmith, G. (1989). Understanding student college choice. In J.C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: A handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 5). New York, NY: Agathon.

House, D. L. (1994). College grade outcomes and attrition: An explanatory study of non-cognitive variables and academic background as predictors. Shelbyville, Illinois: Illinois Association for Institutional Research.

Hudson, L., Aquilino, S., & Kienzl, G. (2005). *Postsecondary participation rates, by sex and race/ethnicity: 1974-2003* (Report No. 2005-025). Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics.

Hurtado, S. (2001). Research and evaluation on intergroup dialogue. In Schoem, D.& Hurtado, S. (Eds.), *Intergroup dialogue: Deliberative democracy in school, college, community, and workplace.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, (pp. 22 –36).

Hurtado, S. (2003). Institutional diversity in American higher education. S. R. Komives, J. Woodard, D. B. & Associates (Eds.). *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (pp. 23–44)..

Hurtado, S., Mayhew, M. J., & Engberg, M. E. (2003, November). Diversity in the classroom and students' moral reasoning. In Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Portland, OR.

Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education, 70,* 324–345.

Hurtado, S., Carter, D. F., & Spuler, A. (1996). Latino student transition to college: Assessing difficulties and factors in successful college adjustment. *Research in Higher Education*, *37*(2), 135-157.

Hussar, W.J., and Bailey, T.M. (2013). *Projections of education statistics to 2021* (NCES 2013-008). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Jalomo, R. (1995). *Latino students in transition: An analysis of the first-year experience in the community college.*

Johnson, R. M. (2000). Investigating the processes of persistence: Refining discourse analysis as a tool for generating new departure theory. In J. M. Braxton (Ed), *Reworking the student departure puzzle.* Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press (pp., 157-169).

Johnson, M. M., & Molnar, D. (1996). *Comparing retention factors for anglo, black and Hispanic students.* Albuquerque, NM: Association for Institutional Research.

Kim, D. (2004). The effect of financial aid on students' college choice: Differences by racial groups. *Research in Higher Education*, *45*(1), 43–70.

King, J. E. (2003). Nontraditional attendance and persistence: The cost of students' choices. *New Directions for Higher Education, 2003* (121): 69–84.

Kinser, K. (2002). Faculty at private for-profit universities: The University of Phoenix as a new model. *International Higher Education*, *28*(6), 1–3.

Kinser, K. (2005). A profile of regionally accredited for profit institutions of higher education. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *2005* (129), 69–83.

Kinser, K. (2006). *From Main Street to Wall Street: The transformation of for-profit higher education* (Vol. 31). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kinser, K. (2006). What Phoenix doesn't teach us about for-profit higher education. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *38*(4), 24–29.

Kinser, K. (2007). Dimensions of corporate ownership in for-profit higher education. *The Review of Higher Education*, *30*(3), 217–245.

Kinser, K., & Levy, D. C. (2006). For-profit higher education: US tendencies, international echoes. *International Handbook of Higher Education*, 107–119.

Knapp, L.G., Kelly-Reid, J.E., & Ginder, S.A. (2012). *Enrollment in postsecondary institutions, fall 2010; financial statistics, fiscal year 2010; and graduation rates, selected cohorts 2002-07*. Washington, D.C: National Center for Education Statistics.

Knapp, L. G., Kelly-Reid, J. E., & Ginder, S. A. (2011). Enrollment in postsecondary institutions, fall 2009; graduation rates, 2003 & 2006 cohorts; and financial statistics, fiscal year 2009. First Look. Washington, D.C., National Center for Education Statistics.

Kuh, G. D., & Love, P. G. (2000). A cultural perspective on student departure. In J. M. Braxton (Ed), *Reworking the student departure puzzle.* Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press

Kuh, G. D. (2005). Imagine asking the client: Using student and alumni surveys for accountability in higher education. In *Achieving accountability in higher education: Balancing public, academic, and market demands* (pp. 148 –172).

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., & Whitt, E. J. (2005). Never let it rest lessons about student success from high-performing colleges and universities. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *37*(4), 44–51.

Laden, B. V., Milem, J. F., & Crowson, R. L. (2000). New institutional theory and student departure. In J. M. Braxton (Ed), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 235-256). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press. (pp. 235-256).

Lechuga, V. M., Tierney, W. G., & Hentschke, G. C. (2003). Expanding the horizon: For-Profit degree granting institutions in higher education. An annotated bibliography. Los Angeles, CA: Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis, University of Southern California.

Lee, J. (2005). Ensuring persistence and degree completion. *Reflections on College Access and Persistence*, 75.

Lenning, O. T., Sauer, K., & Beal, P. E. (1980). Student retention strategies. American Association for Higher Education- ERIC/ Higher Education Research Report No. 8. Washington, DC.: American Association for Higher Education.

Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Littleton, R. A. (2001). African American student persistence at small colleges in Appalachia: A qualitative study. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Richmond, VA.

Long, B. T., & Boatman, A. (2013). The role of remedial and developmental courses in access and persistence. In *The state of college access and completion: Improving college success for students from underrepresented groups* (p. 77)..

Mamiseishivili, K. (2012). Academic and social integration and persistence of international students at U. S. two-year institutions. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 36,* 15–27.

Mason, H.P. 1998. A persistence model for African American male urban community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice 22*, (8), 751- 60

Matthews, D. (2012). A Stronger Nation through Higher Education: How and Why Americans Must Achieve a Big Goal for College Attainment. A Special Report from Lumina Foundation. *Lumina Foundation for Education*.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). Validity: How might you be wrong? In J. A. Maxwell, Designing *Qualitative research: An interactive approach* (2nd Ed.) (pp. 105-116). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

McMillan, J. H. (2000). *Educational research: Fundamentals for the consumer* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Addison Wesley Longman.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (1994*). Research in education: A conceptual introduction* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Longman.

McMillan, J. H., & Hearn, J. (2008). Student self-assessment: The key to stronger student motivation and higher achievement. *Educational Horizons*, *87*(1), 40–49.

Melguizo, T. (2008). Quality matters: Assessing the impact of selective institutions on minority college completion rates. *Research in Higher Education, 49* (3), 214–236.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). Qualitative research and case study applications in education: Revised and explained from case study research in education. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Milem, J. F., & Berger, J. B. (1997). A modified model of college student persistence: Exploring the relationship between Astin's theory of involvement and Tinto's theory of student departure. *Journal of College Student Development, 38 (4), 387-400.*

Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*: *A sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Murdock, T. A. (1987). It isn't just money: The effects of financial aid on student persistence. *Review of Higher Education, 11*, 75-101.

Murtaugh, P. A., Burns, L. D., & Schuster, J. (1999). Predicting the retention of university students. *Research in Higher Education*, *40*(3), 355-371.

Mutter, P. (1992). Tinto's theory of departure and community college student persistence. *Journal of College Student Development, 33*, 310-318.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2012).

Nora, A., & Crisp, G. (2009). Hispanics and higher education: An overview of research, theory, and practice. *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, 317-353.

Nora, A. (1987). Determinants of retention among Chicano college students: A structural model. *Research in Higher Education, 26*(1), 31-59.

Nora, A. (1990). Campus-based aid programs as determinants of retention among Hispanic community college students. *Journal of Higher Education, 61*, 312-331.

Nora, A., Attinasi, L. C., & Matonak, A. (199). Testing qualitative indicators of precollege factors in Tinto's attrition model: A community college perspective. *Review of Higher Education, 13*, 337-356.

Nora, A., Cabrera, A. F., Hagerdon, L. S. & Pascarella, E. (1996). Differential impacts of academic and social experiences on college-related behavioral outcomes across different ethnic and gender groups at four institutions. *Research in Higher Education, 37*, 427-451.

Nora, A. (2001). The depiction of significant others in Tinto's "Rites of Passage:" A reconceptualization of the influence of family and community in the persistence process. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 3*(1), 41–56.

Nora, A. (2003). Access to higher education for Hispanic students: Real or illusory. *The majority in the minority: Expanding the representation of Latina/o faculty, administrators, and students in higher education* (pp. 47–68)..

Nora, A. (2004). The role of Habitus and cultural capital in choosing a college, transitioning from high school to higher education, and persisting in college among minority and non-minority students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 3*(2), 180- 208.

Okun, M. A., Benin, M., & Brandt-Williams, A. (1996). Staying in college; Moderators of the relation between intention and institutional departure. *Journal of Higher Education, 67*, 577–596.

Olivas, M. A. (2005). Higher education as "place": Location, race, and college attendance policies. *The Review of Higher Education, 28*(2), 169- 190.

Ortiz, A. M. (2004). Promoting the success of Latino students: A call to action. *New Directions for Student Services, 105*, 89-97.

Padilla, R. V., Trevino, J., Gonzalez, I., & Trevino, J. (1997). Developing local models of minority student success in college. *Journal of College Student Development, 38*, 125-135.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How college affects students: Findings and insights from twenty years of research.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pascarella, E. T. (1983). Validation of a theoretical model of college withdrawal: Interaction effects in a multi-institutional sample. *Research in Higher Education, 19*, 1, 25-48.

Pascarella, E. T. (1986). A program of research and policy development in student persistence at the institutional level. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 27*, 100-107.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T (1980). Predicting freshman persistence and voluntary dropout decisions from a theoretical model. *The Journal of Higher Education, 51*(1), 60-75.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How college affects students*. San Fransisco: Josey-Bass.

Pascarella, E., & Chapman, D. (1983). Validation of a theoretical model of college withdrawal: Interaction effects in a multi-institutional sample. *Research in Higher Education, 19*(1), 25-48.

Pascarella, E., & Terenzini, P. (1998). Studying college students in the 21st century: Meeting new challenges. *The Review of Higher Education, 21*(2), 151-165.

Pascarella, E., Smart, J., & Ethington, C. (1986). Long-term persistence of two year college students. *Research in Higher Education, 24*(1), 47-71.

Pascarella, E., Duby, P., & Iverson, B. (1983). A test and reconceptualization of a theoretical model of college withdrawal in a commuter institution setting. *Sociology of Education, 56*, 88-100.

Pascarella, E., Terenzini, P., & Wolfe, L. (1986). Orientation to college and freshman year persistence / withdrawal decisions. *Journal of Higher Education, 57*, 155–175.

Pantages, T. J., & Creedon, C. F. (1978). Studies of college attrition: 1950-1977. *Review of Educational Research, 48*, 49-101.

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park; London: SAGE.

Paulsen, M. B. (2001). The economics of human capital and investment in higher education. In M. B. Paulsen & J. C. Smart (Eds.), *The finance of higher education: Theory, research, policy and practice* (pp.55-82). New York, NY: Agathon Press.

Perna, L. W., & Thomas, S. L. (2008). *Theoretical Perspectives on student success: Understanding the contributions of the disciplines*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Perna, L. W. (2013). Improving college access, persistence, and completion: Lessons learned. *The State of College Access and Completion: Improving College Success for Students from Underrepresented Groups*, 208.

Piazza, R. M. (1996). A test of Tinto's model of voluntary student departure at a proprietary institution. Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Publication number: AAT 9619339).

Fischer, J. L., Munsch, J., & Pidcock, B.W. (2001). Family, personality, and social risk factors impacting the retention rates of first-year Hispanic and Anglo college students. *Adolescence, 36*(144), 803-818.

Pike, G. R., Schroeder, C. C., & Berry, T. R. (1997). Enhancing the educational impact of residence halls: The relationship between residential learning communities and first-year college experiences and persistence. *Journal of College Student Development, 38*, 609-621.

Porter, M. E. (1990). *The competitive advantage of nations*. London; McMillan.

Ramist, L. (1981). *College student attrition and retention* (College Board Report No. 81-1). New York, NY: College Entrance Examination Board.

Randall, M. E. (1999). Minority achievement report summary, 1999. Maryland Community Colleges. University System of Maryland. Morgan State University, St. Mary's College of Maryland.

Rendon, L. I., Jalomo, R. E., & Nora, A. (2003). Theoretical considerations in the study of minority student retention in higher education. In: J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp.127-156). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press

Rendon, L. I. (1994). Validating culturally diverse students: Toward a new model of learning and student development. *Innovative Higher Education, 19*(1), 23-32.

Rendon, L. I., Jalomo, R. E., & Nora, A. (2000). Theoretical consideration in the study of minority student retention in higher education. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 127-156). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Reissman, C.K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences.* London & Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Ruch, R. S. (2001). *Higher Ed, Inc.: The rise of the for-profit university*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Sauchuk, S. B. (2003). A case study of student retention in two programs at a two year for-profit institution of post-secondary education. Available from Proquest Dissertations and Theses database. (Publication Number: AAT 3092048).

Schuh, J. H. (1999). Examining the effects of scholarship on retention in a fine arts college. *Journal of College Student Retention, 1*, 193-202.

Schwartz, S. A. (1990). Application of a conceptual model of college withdrawal to technical college students. Paper presented at a meeting of the American Education Research Association, April, Boston.

Seidman, A. (2005). *College student retention: Formula for student success.* Westport: American Council on Education.

Sewell, W. H., Haller, A. O., & Portes, A. (1969). The educational and early occupational attainment process. *American Sociological Review, 34*, 82-92.

Sewell, W. H., AND Sharh, V. P. (1987). Social class, parental encouragement, and educational aspirations. *American Journal of Sociology, 3*, 559-572.

Sewell, W. H., Hauser, R. M. (1975). *Education, occupation, and earning: Achievement in early career.* New York: Academic Press.

Sleet, D. P. (2000). Assessing knowledge and actions employed by African American college students in overcoming barriers to academic success: A local model based on Raymond Padilla's expertise model of successful minority college students (Doctoral dissertation, Saint Louis University, 2000). Dissertation Abstracts International, 61(05A), 1765.

Smith, D. G. (1995). Organizational implications of diversity in higher education. In M. M. Chemers, S. Oskamp, & M. A. Costanzo (Eds.), *Diversity in organizations: New perspectives for a changing workplace* (pp. 220-244). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Snyder, T.D., and Dillow, S.A. (2012). Digest of Education Statistics 2011 (NCES 2012-001). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.

Snyder, T. D., & Hoffman, C. M. (2003). *Digest of education statistics 2002*. National Center for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Solorzano, D. (1995). The Chicano Educational Experience in Empirical and Theoretical Perspective. In S. Rothstein (Ed.), Class, culture, and race in American schools: A Handbook (pp. 35– 54). Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Spady, W. G. (1970). Dropouts from higher education: An interdisciplinary review and synthesis. Interchange, 1(1), 65- 85.

St. John, E. P. (1991). A framework for reexamining state resource-management strategies in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education, 62,* 263-287.

St. John, E. P., Hu, S., & Weber, J. (2001). State policy and the affordability of public higher education: The influence of state grants on persistence in Indiana. *Research in Higher Education*, *42*(4), 401-428.

St. John, E. P., Cabrera, A. E., Nora, A., & Asker, E. H. (2000). Economic influences on persistence reconsidered: How can finance research inform the re-conceptualizing of persistence models? In J. M. Braxton (Ed.) , *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 29-47). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

St. John, E. P., & Starkey, J. b. (1995). An alternative to net price: Assessing the influence of price and subsidies on within-year persistence. *Journal of Higher Education, 66*, 156-186.

Stage, F. K. (1989). Effects between the Academic and Social Integration of College Students. *Research in Higher Education, 30*, 517-530.

Stage, F. K. (1989). Motivation, academic and social integration, and the early dropout. *American Educational Research Journal, 26*(3), 385-402.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stampen, J. O., & Cabrera, A. F. (1986). Exploring the effects of student aid on attrition. *Journal of Student Financial Aid, 16*(2), 28-40.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2012). Satisfaction and retention among African American men at two-year community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 36,* 358-375.

Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *69*(5), 797.

Swail, W. S. (2004). Value added: The costs and benefits of college preparatory programs in the United States. In Tierney, Corwin, & Colyar (Eds.) *Preparing for college: Nine elements of effective outreach*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Swail, W. S., Cabrera, A. F., & Lee, C. (2004). *Latino youth and the pathway to college*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center.

Swail, W. S., Redd, K., & Perna, L.W. (2003). *Retaining minority students in higher education: A framework for success*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Thomas, G. E. (1991). Assessing the college major selection process for black students. In Walter R. Allen, Edgar G. Epps, and Nesha Haniff (eds.) College in Black and White: African American students in predominantly White and in historically Black public universities (pp. 61-74).. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Terenzini, P. T., Lorang, W. G., & Pascarella, E. T. (1981). Predicting freshman persistence and voluntary dropout decisions: A replication. *Research in Higher Education*, *15*(2), 109-127.

Terenzini, P., & Pascarella, E. (1977). Voluntary freshman attrition and Patterson of social and academic integration in a university: A test of a conceptual model. *Research in Higher Education, 6* (1), 25-43.

Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E. T., Theophilides, C., & Lorang, W.G. (1985). A replication of a path analytic validation of Tinto's theory of college student attrition. *Review of Higher Education, 8,* 319-340.

ThễNguyịn, T. (2008). Peer debriefing. In L. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods.* (p. 605). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412963909.n312

Tierney, E. G. (2000). Power, identity, and the dilemma of college student departure. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 213-234). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Education Research, 45*, 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Higher Educational Research, 45*, 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1982). Limits of theory and practice in student attrition. Journal *of Higher Education, 53*, 687-700.

Tinto, V. (1986). Theories of student departure revisited. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education : A handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 2, pp. 359-384). New York: Agathon.

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (1st ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities: Exploring the educational character of student persistence. *Journal of Higher Education, 68*, 599-623.

Tinto, V. (1998). Colleges and Communities: Taking research on student persistence seriously. *The Review of Higher Education, 21* (2), 167-177.

Tinto, V. (1998). Colleges as communities: Taking research on student persistence seriously. *Review of Higher Education, 21*, 167-177.

Tinto, V. (2000). Linking learning and leaving. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the departure puzzle* (pp. 81-94). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Tinto, V. (2012). *Completing college: Rethinking institutional action*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Titus, M. A. (2006). Understanding college degree completion of students with low socioeconomic status: The influence of the institutional financial context. *Research in Higher Education*, *47*(4), 371-398.

Torres, V. (2003). Mi casa is not exactly like your house. *About Campus*, *8*(2), 2-7.

U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012 (131st Edition) Washington, DC, 2011; <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/>

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *Digest of education statistics, 2011*.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *The Condition of Education 2011*.

Van Gennep, A. (1960). *The rites of passage* (M. Vizedon & G. Caffee, Trans.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Voorhees, R. A. (1985). Student finances and campus-based financial aid: A structural model analysis of the persistence of high-need freshmen. *Research in Higher Education, 22,* 65-92.

Voorhees, R. A. (1987). Toward building models of community college persistence: A logit analysis. *Research in Higher Education, 26* 115-129.

Waggener, A. T., & Smith, C. K. (1993). Benchmark factors in student retention.

Watson, L., & Kuh, G. D. (1996). The influence of dominant race environments on student involvement, perceptions, and educational gains: A look at historically Black and predominantly White liberal arts institutions. *Journal of College Student Development*, *37*(4), 415-24.

Weisbrod, B. A., Ballou, J. P., & Asch, E. D. (2008). *Mission and money: Understanding the university.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Windham, P. (1995). The relative importance of selected factors to attrition at public community colleges. *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College 3*(1): 65–78.

Van Gennep, A. (1960). *The rites of passage* (M. Vizedon & G. Caffee, Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Yorke, M. (2004). Retention, persistence and success in on‐campus higher education, and their enhancement in open and distance learning. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, *19*(1), 19-32.

Zajacova, A., Lynch, S. M., & Espenshade, T. J. (2005). Self-efficacy, stress, and academic success in college. *Research in Higher Education*, *46*(6), 677-706.

Zhang, Z., and RiCharde, R. S. (1998). Prediction and Analysis of Freshman Retention. Minneapolis, MN: Paper presented at the Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research.

Zurita, M. (2004). Stopping out and persisting: Experiences of Latino undergraduates. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice*, *6*(3), 301-324.

Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet

ID No./ Pseudonym:_____

E-mail Address:_____

Telephone No.:_____

Best method of communication
Email____ Telephone____ Preferred time to call_____

Current age:____

Current occupation:_____

Current place of employment:_____

Household status while in the doctorate program
Single____Married____Partnered____Separated____Divorced____Widowed____

Did your household status change during matriculation?
Yes___ No___ If yes, please explain_____
_____
_____
_____

Do you have any children?
Yes____ No____ If yes, how many children do you have?_____

Did you have children while you were enrolled in your degree program? Yes_
No_____

Did you complete your degree program?
Yes____ No
If yes, what year did you complete your degree program?_____
_____
_____

In what area is your degree?_____

Name of College/ University:_____

Student status while in the undergraduate degree program

Appendix A

Full-time_____Part-time_____

Did your student status change during your matriculation?

Yes___No____ If yes, please explain_____

_____

_____

Did you receive financial support during your degree program? Yes___No

If yes, please explain_____

_____

Did your student status change during the matriculation?

Yes____No_____If yes, please explain_____

_____

_____

Did you receive financial support during your degree program?

Yes____No_____If yes, please explain_____

_____

Is this your first undergraduate institution? Yes___No___ If yes, please explain_____

_____

_____

The information collected from this participant information sheet will only be used for the purpose of this study. All information will be kept confidential.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol (Guiding Questions)

Social Integration

In your experience, how has your relationships with other students influenced your academic success?

What were/ has been your most important relationship (with one or more individuals) while at (Institution's Name)?

How have the personal relationships with other students affected your personal growth?

How have the personal relationships with other students affected what you value most?

How have the personal relationships with other students affected attitude towards college?

At this institution, How has your experience been meeting and socializing with other students?

How has your classroom experiences affected you developing relationships with other students?

In your experience, do the students at your institution share similar values?
- Do the students at your institution share similar goals?
- Do the students at your institution share similar Morals?
- How has this affected your ability to persist?

Academic and Intellectual Integration

How do you feel the coursework you have completed at (Institution's name) affected your ability to persist?

What is most memorable about your classroom/ academic experience at this institution?

Since enrolling in (Institution's Name), have you attended more cultural events (e.g., a concert, lecture or art show) now compare to before you were enrolled at (Institution's name).
- Has this has affected you persistence, and if so, how?

What about your institution do you feel have attributed to you academic performance?

Institutional and Goal Commitment

How important are your grades are to your success?

Do you/ did you know what you wanted to ultimately do after graduating from (Institution's Name)?

How important is it for you to graduate from (Institution's Name)? Why?

How confident are you in (Institution's name) helping you achieve your goals?

Interaction with Faculty

Have your informal interactions with faculty influenced your persistence?
- If so, how?

In your experience, how has your experience with faculty in the classroom influenced your personal growth?
- Values
- Attitudes

How has your classroom experience with faculty affected your career goals?

Faculty concerns for student development and teaching

Appendix B

Describe an experience when you have had contact with a faculty member outside of class to discuss issues of interest and importance to you.
- How has this and other similar experiences affected your success at (Institution's Name)

Probes:
Please provide an example
Tell me more about the situation
Please elaborate
How do you think that affected…

Appendix C

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
CONSENT FORM

Understanding Academic and Social Integration and Minority Student Degree Persistence at For-profit Colleges and Universities

Researcher's Statement

I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: Karen L. Webber, Ph.D.
Institute of Higher Education
Kwebber@uga.edu
706-542-6831

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how minority student's perception of their academic and social experiences influences their persistence towards the completion of an undergraduate degree at a for-profit colleges and universities.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to …

1. Answer questions about my academic and social experiences at my institution.
   Potentially two 60-minute interviews that will last for a total duration of 120-minutes and will be audiotaped.

Risks and discomforts

No risk or discomfort is expected.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you as a participant. However, your participation in this study may aid university officials in gaining a better understanding of the students they serve. This study also has the potential to inform policies and practices that can increase the number of students who persist to the completion of a college degree at institutions within this sector of higher education.

Audio/Video Recording

The audiotapes will be kept until the interviews have been transcribed and then destroyed. Until the tapes are destroyed they will only be accessible by members of the research team.

Appendix C

Please provide initials below if you agree to have this interview *audio* recorded or not. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

_____I do not want to have this interview recorded.
_____I am willing to have this interview recorded.

Privacy/Confidentiality

The only people who will know that you are a research subject are members of the research team. No individually identifiable information about you or provided by you during the research will be shared with others without your written permission unless required by law. All information linking you to the interview data will be destroyed once the interviews are transcribed by the researcher.

You will be assigned an identifying pseudonym and number that will be used in lieu of any identifiable information.

Taking part is voluntary

Participation is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to stop or withdraw from the study, the information/data collected from or about you up to the point of your withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the data that can be identified as yours.

If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is Samaad Wes Keys, doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia, under the direction of Dr. Karen L. Webber- Associate Professor at the University of Georgia's Institute for Higher Education. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Samaad Wes Keys at Swkeys@uga.edu or 678-596-4914 and Dr. Karen L. Webber at Kwebber@uga.edu or 706-542-6831. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

Samaad Wes Keys	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Approved by University of Georgia
Institutional Review Board
Protocol # STUDY00000031
Approved on: 6/27/2013
For use through: 6/26/2018

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW REQUEST

Topic:

Understanding the Influence Academic and Social Integration Has on Undergraduate Minority Student Degree Persistence at For-Profit Colleges and Universities.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore how an undergraduate minority student's interaction with both the academic and social structures of a For-profit institution influences degree persistence. This study will investigate the minority student's experience with both the social and academic culture of the institution through individual interviews.

Research Questions:

This paper seeks to answer the central question, how does academic and social integration affect the degree persistence of undergraduate minority students attending a degree-granting for-profit college or university (FPCU)? In doing so, I ask the following sub-questions:

- How does academic integration influence minority student degree persistence at a FPCU?
- How does social integration influence minority student degree persisitence at a FPCU?

Requested Interviews:

- Minority Students (African American & Hispanic) currently enrolled beyond the first academic year.
- Minority Students (African American or Hispanic) that were once enrolled.
    - This includes individuals who:
        - Graduated within the last 5 years (2008-2013)
        - Withdrawn and have not returned

Contact Information:

Samaad Wes Keys
Doctoral Candidate
Institute of Higher Education
University of Georgia
678-596-4914
Swkeys@uga.edu

Major Professor:
Dr. Karen L. Webber
Institute of Higher Education
Associate Professor of Higher Education
University of Georgia
706-542-6831
Kwebber@uga.edu