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Exploring the effects of an Afrocentric learning community on the retention of African American students in community colleges: a quantitative study

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EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF AN AFROCENTRIC LEARNING COMMUNITY ON THE

RETENTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A

QUANTITATIVE STUDY

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by

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DEDICATION

With God first, this dissertation is dedicated to the love of my life, my wife, Delilah Ann Crenshaw, who recognized my unrealized talent. After I taught Adult Sunday School for ten years, Delilah encouraged me to pursue the field of teaching higher education, leading to the doctorate journey. I also dedicate this to daughter Imani Jillian Crenshaw. Her enrollment in an Afrocentric learning community at community college introduced me to the concept. Recognizing the value of the ethnic-centered learning community for African American students initiated this journey.

Furthermore, I dedicate this to my son, the late Andre Evan Crenshaw, Jr. Losing his life at 13- and 11-months years old in pursuit of quality education. Moreover, this is dedicated to my parents. The late Walter Crenshaw, Jr. passing at 106 and 11 months during the first semester of this doctorate program (as the oldest living Documented Original Tuskegee Airman). He is at peace, knowing I was pursuing a doctorate. Finally, I dedicate this to Zelma Crenshaw, my 100-year-old mother, who is always encouraging and loving me. Thanking my parents for instilling my wisdom, love of God, family values, persistence and appreciation for education.

x

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VITA

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ABSTRACT

The majority of African American students who begin postsecondary educational pursuits do not graduate within 6 years, resulting in one of the lowest postsecondary completion rates in America. As of Fall 2019, the degree applicable retention rate for African American students in California community colleges was 62%, compared to all students 87.65%. The purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental study was to examine whether a learning community positively affected retention and success rates of African American students in community colleges, comparing outcomes with cohort Fall 2016 with cohort Fall 2019. This analysis applied Tinto's Student Integration Model Theoretical Framework with supporting works from Kuh and Astin. The study examines the cumulative retention and success rates of Afrocentric learning communities on California community college campuses. The sample cohort Fall 2016-Fall 2019 had a statistically significant decreased difference in degree-applicable retention rates. The results of the analysis are inconclusive as to the positive effect on institutional retention and success rates. Historically the retention rate of this group of students is below that of all other groups. A collaborative mixed-methods study involving administrators, faculty, and students might produce different outcomes. There was a statistically significant difference in completion and transferable success rates. However, the results are inconclusive; it cannot be verified from this study that the Afrocentric learning community had a positive effect on student retention, success, and transferability rates in California in community colleges.

Keywords: African Americans, Afrocentric learning community, community college, social engagement, academic engagement, retention, success or completion.

Chapter I: Achievement Gap and Afrocentric Learning Community

"Of all racial groups in America, African Americans are the only group where females are attaining higher levels of academic achievements than males at an increasing rate" (Hageddorn, Maxwell & Hampton, 2001, p. 244). The retention and degree completion rates for African American females are outpacing the rates of African males (Garibaldi, 2009). This trend offers an important opportunity to examine its root causes.

This study examines the retention and success rates of African American community college students. While, for decades, researchers and scholars have studied the retention, persistence, and graduation rates of African American students in higher education. There is a need for additional research that explores retention. A minimal amount of research exists on African American students in public community college systems (Davis & Palmer, 2010; Wood, 2010). Moreover, the need to understand these experiences is enhanced by the fact that a significant majority of African Americans entering post-secondary education enroll in the community college systems (Strayhorn, 2012a). As such, this study may be instrumental to the possible understanding of the barriers and possible solutions to the problem of low retention and success rates of African American students in community college.

The purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental study is to examine the effect of an Afrocentric learning community on retention and success rates of African American students in public community colleges, as well as determine if there is a relationship among the variables to the completion of an Associate's of Arts degree, Associates of Science degree, or transfer to a four-year institution. The variables for this study are (a) degree applicable retention rates, (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associate of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year

institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the Afrocentric

learning community.

African American male students are not aggregated in the Afrocentric learning

community sample populations analyzed in the study. Both genders of students are researched as

a group. Data Mart does not aggregate special groups, such as learning communities by gender.

An Afrocentric learning community includes an Afrocentric curriculum. There is research

showing that andragogy that is not culturally sensitive jeopardizes the retention of African

Americans in college (Harper, 2005; Hope, Chavous, Jagers & Sellers, 2013; Hunn, 2014; L. S.

Johnson, 2012). The researcher sought to determine what, if any, effects an Afrocentric learning

community has on the variables for the retention and persistence of African American students in

community college. There are no studies on the impact of an Afrocentric learning community on

the retention rates of African American student's community college students (White, 2015).

According to Strayhorn (2012a), the focus of prior retention research is primarily on African

American students attending four-year institutions, with theoretical work assuming that

influences on retention at four-year and two-year institutions are the same.

The second variable in the study is engagement. The scholars consider student

engagement as the degree of the effort, in energy and time, which the student applies to

educationally related activities with institutional conditions that encourage students to engage in

such practices (Kuh, 2001; Nora, Crisp, & Matthews, 2011). The research used engagement and

faculty-student interaction interchangeably. The researcher analyzed engagement because,

according to Astin (1993a), engagement is a pivotal element in predicting college students'

personal development and learning. Scholars such as Harper (2012), Wood, and Harris (2013)

are increasing the body of research on the retention of African American students in higher education and community college.

Research shows that disengagement negatively impacts the retention of African American students in community college (Bush & Bush, 2010). An objective of an Afrocentric learning community is to engage the student in high-impact academic and social activities actively. African American males in community college are the primary ones in need of faculty-student interactions, programming, and other student support services. Disengagement results in poor achievement and retention rates (Wood, 2014b). The study sought to determine what statistical significance engagement has on the success of African American students enrolled in a community college Afrocentric learning community.

The third variable examined in the study is persistence. According to Tinto (2006), a student who enrolls in college and remains enrolled until degree completion is a persister (Tinto, 2006). Moreover, a student who leaves college without earning a degree and never returns is a non-persister. The terms persistence and retention are often used interchangeably in the body of research (Mamiseishvili, 2012; Reason, 2003; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009). This study uses the term persistence in accordance with Tinto's definition.

According to the literature, African American's community college experience may not be the same as other subgroups, such as that of White students. Subsequently, retention rates and persistence rates of the two groups are examined separately (Kinzie, Gonyea, Shoup, & Kuh, 2008). The study examined the retention and success rates of African American students, with a focus on African American male community college students participating and not participating in an Afrocentric learning community.

The literature showed that there is evidence of a small number of programs with designs engaging African American students at high levels of activities, making educational gains. However, no studies focus on African American students' involvement in Afrocentric learning communities. This study sought to contribute to the body of research on African American students in higher education. The study focused on the following variables: (a) degree applicable retention rates; (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associates of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution; or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning; and (d) transfer success rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the Afrocentric learning community.

Scholars are not consistent in the use of retention rates in higher education. Research and theoretical frameworks of scholar's postulate that retention at four-year institutions is considered the same as retention at two-year institutions, with research focusing primarily on the four-year institutions (Windham, Rehfuss, Williams, Pugh, & Tincher-Ladner, 2014). Scholars focused most of the research on the traditional-age college students at four-year residential institutions. Their research established the benchmarks for universities to measure their student retention and success rates. However, the outcomes do not apply to community colleges (Windham et al. 2014). This study analyzed retention rates following the formula the State of California Community College Chancellor's office uses.

In the 1980s and 1990s, scholars established the foundations for research on retention as it applied to the community college. However, the need for additional research to understand better the integration of all the various retention theories is necessary with the growth of the community college (Deil-Amen, 2011; Pascarella, Smart, & Ethington, 1986). The outcomes of

this study might contribute to the body of research on community-college retention theories and give insight into the achievement gap of African American students in community college.

This study also examined the retention strategies of the Mafanikio Community, an Afrocentric learning community in the State of California community colleges for African American students. An Afrocentric learning community is an ideal environment to explore in studying the retention, engagement, and completion rates for African American students in community college because an Afrocentric learning community accommodates and counteracts some of the barriers for African American students. The following are some of the barriers negatively influencing retention for these students: (a) lack of minority faculty and staff, (b) social activities, (c) cultural activities, (d) academic integration, (e) social integration, (f) guidance, and (g) peer support (Opp, 2002). This study explores if Afrocentric learning communities contribute to the retention of African American community college students. The researcher studies African American community college students by utilizing the CCCCO–Data-Mart system to obtain data for an exploration of African American community college students in the State of California.

Scholars and educators have examined the gap in retention and completion rates of African American students in higher education for decades. They searched for solutions to determine why African American students in higher education are underachieving in higher education and completing college degrees at disproportionately lower rates than other racial and gender groups (Kim & Conrad, 2006). In 2000, 23.1% of African American males earned an Associate's degree nationally (NCES, 2019). In contrast, 30% of White males and 26%, African American females earned Associate's degrees (Snyder, De Brey, & Dillow, 2018a). The academic gap for African American males continues to widen from decade to decade (Vasquez

Urias & Wood, 2014). According to Wood (2014a), percent of Associates degrees earned

national for male and female African American community college students are consistently

lower than all other groups. The following statistics provide insight into the issues.

African American first-year students' fall to fall retention rate for cohort 1998 was

74.51%, as compared to the statewide average for all groups for cohort 1998 at 76.48% (State of

California, n.d). As of 2018, the same age group of African Americans in the State of California

has a fall cohort retention rate of 83.81%, for a change of +9.3%. The success rate for 2018 of

the same population is 51.86% as compared to a statewide rate of 56.32%. The cohort Fall 2016

to Fall 2019 success rate for African American freshmen students is 57.27%, for a change of

+5.41 % (State of California, n.d). This shift represents a retention and success rate change for a

comparison of 20 years.

According to the statistics, throughout 20 years, there is a significant improvement in the

retention and success rates of African American students enrolled in the State of California

public community colleges. Notwithstanding, the difference in the retention and success change

rates for the state-wide population is +1.97% and +5.22%, respectively. The retention and

success rates for this population remain significantly below the California statewide rates.

The quantitative comparative nonexperimental research methodology is suitable for this

research design because it allows educational researchers to collect data on an issue of concern in

education (Sousa, Driessnack, & Mendes, 2007). This study used a nonexperimental approach

because it was protective of the students' privacy. Furthermore, it allows for an examination of

differences between groups with no manipulation of the variables (Grove, Burns, & Gray, 2013).

In applying this approach, the study examined the cohort Fall 2016 as a pre-intervention group

and Fall 2019 as a post-intervention group of African American community college students

from the State of California community colleges. The study gathered secondary data of the students in the Afrocentric learning community from the CCCCO–Data-Mart.

The Afrocentric learning community in this study operates within 47 community colleges across the State of California. The study sought to determine the effect an Afrocentric learning community might have on African American community college students' intended retention rates and other related variables. In particular, the research examined independent variables: (a) degree applicable retention rates; (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associates of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a four-year institution, or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning; and (d) transfer success rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the Afrocentric learning community.

Through this analysis, the researcher sought to explore to what extent an Afrocentric learning community is effective, if at all, in increasing the retention and success rates of African American students in a State of California community college. An essential feature of the Mafanikio Community is that this learning community is primarily in the State of California community colleges, while there are also a few consortiums at four-year universities and community colleges in other states. The study examined the variables through the lens of theories developed by the most cited scholars in the study of student retention, engagement, and success in higher education; Tinto (1990), Kuh (2001), and Astin (1999). The literature confirms the contributions of these scholars (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Harper & Quaye, 2010; Martínez-Alemán, Pusser, & Bensimon, 2015). This study might add to the body of literature, focusing on the achievement gap of African American students in higher education.

Chapter I applies Tinto's Theory of Student Integration Model (SIM) with supporting works of Kuh and Astin. Tinto is the highest regarded scholar in the field of student retention (Braxton, 2000). The scholars Kuh and Astin also made significant contributions to the literature in higher education around student engagement and attrition (Reason, 2003; J. Roberts & McNeese, 2010). The study examined the problem of low retention for African American students in community college and explored the literature of scholars who cite in their works the three most noted scholars: Tinto, Kuh, and Astin.

Tinto considered the works of other scholars in the development of his theory and modified it, considering critical feedback. In redefining the SIM theory, Tinto stopped using the term integration, replacing it with engagement in the 1980s (Penn-Edwards & Donnison, 2011). The current literature showed the term student engagement in student retention and persistence research (Reason, 2009).

According to Kuh (2009a), student engagement is defined as the quality of effort and amount of time students commit to activities that are linked empirically to the goal-oriented outcome of higher education as well as the practiced policies and actions colleges employ to influence students to engage in these activities (Kuh, 2009b). The concept of quality of effort was built on further by Astin (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009) with his theory of involvement. This theory focused on the behavioral and psychological dimensions, the quality of effort, and the amount of time on the academic task. Astin's works empirically illustrated the links between the assortment of developmental and attitudinal outcomes of students (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2009b). This study explores Astin's theory in the context of a professional learning community.

Statement of the Problem

The achievement gap for African Americans in higher education is being examined by researchers continuously. However, the literature on the problem of low retention and degree completion of African American males in community college is minimal in comparison. The majority of the research on this topic is unpublished dissertations (Bratton, 2018; Dabney et al., 2012; Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014). This relationship between socioeconomic mobility and degree completion makes the topic of retention particularly crucial to stakeholders concerning African American students in community colleges. The low academic performance of African Americans has serious consequences socially and financially.

The researcher focused on African American's disproportionate low retention and persistence rates in community colleges for this study because it is a national epidemic (Wood, Newman, & Harris, 2015). The researcher sought to determine what, if any, effect an Afrocentric community college has on the retention and success rates of African American students in the community college setting.

African American students are underachieving disproportionately in community colleges in the State of California and nationally in comparison to other groups, including all ethnic and gender subgroups (Goings, 2016; Harper, 2010; Wood & Harris, 2013; see Table 1).

Table 1

National Percentage of Community College Students Completion Within Six Years

White	Asian	Hispanic	African American
46.7	46	35	26

Note. Cohort- 2011 National Center for Education Statistics, 2019.

The graduation rate for African Americans from community colleges within the standard allotted time in the State of California community colleges is 34%, the lowest of all other groups. The national graduation rate for African Americans from community colleges is 42%, the lowest

of all groups (Wine et al. 2018a). The nation's workforce is adversely affected because the problems of low graduation and retention rates negatively impact African American's social positioning, income potential, and family stability.

The majority of African American community college students who begin postsecondary educational pursuits do not graduate within six years. The average completion time from a community college for African American students is in six years or 150% of the time, considering full- and part-time enrollments (Harper, 2012; Myers, 2012; Strayhorn, 2012a; Vasquez Urias & Wood, 2014; Wood & Palmer, 2013). Multiple variables might cause this disproportional achievement gap. This study examined those variables and sought to determine what, if any, effect Afrocentric learning communities might have on the retention and success rates of African American students in the State of California community colleges.

This literature supports that there is an association between socioeconomic mobility and the completion of college degrees, thereby affecting the social and financial conditions of the country. The completion of a degree is contributive to improving the quality of the health, morbidity rates, and incarceration rates of African Americans (Bush & Bush, 2010). This quantitative study sought to explore the relationships between an Afrocentric learning community and retention and degree completion rates of African American students in the State of California community colleges, and what, if any, affect the Afrocentric learning community has on the social engagement and academic integration of African American students in the community college.

Table 2 below depicts the Retention and success rates for the State of California Community College students Cohort Fall 2019. The African American students have the lowest degree applicable retention and success rates compared to all other groups. This study sought to

improve the academic achievement gap of African American students by exploring an

intervention of an Afrocentric learning community. However, the information from the State of

California Community College Chancellor's Office does not include the students that may have

transferred to another community college or four-year institution.

Table 2

California Community College Degree Applicable Retention and Success Rates

	White	Asian	Hispanic	African American
Retention	88.87	89.25	86.19	84.81
Success	78.05	76.63	67.32	63.85

Note. Cohort- 2019, The State of California Community College Chancellor's Office

Except for African American students, there has been a significant increase in retention,

enrollment, and graduation rates in institutions of higher learning for the majority of

underrepresented ethnic groups in America since the 1980s (Farmer & Hope, 2015). The

researcher chooses to focus on African American students because, according to Moore and

Shulock (2010), this group has the lowest retention, completion, and transferability rates

compared to all subgroups nationally and in the state of California.

California Community College Achievement Rates

There is a significant achievement gap in higher education for African Americans in the

State of California. According to Flennaugh et al. (2017), due to inadequate high school

preparation, the majority of African American entering college student does not qualify for the

University of California or California State Universities. As of 2017, seventy-two percent of

African American students in California enter postsecondary education at the State of California

community colleges (McFarland et al., 2019). After one-hundred and fifty percent of standard time (or six-years), the State of California community colleges only transfers thirty-five percent of African American students (State of California, 2018). This study sought to contribute to the body of literature, offering solutions to the problem of the African American student's achievement gap in community colleges.

Nationally the rate of enrollment in community colleges is almost 50% of all students entering postsecondary education (Toldson & Morton, 2011). Public community colleges are open-admission institutions and more affordable than four-year institutions (Crisp, 2016). These factors are a draw to community colleges for first-generation, low-income African American students. However, African American students in the State of California's community colleges are underachieving disproportionately in comparison to other groups, including all ethnic and subgroups in all measures of academic outcomes such as retention, persistence rates, grade point averages, and percentage of college degrees earned (Bush & Bush, 2010; Harper, 2012; Hickman, 2008). There are significant disparities among African American students compared to other subgroups, as they pertain to outcomes, including certificate attainment, transfer to a four-year institution, and associate's degrees (Wood & Harris, 2013). According to the literature, the problem is escalating despite increasing enrollments in community colleges for this population.

Purpose of the Study

Multiple variables are affecting an African American community college students' capacity to apply the behaviors that cause persistence in community college to degree completion or transfer. The purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental study is to examine the effect an Afrocentric learning community has, if any, on the retention and success rates of African American students in community colleges, as well as determine if there is a relationship

among the variables to the completion of an Associate's of Arts degree, Associates of Science

degree, or transfer to a four-year institution. The variables for this study are (a) degree applicable

retention rates, (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associate of Arts,

Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution or (c) transfer retention rates

to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the

Afrocentric learning community.

As of fall 2019, in the State of California community colleges, African American students

have a degree applicable retention rate of 84%, compared to a White non-Hispanic rate of 89%,

representing a -6% difference. The study measured student engagement by the students'

involvement in high-impact activities such as a learning community, academic, and social clubs,

as well as student government (Reason, 2003). While the academic engagement was measured

by the frequency with which students asked pertinent questions in class, interacted with faculty

and staff, contributed to class discussions, and interjected ideas from different subjects of study

during class discussions (Soria & Stebleton, 2012; Tinto, Goodsell, & Russo, 1993), these

concept measures are in accord with the definitions of the terms by Tinto, Astin, and Kuh.

This research sought to identify the connection between variables affecting retention.

According to the literature, retention has a direct connection to the variable completion of the

degree (Tinto et al., 1993). Retention also has a direct effect on transferring to a four-year

institution of higher learning (Tinto et al., 1993). The study sought to explore the issue of low

retention and success rates of African American students in community colleges.

The study examined two groups of African American students in the State of California

community colleges, with the difference being one group's participation in the Mafanikio

Community, an Afrocentric learning community, as an intervention. The expected outcomes are

determining the effect if any, the dependent variable an Afrocentric learning community has on

of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the Afrocentric learning

community, the multiple independent variables. The variables for this study are (a) degree

applicable retention rates, (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associate

of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution or (c) transfer

retention rates to a four-year institution.

Research Questions

      The following research questions led the study:

1. Is there a relationship between African American community college students' retention and
    participating in an Afrocentric learning community?

2. Is there a relationship between African American community college students' success or
    completion of Associates of Arts degree, Associates of Science degree, and participating in
    an Afrocentric learning community?

Hypotheses

      H_{0a}: No statistically significant relationship exists between the degree applicable

retention rates of African American community college students who participate in an

Afrocentric learning community and those African American community college students who

do not.

- $H_{0b}: \mu_1 = \mu_2$ or $(\mu_1 = 0)$

      H_{1a}: A statistically significant relationship exists between the degree applicable retention

rates of African American community college students who participate in an Afrocentric learning

community and those African American community college students who do not.

- $H_{1a}: \mu \neq_2$ or $(\mu_1 \neq 0)$

H_{0b}: The participation of African American community college students in an

Afrocentric learning community does not have a statistically significant relationship in predicting

the success rates or the awarding of an Associate's of Arts degree or Associate of Science

degree.

- H_{0b}: $\mu_1 = \mu_2$ or ($\mu_1 = 0$)

H_{1b}: The participation of African American community students in an Afrocentric

learning community has a statistically significant relationship in predicting the success rate or the

awarding of an Associate's of Arts degree or Associate of Science degree.

- H_{1a}: $\mu \neq_2$ or ($\mu_1 \neq 0$)

Theoretical Framework

The overarching theoretical framework for this study is Tinto's SIM, a (post-) positivism

theory (Butin, 2009; Quaye & Harper, 2014; Tinto, 2006). Postpositive theories are pluralistic

and critically a multidimensional research paradigm recommending further research (Panhwar,

Ansari, & Shah, 2017; Phillip & Burbules, 2000). Tinto's SIM was the first theoretical model to

address the connections between student retention, social engagement, and academic engagement

(Braxton & Mundy, 2001; McClenney & Marti, 2006). This study also drew from the works of

Astin and Kuh in exploring a solution to the problem of low retention rates of African American

students in community colleges. According to DeWitz, Woolsey, and Walsh (2009), the works of

the three scholars are highly recognized and cited in higher education.

Definitions of Terms

Academic Achievement: The successful completion of an academic program in an

institution of higher education (Jamali, Noroozi, & Tahmasebi, 2013).

Academic Integration or Engagement: Engagement in educationally productive activities (Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Achievement gap: Pervasive racial and socioeconomic disparities in student achievement and inequalities in America's school, with profound consequences for life outcomes from employment to welfare dependency to health (Allen, 2008; Lavin-Loucks, 2006).

African American: An American having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (Agyemang, Bhopal, & Bruijnzeels, 2005).

Afrocentric: Regarding African or Black culture as prominent (Cokley, 2005).

The State of California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems

Attainment: Educational attainment is defined as the number of years of schooling completed or degrees earned (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)

Data Mart: The data mart provides information about students, courses, student services, outcomes, and faculty and staff. The emphasis of a data mart is to answer the questions of administrators, educators, parents, students, state leaders, and professional organizations (State of California, n.d.)

Campus Climate: The general perceptions held by students of the institution, including, but not limited to, support, equity, engagement, experiences, opportunity, and access to college resources (Bush & Bush, 2010).

Campus Involvement: Student involvement in campus clubs, government, and co-curricular organizations (Montelongo, 2002).

Cohort: A group of students entering college during the same academic term, and taking classes together specific to the learning community (Saltiel & Reynolds, 2001).

Completion: Graduating from college. Describes how many people finish the programs they begin (Petty, 2014)

Engagement: The degree of the effort, in energy and time, which the student devotes to educationally related activities in conjunction with institutional conditions that encourage students to engage in such practices (Kuh, 2001).

Persister: A student who enrolls in college and remains enrolled until degree completion is a persister. A student who leaves the college without earning a degree and never returns is a non-persister. The terms *persistence* and *retention* are often used interchangeably. However, the National Center for Education Statistics differentiates the terms by using retention as an institutional measure and persistence as a student measure. In other words, institutions retain, and students persist (Tinto, 2017).

Persistence Rates: The percentage of students enrolled in courses from one term to the next (Tinto, 2006).

Professional Learning Community: A group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students in cohorts (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008).

Retention: The measure of student continuation or progression in school from term to term (Jensen, 2011).

Institutional Retention: Institutional retention is the measure of the proportion of students who remain enrolled at the same institution from year to year (Hagedorn, 2005).

Self-Efficacy: An individual's belief in his or her innate ability to achieve goals (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013).

A Sense of Belonging: The result of academic and social integration or engagement (Hausman, Schofield, & Woods, 2007).

Social Integration or Engagement: Identification with as well as the extent of levels of achievements according to the standards of the college and social relations with fellow students (Tinto, 1975).

Success: Broadly defined as graduation from a community college within three years, job placement, and completing the courses that the students set as their targets (Dabney-Smith, 2009; Harris & Harper, 2008; McClenney, 2009).

The terms completion, persistence, and attainment are universal in secondary education. The differences in the meanings of the terms are discussed here. According to Petty (2014), completion is defined as the student graduating from college, or the number of students finishing the programs they started. While different from completion, Tinto (2006) defines Persistence Rates as the percentage of students continuously enrolled in academic courses from one term to the next. The terms retention and persistence are often used interchangeably in the body of educational literature (Mamiseishvili, 2012; Reason, 2003; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). This study uses the term persistence in accordance with Tinto's (2006) definition.

Furthermore, the terms attainment and completion are not interchangeable or synonymous (Adelman, 2006). Attainment measures the highest level of education that students have completed, while completion describes how many students finish the programs they enrolled in (Hagedorn, 2005). The term attainment is primarily used in the study as it pertains to community college certificate attainment as opposed to degree completion. Whereas upon completion of the program, the students have attained a degree. According to Pascarella and

Terenzini (2005), defines educational attainment as the number of years of schooling completed or degrees earned.

The Significance of the Study

This study sought to identify best practices from positive outcomes to address the issue of low retention rates of African Americans in community colleges. The outcomes from the study might be useful to college administrators, faculty, and counseling staff in increasing student retention rates. Research showed that African American male students are underachieving disproportionately in the State of California's community colleges in comparison to other groups, including ethnic, gender, race, and subgroups (Goings, 2016; Harper, 2010; Quaye & Harper, 2014).

The outcomes of this study should have a positive effect on the retention rates of African American community college students. The significance of the study includes understanding to what extent the Afrocentric learning community affects increasing the retention and success rates of African American students in community colleges. Moreover, the outcomes of the study might benefit all marginalized community college students.

The findings from this study might contribute knowledge to the field of higher education and community college specifically. Other scholars may use the outcomes from this study to build upon the theories of Tinto, Astin, and Kuh, as well as develop new theories. This study has the potential to provide community college administrators faculty and staff with best practices to address low retention rates and achievement gaps in the nation's community colleges.

The community college student of any ethnicity may benefit from this study because all students should be engaged in social and academic activities in college. While interventions for community college students are in practice, this study aims to determine the effect of an

Afrocentric learning community on the problem of African American's low retention and success rates. The outcomes of the study may empower policymakers with information and benefit students, faculty, administrators, and stakeholders in community colleges that serve African American and other students.

The outcomes of this study might assist stakeholders in higher education to implement programs to reverse the declining trends in academic achievement for African American students. The State of California might recognize the financial gains of increased student retention rates, thereby allocating increased resources to the districts. The outcomes and results may assist community college stakeholders, policymakers, administrators, educators, and counseling staff in identifying, designing, and implementing viable services and programs designed for the success of African American students.

Moreover, the findings from the study might improve the separation and transition stages of the development of the college student. This research may also encourage college students who are experiencing marginalization to seek resources to assist them in the successful completion of higher education. The results may provide information that positively affects and improves African American retention and engagement and degree attainment rates in higher education.

Table 3 below depicts the retention and success rates of the State of California Community College student Cohort Fall 2019. African American students have the lowest rates compared to all other students. The low retention and success rates displayed why the study is significant to research.

The student information is gathered from the State of California Community College Chancellor's Office, Management Information System, Data-Mart. The focus mission of data

mart is providing information and answer the inquiries of state leaders, administrators,

professional organizations, educators, parents, and students (State of California, n.d.). The State

of California Community College Chancellor's Office was established in 1967, is the largest

community college system in the United States (State of California, 2018.).

Table 3

Significance of the Study California Community College Student's Retention and Success Rates Degree Applicable

Ethnicity	Retention Rates	Success Rate
African American	84.65	72.67
Unknown	90.90	79.61
Asian	89.25	76.63
White	88.87	78.05

Note. Fall 2019–Non-Distance Ed, The State of California Community College Chancellor's

Office.

California Community Colleges Background

This section of the paper provides demographic information of the State of California

community colleges. The state of California had 870,696 students enrolled in the State of

California public colleges in the Fall Semester of 2018 (State of California, n.d.). From this

population of students, 66,085 or 48.93% are males. The total number of African American

students enrolled in community colleges as of 2018 was 4,033, representing 6.10% of the total

student count (State of California, n.d.).

According to a study conducted by the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and

Policy at California State University—Sacramento, 70% of the State of California community

college students do not earn a degree or transfer to a four-year college or university (Li &

Kennedy, 2018; Smart, 2008). Of these students who drop out, 40% did not acquire adequate academic credit hours in the community college to increase their marketability in the workforce (Li & Kennedy, 2018; A. Smith, 2016). This issue decreases the potential of African American students progressing in education as well as future employment opportunities (Palmer, Davis, Moore, & Hilton, 2010). The study sought to explore if African American students' participation in an Afrocentric learning community impacts the trend of low retention and success rates in community colleges.

As a result of the overall low retention rates within the State of California community colleges throughout the last 50 years, the subject of student retention has become a highly researched area in higher education (Ackerman & Schibrowsky, 2007; Boggs, 2010; Field, Merrill, & Morgan-Klein, 2010; Thomas, 2002). State government education agencies monitor student retention rates and allocate budgets based on retention rates of the institutions (Spanier, 2010). Advancements in research have developed instruments that reportedly are capable of measuring at-risk traits leading to drop out (Chapin, 2008; Derby & Smith, 2004; Tinto, 2006, 2012). Early intervention with students displaying drop-out traits might have a positive impact on retention rates. Moreover, institutions and state governments are utilizing measures of institutional retention rates to assess higher education accountability (Chapin, 2008; Tinto, 2006, 2012). Community college administrators are placing more importance on retention and the adverse effect poor retention rates have on budgets.

There was a shift in focus in higher education toward the cause of low student retention rates. Research conducted on college student retention rates 50 years ago placed blame on students for their failures, with no responsibility given to the institution (Chapin, 2008; Harper, 2010; Tinto, 2006, 2012). There was a shift in views of the causes of community college

student's drop-out rates 30 years ago. Community college districts realized they were experiencing steady enrollments of new students with the open-door policy. On the other hand, the colleges were not retaining and graduating students proportionally. Stakeholders and states began to tie budgets to retention rates. The field of higher education currently holds the institution to a greater degree of responsibility for retention rates.

Furthermore, the field recognizes the role of the student's environment as having a more significant role in the problem, causing the lack of retention in community colleges (Aragon & Johnson, 2008; Tinto, 2006, 2012). During the first year of college, the student must be involved in aspects of the college environment (Astin, 1975; Kuh, 2009a; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). According to Kuh (2008), college students' first-year academics can determine if the student will complete his or her degree or transfer to a four-year institution. The students engaged in academic and campus social activities have a sense of belonging and being part of the college. When the student is engaged in activities such as social and academic clubs and organizations, he or she becomes connected with peers and faculty (Guiffrida, 2003; Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Tinto, 2006). With fellow students and faculty connections, relationships are developed.

California Community College Campus Demographics

The community college student does not fit the description of the typical four-year college student. According to the State of California Community Colleges community organization, most State of California community colleges is commuter campuses serving their local areas (Cohen & Brawer, 2014). Of the 140 State of California community colleges, 11 are in primarily rural areas with dormitories. A significant number of students have dependent children and spouses. The students may be distracted by family responsibilities, causing students to leave campus at the end of class. According to the literature, the typical community college

student works off-campus full- or part-time. Collaboration with peers in academic projects and study groups during the evening or weekends may present a challenge, justifying reasons for the use of secondary data.

Learning Community Background

Learning communities in higher education are not a new concept. As a result of educators exploring techniques to assist students in learning, the professional learning community concept first came into practice in the 1920s. During the last six decades, the field of higher education has developed the innovative situational learning technique in postsecondary education. Chapter II provides the history and in-depth background of the Afrocentric professional learning communities application in the community college setting. The chapter introduces the concepts of ethnic-centered learning communities such as Mafanikio Community, an Afrocentric learning community. The name Mafanikio is a pseudonym.

Assumptions

The research assumes that the secondary data collected from the CCCCO–Data-Mart on the Mafanikio Community is accurate. It is assumed that the disaggregation of data of populations in this study by gender might affect the cumulative outcomes by ethnicity. The researcher assumes that the population of cohort Fall 2016–2019 is consistent. Because of the transitory trends of community college students, dropping out, and attending the colleges, plus cross-institution enrollment, the group is inconsistent.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to this study that deserve attention. With the secondary data used in this quantitative analysis study, there are limitations. The researcher is protecting the privacy of the student by using secondary data in the study and not using primary data with cases by

individual student count. Individual student cases are utilized in experimental studies to create primary data for analysis in the IBM SPSS statistical software. Such robust data would provide individual cases, allowing descriptive statistics analysis for a correlational study. A correlational study seeks the relationships of variables with descriptive statics as analyzed with IBM SPSS statistical software.

There are limitations to gathering data for African American State of California community college students. The data for the study are not aggregated by age, gender, parents' level of education, and income levels. Not having these variables in the analysis did not change the value of the other variables in the output comparison models. The inclusion of a higher level of aggregated data would result in a more analytical study. Collecting data on the students throughout five to 10 years might provide a more robust story. Using a mixed-methods process, including quantitative and qualitative methods, can add valuable information to the literature (Hashemi & Babaii, 2013). Obtaining valid data is a challenge with secondary data in quantitative research.

According to Harper (2012), compared with other students, most African American students may not engage in activities outside the classroom. There might be limitations in sourcing data for African American community college students only enrolled full-time. Because community college students often work full-time, they may only be enrolled in one or two classes at a time or only attend night classes. These limitations could cause a skewed outcome in data analysis (A. Field, 2014; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). The data used in this study are from the CCCCO–Data-Mart. The researcher had no control over the depth or accuracy of the data collected.

The use of secondary data with descriptive statistical analysis in this study shows only one dimension of the narrative. This study did not utilize an experimental design; this study did not manipulate variables in determining a relationship between variables (A. Field, 2014; McCabe, 2000). A mixed-methods experimental study would provide more substantial evidence for causation than the quantitative-only method used in this study (Creswell, 2014; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). The validity of the outcomes from this study might be strengthened with further experimental studies, using statically oriented descriptive designs and performed with additional populations.

With further research, the researcher might use an experimental design, such as a longitudinal study. With an experimental research design, there is more flexibility in structuring the research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). This flexibility might allow for a more rigorous study with more substantial evidence. The researcher can test for homoscedasticity by scatter plots, as well as assess linearity with straight-line relationships of variables.

Limitations of Instruments

The data samples sourced from CCCCO–Data-Mart, are not random and limited to only secondary data used for the cohorts Fall 2008–2011, for the sample years. For the analysis of retention, data are restricted to students enrolled in the colleges during the students' first term. This student engagement consists of the participation of African American students in the Afrocentric learning community. Data-Mart aggregated by male and female for the entire African American Students enroll. Except for the Afrocentric learning community, this information is not aggregated by gender. The accuracy of the status field for special populations is unknown; the investigator is not able to collect student identification numbers as a cross-reference. The data include only the new African American students for the fall cohorts.

The data include results from secondary data from African American students statewide. The generalizability of the data to all of the learning communities' participants is unknown. The instrument relies on the student's self-reporting. Students are credible reporters of their own college experiences and related activities (Hu & Kuh, 2002; Korobova, 2012). The secondary data on African American State of California community college student retention, degree completion, and transferability were collected from the CCCCO Web site (State of California, n.d.). The CCCCO Web site is an open-source database.

Summary

The methodological process for the study is quantitative descriptive statistics analysis, nonexperimental research. The purpose of this study was to examine the possible relationships among the variables of (a) degree applicable retention rates, (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associate of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the Afrocentric learning community, with the Mafanikio Community, a professional Afrocentric learning community as an intervention. The study sought to identify if there is a significant difference in retention rates of African American students resulting from their active participation in an Afrocentric learning community in the community college setting.

African American male students are underachieving disproportionately in the State of California's community colleges in comparison to other groups, including ethnic and gender subgroups (Bush & Bush, 2010; Harper, 2006; Hickman, 2008). With the intervention of the Afrocentric learning communities, the researcher analyzed secondary data to examine variables to determine if there are relationships among retention, student social engagement, academic

engagement, completion of Associates of Arts, Associates of Science degree, or transfer of a four-year institution. The study assumes that African American students can achieve in community colleges at the same rate or higher as their counterparts, providing they receive relevant resources and support in their academic endeavors.

Finally, the outcomes of this study are to improve the retention of African American community college students. The improvement of student retention might improve the rates for awarding Associates of Arts, Associates of Science degrees, or transferring to a four-year institution of African American students. The outcomes might improve retention rates, social engagement, academic engagement, and degree attainment of other community college students as well. The Mafanikio Community does not discriminate and serves a diverse population of community college students. The outcomes of this study might benefit institutions of higher learning globally by empowering institutions with information to support productive professional Afrocentric learning communities and other academic support programs in higher education.

Overview

The research design for this study is quantitative analysis nonexperimental; the study does not manipulate variables or affect or influence the behavior of the State of California community college students or staff (Pan, 2016; Quinn, 2009). Scholars use the design widely in education research (A. Field, 2014). The method applies to events and studies that have already occurred (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). This study examines secondary data from the CCCCO–Data-Mart (Pettitt, 2006). This study sought to discover the possible effects of a professional Afrocentric learning community on the retention rates of African American students in the State of California community colleges.

The secondary data examined in this study were examined and analyzed with IBM SPSS statistical software. Scholars have utilized this research method in education for studies of events that have already occurred. They reported the research findings in tables reflecting numbers and percentages of results for a defined period (Kantorski & Stegman, 2006). The two sources of secondary data in this study are measured cumulatively in analyzing the findings.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the relevant literature addressing the retention, success, and degree completion for African American students in community colleges. The methodology and review type the study uses is a narrative-type review. According to Xiao and Watson (2019), the narrative-type review in a literature review provides a descriptive account of facts supporting the conclusions of the study from critical topics related to the research questions.

This chapter presents the theoretical foundation utilized and details of the conceptual theories for this study. The chapter references information from peer-reviewed studies focusing on community college student retention. The problem statement gives insight into the significance of the problem of retention for African American students in the State of California community colleges. Moreover, the chapter includes the backgrounds of the theoretical framework supporting the study.

The chapter explores the concept of retention as it relates to postsecondary education. Historical background information, in conjunction with current topics on retention, gives perspective to the relevance of the study of retention of African American students in the State of California community colleges. The chapter explores theories related to retention. The study synthesizes theories of scholars George D. Kuh and Alexander Astin as they relate to the study of retention in postsecondary education.

A review of the literature on variables in this study is explored, providing scholars' points of view on the subject matter. The variables for this study are (a) degree applicable retention rates; (b) degree-applicable success rates or, the awarding of the Associates of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution, or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-

year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the Afrocentric learning community.

The chapter provides the background and history of the professional learning community. The chapter explores the background of the Mafanikio Community, an Afrocentric ethnic centered learning community. The study examines the institutional retention and success rates of African American students enroll in the Mafanikio Community at 17 consortium sites in California. This Afrocentric learning community is founded in the State of California community colleges.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is Tinto's SIM Model of Attrition, a (post-) positivist theory. A vital outcome of the study was to determine if there is a relationship among variables associated with institutional retention and success rates of African American students participating in an Afrocentric learning community in the State of California community colleges (Butin, 2009). This chapter explores Tinto's SIM Model of Attrition, a student retention theory (Tinto, 2006, 2012). Accordingly, the chapter explores the background information of the theoretical framework while justifying the use of the framework in the study. Tinto's retention theories are the most explored theory in retention research (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005; Neuville et al., 2007). According to the founder of the Mafanikio Community, Tinto's SIM theory is the foundation of the design of the learning community's programs.

The purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental study is to examine the effect, if any, of an Afrocentric learning community in improving institutional retention and success rates of African American students in the State of California community colleges, by determining if there is a statically significant relationship among the variables. The variables for this study are (a)

degree applicable retention rates; (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the

Associates of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a four-year institution; or (c)

transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable

for the study is the Afrocentric learning community. The outcomes of this study should empower

and benefit students, faculty, administrators, and stakeholders in community college, especially

other institutions of higher learning with marginalized students.

Tinto's SIM Framework

This study explores Tinto's (2006, 2012) SIM framework. According to the literature,

some scholars consider Tinto's SIM theory as not applicable to student matriculation in

community colleges (Braxton, 2000; Karp, 2011a; McQueen, 2009). During the initial

development of the SIM model in the early 1970s, Tinto focused on the four-year college student

and did not consider the community college student. Scholars criticized Tinto's SIM theory for

not applying to the community college student (Urwin et al., 2010).

Tinto realized that community college students did not fit the profile of the typical

college student. African American scholars also criticize Tinto's SIM model for not being

flexible enough to apply to the African American student in higher education (Barker & Avery,

2012). Tinto considered the criticism, altering the SIM model accordingly.

Tinto collaborated with Cullen in the early 1970s, developing the student departure

theory (Tinto & Cullen, 1973). Cullen researched longitudinal studies on student attrition.

Preceding Tinto's SIM model is Tinto and Cullen's theoretical model of attrition and persistence

that included the following components: (a) pre-entry attributes (prior schooling and family

background); (b) goals or commitment (student aspirations and institutional goals); (c)

institutional experiences (academics, faculty interaction, co-curricular involvement, and peer

group interaction); (d) integration (academic and social); (e) goals or commitment (intentions

and external commitments); and (f) outcome (departure decision graduate, transfer, dropout;

Tinto & Cullen, 1973). Tinto improved on the theory with the SIM model.

Tinto replaced the term integration for engagement in the SIM Framework in the 1990s;

(Fike & Fike, 2008; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009) recognized the flaw in Tinto's model, arguing

that the community college student does not fit the profile of the typical college student.

According to the literature (Peltier, Laden & Matranga, 2000), the average college student is a

White male between the ages of 18 and 25 enrolled in a four-year institution.

The literature showed, of the student population in community colleges, 60% are age 25

and older (Aslanian, 2001; Fike & Fike, 2008). While all retention models may have some

application to community college students, it must be considered that the application of the

model may vary by type of student. The majority of the research on retention in the literature

based on retention models applies to the typical college student, which is White males between

the ages of 18 and 25 (Fike & Fike, 2008; Windham et al., 2014). The outcomes of this study add

new information to the field of retention in community colleges that applies to not only African

American students but to any marginalized community college student.

Research showed that some scholars assume that African American community college

students do not involve themselves within in- or out-of-classroom activities such as clubs and

organizations (Harper, 2007; Vasquez Urias & Wood, 2014). Harper (2007), disputed such

claims, pointing out that most predominantly White colleges do not have activities in or out of

the classroom that is culturally inclusive of the African American experience, except for sports

programs in community colleges, which are disproportionately populated with African American

students (Harper, Williams & Blackman, 2013). Where the activities are appealing to the African American students, the students engage themselves, such as in the Mafanikio Community.

A component of the Mafanikio Communities program is to connect the student with a faculty member as a mentor. The literature supports the mentor concept as a solution to the low retention and success issues for African American students. One educational type of out-of-classroom activity is engaging African American students with peers and faculty members (Karp, 2011a; Tinto, 2006, 2012). The student connects with the faculty member, which may continue throughout the student's academic career and into his or her career.

Connectivity and engagement into the college experience are essential to the academic achievement of the community college student. The SIM theory considers formal and informal academic and social connections in assessing community college students' level of engagement in college life (Barker & Avery, 2012; Tinto, 1975). The students' college engagement activities assist in strengthening their socialization skills while building-up social capital. According to Tinto, the connected academic and social experiences form a student's level of commitment to the college (as cited in Min & Chau, 2012). The scholars agree on the significance of engagement in the student's college experience. These student academic and social engagement experiences determine a student's desire to pursue his or her goals of completing a degree or transferring to a four-year institution (Chapin, 2008; Derby & Smith, 2004; Tinto, 2006, 2012). An objective of the learning community is for the student to have a sense of belonging. According to Farmer and Hope (2015), if the student is isolated socially with no sense of belonging, he or she is more likely to drop out.

Tinto built the SIM theory based on the works of Spady (1971), who began the process of shifting the blame for poor retention from the student to the institution (Tinto, 1975). Early

literature places the blame of poor student retention on the student taking no responsibility for the students exiting higher education prematurely. Spady (1971) developed one of the first theoretical models exploring the student dropout process and developed the student persistence models based on the works of Durkheim. Tinto used the one type of departure, egotistical, suggested by Durkheim, as the model for explaining student departure from the system.

Tinto based his theory of academic and social engagement on Van Gennep's theory of rite of passage (Swail, 2014; R. Taylor, 2012). Van Gennep's theory consists of the following elements: (a) Separation—At this stage, the student moves on from his or her former life, which consists of former habits, friends, and family members, to emerge into college life. (b) Transition—The student takes into consideration the stress factors related to separating from his or her former life. (c) Incorporation—The student is integrated and accepted as a member of a new academic centered community (Metz, 2002; Swail, 2014). The student has moved to the next phase of the rite-of-passage process.

The Mafanikio Community incorporates these elements in the programs for students. The separation and transition stages of the development of the student is the focus of retention research program designs (Swail, 2014; Tinto, 1998). The students that participate in the program form new friendships with fellow cohort members and other students by being involved in activities on campus. The student becomes socially engaged.

Bonding with other students in the program often establishes lifelong friendships. This process is a part of the rite-of-passage process that increases the student's social engagement capital.

Applicability of Tinto's SIM Model to Community College Students

Scholars initially criticized the SIM theory with the application of the model to community college students. The critic's perception of Tinto's SIM framework of not applying to community college students stems from the following notions: (a) the majority of community college students live off-campus, (b) work off-campus, and (c) are older (Dwyer, 2017). Researchers have found this theory to be incorrect. As a result of the students' persistence in the second year of community college, community college students make attachments on both the social and academic spectrums (Jaggars & Stacey, 2014). The student forms friendships by being affiliated with organizations and participating in joint academic projects. The student's engagement in academic and social activities build a support network and a circle of friends from college.

Tinto's Responses to Criticisms

In response to the criticisms by scholars of Tinto's SIM theory being inadequate in modeling student attrition, Tinto stated that the focus of the model is on educational and social systems only. In response to the SIM theory only applicable to traditional students, Tinto's (1997) response was, the design of the model is for all (as cited in Braxton, 2000). The model focused only on a few student elements such as grade point average, family background, gender, and more (Braxton, 2000). Tinto took into consideration the criticisms, revising the retention model based on feedback from scholars.

Tinto also responded to criticisms of his theory that academic integration is not an essential predictor of student attrition. Tinto did not consider different types of student leaving or dropping out of college behaviors (Braxton, 2000). As Tinto continued to improve his theory of academic and social engagement, he made concessions. Tinto considered the role that finances have in the student's decision to drop out of college. Tinto also took into account in modifying

his theory other factors that affect student retention, such as the causes for transfer and dropout as well as the various educational experiences and social variables as a result of the student's gender, race, and social-economic status.

Tinto Improves SIM Theory

In the 1990s, Tinto continued to improve on the SIM Theory. Tinto's theory focused on the following components: (a) the importance of the classroom, (b) relationship of learning, (c) persistence, (d) involvement, and (e) quality of effort on the student and faculty's part. The Mafanikio Community considers the classroom as the locus of control of the college experience. In the revised model, social and academic aspects are part of the more extensive process. Social and academic engagement occur at different points in the development process (Tinto, 2006).

Tinto made changes in the SIM theory as a result of the outcomes of a study of students in the Coordinated Studies Program, a learning community, conducted at the State of Seattle Central Community College (Tinto & Russo, 1994). Tinto's theory evolved with research and awareness of the needs of students in community colleges. Tinto recognized the uniqueness of learning communities' position to fill the gap between academic and social integration (Tinto, 1997). Tinto was not stagnant in the development of the SIM model. Tinto incorporated the works of other scholars such as Durkheim in developing the SIM model. Durkheim defined three of the four types of suicide. Three types of suicide are (a) cultural, (b) educational, and (c) egotistical. Furthermore, each of these areas is expanded on in the next three sections as they relate to Tinto's theory (Tinto, 1975).

Cultural Suicide

According to Tierney (1999), Tinto's theory of students conforming to the dominant culture of the campus, which is not their own culture, might lead to cultural suicide by denying

their cultural identity (Harper, 2007; O'Keeffe, 2013). On the other hand, Morrow and

Ackermann (2012) contended that Tinto's framework was flawed theoretically. Morrow and

Ackermann (2012) took this stand based on Tinto's initial SIM model before the model's

redesign that included community college students.

Conversely, Morrow, and Ackerman (2012) did not take into consideration the history of

America's discrimination and ethnic oppression practices in the theory. According to the

literature, the students' acceptance of who they are is a healthier route to take (Booker, 2016;

O'Keeffe, 2013). With the acceptance of who they are and their ethnic background, the students

have a greater sense of belonging and security.

Educational Suicide

The scholar Spady's theoretical concepts influenced Tinto's theory of student attrition in

several ways (Tinto, 2012). According to research conducted by Spady (1971), if adverse

interactions impede students' first-year college experiences and institutions' influences, their

social interactions are not favorable. This experience could lead to educational suicide by

dropping out of college (Keller & Cernerud, 2002). Spady (1971) designed the conceptual model

as a metaphor from Durkheim's Suicide Theory, where an adequate social support network and

sufficient moral engagement reduce the probability of suicide (Keller & Cernerud, 2002). A

drawback of Tinto's model initially was not taking into account psychological characteristics

such as the predisposition of the student. Some college students do not have the desire to earn a

degree.

Egotistical Suicide

As with cultural suicide and academic suicide, the concept of egotistical suicide is

instrumental in forming Tinto's SIM Theory. Durkheim (1953, as cited in Tinto, 1975) defined

egotistical suicide as the students' inability to establish membership in their community or college campus environment (Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000). Egotistical suicide is also when the students fail to become integrated into a new environment (Metz, 2002). This aspect of the life of an African American community college student addresses his or her participation in an Afrocentric learning community. There he or she can find a safe place and a sense of belonging. Research showed (D. R. Johnson et al., 2007) that students with feelings of isolation, without a sense of belonging, have a high tendency to drop out. Tinto used the egotistical type of suicide, as theorized by Durkheim, for the model for explaining student departure from the system (Metz, 2002). The Afrocentric learning community reinforces a student's sense of belonging in a proactive effort with engagement to prevent egotistical suicide.

Student Engagement

According to the literature, scholars defined student engagement as a representation of the effort students invest in educational pursuits, with their energy and time and commitment involving the right engagements. The institution has a responsibility to engage in empowering academic practices (Afolabi, 2013; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008). The professional learning community fills this gap for students in community colleges. The literature has a mass amount of evidence supporting this theory (Greene, Marti & McClenney, 2008). The Mafanikio Community places a high priority on student engagement, both socially and academically.

Harper (2009a) argued that race-conscious student engagement compels more racially underrepresented students in higher education institutions to think carefully about resources available in the institution. The amount or lack of resources may influence the student's choice of college in which to enroll. Some scholars consider the level of resources essential because

resources offered by the institution that will assist the student's academic advancements, outcomes, and productive experiences (McCormick, Gonyea, & Kinzie, 2013). According to Harper (2009b), the practice of student engagement must be a priority and responsibility of the institution and shifted from the individual student. Harper (2009b) argued that the institution more effectively balances the engagement activities in which college students participate. An Afrocentric center learning community caters to the needs of African American community college students.

On the other hand, Hu (2010) argued that the probability of student retention in college and student engagement is not linear. The outcome from Hu's study using retention models indicated that a higher level of social engagement directly relates to a definite increase in student retention; a significant increase of academic engagement negatively impacts this probability (Hu, 2010). These findings support the concept of college student involvement in the right social and academic high-impact activities and engagements.

Equally important, research shows that high-impact activities are essential components of community college students' agendas. The literature supported the right activities for the student consist of the following: Professional learning communities that offer robust social and academic resources, support for the success of the student, and yield positive social and academic outcomes (Hu, 2011). Research showed (Astin et al., 2012) the demonstrated differences in student success impacted by learning communities reflected in the outcomes, retention rates, completion rates, and transferability to four-year institution rates.

Retention

According to the literature, there is no standard definition in higher education for college student retention (Manyanga, Sithole & Hanson, 2017). For purposes of this study, the researcher

used the definition for retention of the State of California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO)—the measure of the proportion of students who remain enrolled at the same institution from year to year (State of California, 2018; Hagedorn, 2005). The formula for retention can vary by the community college school district.

Research remains a primary focus in educational research. Nevertheless, the last two years' retention rates results indicate no improvements. The cost of financing a degree continues to rise disproportionally to inflation (McClenney, 2009; Mitchell, Leachman, & Masterson, 2016). These extenuating factors continue to extend the time to complete a degree (Caruth-Blake, 2018). The researcher analyzed three variables in the study: (a) degree applicable retention rates, (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associate of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The literature showed there are other variables equally as important. According to Slanger, Berg, Fisk, and Hanson (2015), there are four variables not examined in the study that are essential in predicting retention and academic success. These variables are: (a) secondary educational performance, (b) demographical and socioeconomic characteristics, (c) college integration, and (d) institutional support, financial support, financial aid conditions, and overall quality of integration. The literature will benefit from further research on these variables in the community college setting.

One of the underlying problems in institutional retention research is determining a standard definition of it. The researcher uses for the study the definition according to the CCCCO; retention is the process of matriculating toward a degree or certificate from the prior fall term and for students' completing the program goal by the fall of the following year or re-enrolled in the next semester at the same college (State of California, n.d.)

According to Barra (2013) and Tinto (1999, 2012), the retention of students is a college or university's ability to matriculate and graduate a student who started his or her higher education pursuits at that institution. Conversely, a definition of student retention, according to the Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System, is the difference as a percentage of college student's initial enrollment (as cited in Mezick, 2015). Retention rates in higher education became an area of focus in community colleges beginning in the late 1970s (Tinto, 1999). The subject is at the top of agendas in higher education.

The significance of student retention rates in institutions of higher learning has continued to develop for the last 40 years (Manyanga et al., 2017; Tinto, 2012). The history of the conceptualization of retention has evolved in meaning over the previous eight decades (Tinto, 1990, 2012). The term student retention in college has a close relationship with other similar terms that are not synonymous (Tinto, 2012; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). Similar terms are student departure, student mortality (Girard, 2015), college dropouts (Morrison & Silverman, 2012), student persistence (Berger, Ramírez, & Lyons, 2005), college retention (Berger et al., 2005; Braxton & Mundy, 2001; Zaheer, Gul, Wazir, & Wazir, 2016). The literature supports that terms, persistence, and retention have different meanings.

Furthermore, retention is one of the postsecondary education's most studied fields (Scott, Shah, Grebennikov, & Singh, 2008). As the higher education system evolved in America, the concept of student retention developed. Initially, the concept of retention in postsecondary education developed in the 1930s and continued to evolve through the 1960s. Scholars began to explore the effect of retention in higher education on students in the latter part of the 1960s (Feldman & Newcomb, 2020). Retention has become a primary focal point for community college administrators and stakeholders as a driver for policy and budgets.

According to research, community college students who participate in a learning community have higher persistence rates that lead to higher retention and success rates and are more engaged than students who did not participate (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). According to some scholars, based on how college campus retention rates differ, the variables that determine retention should vary accordingly in conducting assessments and research (Astin, 1999; J. Roberts & McNeese, 2010). Student retention is a primary objective of the Mafanikio Community.

Recruitment, Retention, and Completion

African American community college student retention is a focus of concern for the Mafanikio Community. The organization routinely tracks retention rates for all the consortiums. The retention rate for African Americans attending community college is the lowest of all groups at 26% compared to White students at 46% (McFarland et al., 2019). Student retention and successful completion of programs and engagement into the culture of the college drive the students' social and academic engagement (Tinto, 1999; Zepke, 2014). There does not appear to be any disagreement in the literature on this point.

Conversely, the researcher observed the Mafanikio Community operating in a perpetual atmosphere of political push back and negotiating with institutions' administrators for adequate funding and adequate facilities for maintaining a safe space for the students to meet and study. The participating staff and faculty are partially volunteering in order to participate in the learning communities. The researcher observed these issues as agenda items in the steering committee meetings with one of the Mafanikio Community consortium sites.

The Mafanikio Community incorporates activities that consistently engage the students with staff and faculty in educational activities. Academic engagement is the primary focus of the

Mafanikio Community's programs and activities. The community college students' goal of degree attainment drives the level to which the student is academically engaged (Tinto, 1975). The Mafanikio Community recruits highly motivated students with the goals of either completing an Associate's Degree or transferring to a four-year institution.

The Mafanikio Community maintains a calendar of events and activities for the staff, faculty, and students to engage. The probability of students being retained in college is impacted positively by the level of engagement in high-impact activities and interacting with faculty members (Miller, Rycek, & Fritson, 2011; Tinto, 1999). Each consortium site of the Afrocentric learning community also administers engaging activities that involve administrators, staff, faculty, parents, students, and the community.

Intervention

The community college counselors can detect early warning signs that a student is not on track academically and may require an intervention. A student's grades are the primary factor in accessing student deficiencies. According to Levin and Calcagno (2008), the trend in colleges is to direct the student to remedial courses without evaluating the needs of the student.

The student's grades may not reflect the student's abilities as much as they reflect the effect of variables impacting the student performance (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). An intervention technique for community colleges to implement is directing the student to a learning community at the beginning of freshman year of community college (Escobedo, 2007). Scholars contend that the objective of the intervention of a learning community is to improve retention and program completion (Escobedo, 2007; V. C. Smith, Lange, & Huston, 2012) and suggested early intervention for the student by practicing what is known as intrusive advising.

Intrusive advising consists of the academic advisor meeting with the student on a regular, planned basis (Heissrer & Parette, 2002). The key is to discover any difficulties before they manifest into significant problems. The regular meeting with the advisor assists the student with issues such as class schedule, deciding on a major field of study, transportation problems, or a social problem. The learning community advisor can either work with the student, resolving the issue, or direct him or her to the proper resources.

A benefit of the community college student participating in a learning community such as Mafanikio is the student to counselor ratio, which is, on average, 80:1, or 80 students to one counselor. Alternatively, the student to counselor ratio in the majority of the State of California community colleges is 1,000:1. The opportunity for the student to meet with a counselor is minuscule (State of California, n.d.). The lack of sufficient academic advising and counseling creates poor student retention.

Effect of Persistence on Retention

Research showed three primary situations that negatively affect student retention. They are (a) institutional, (b) cognitive, and (c) social (Escobedo, 2007; Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003; Zepke, 2015). The professional learning community incorporates components in its programs to circumvent such negative situations in the life of the student. Additionally, other factors for students dropping out of community college are: (a) enrolling in a class that will not lead to credits toward a degree or acceptable for transfer to a four-year institution, (b) insufficient time, and (c) financial shortfalls (Bers & Nyden, 2000; Bettinger & Baker, 2014). The students' academic counselors have a pivotal role in this process of proper guidance for classes that will have the proper credits for graduation or transfer.

Subsequently, one of the primary challenges for the Mafanikio Community staff is involving and training the college faculty members in the program. Some faculty members do not consider the retention of students their responsibility. A key component of retention theory and practice is the cooperation of staff and faculty, considering retention as a college-wide responsibility (Escobedo, 2007; Thomas, 2002). When students notice that faculty are taking an interest in their learning, the students, in turn, are motivated to be engaged and remain in the programs.

Conversely, developing innovative activities that keep the student involved in the Mafanikio program is continuously evolving. Research showed a crucial component in increasing student retention in community colleges is creating opportunities for students to participate in at least two high-impact activities (Kuh, 2008a). According to Kuh (2008), the learning community has the following components: (a) Staff tracks the participation of the student in programs and activities; (b) Outcome of the information is a component of the student's counseling sessions, and (c) High-impact activity is the objective of the student's participation in the program. The counselors have the students commit to activities and involvement in programs at their registration in the program. According to Kuh (2008), the student's involvement in a learning community is most active during the student's first year of college. The program articulates the goals and objectives of the learning community at the beginning of the program.

Redefining College Outcomes

This study focused on African American students in the community college setting; therefore, the researcher examined variables that were associated with community college students. Community college student's goals and objectives are different from the traditional

four-year college students between the ages of 18 and 25 (Fike & Fike, 2008; Reason, 2003; Windham et al., 2014). All students enrolled in community college do not have goals of earning a degree or transferring to a four-year institution. According to Reason (2003) and Fike and Fike (2008), the age of community college student populations is drastically above that of the typical four-year institution. A large percentage of community college students are lifelong learners, such as senior citizens (Slowey & Schuetze, 2012). This population may have no desire to earn a degree or may already have a two- or four-year college degree.

Engagement

The level of the students' integration with their classmates, classes, and the institution is one definition of student engagement. According to Fredin, Fuchsteiner, and Portz (2015), student engagement is essential to the success of the student in college. Research showed that student involvement or engagement identifies a crucial factor for student retention and success. Astin (1993) conducted a considerable amount of research on postsecondary education student engagement. According to Astin, for students to be successful for retainment in college, they must be actively engaged in campus culture (Astin, 1993; J. Roberts & McNeese, 2010). The Mafanikio Community provides a culturally relatable environment that encourages engagement for African American students in the State of California community colleges where they are an underrepresented population.

According to Astin (1993), what determines engagement is the level of energy devoted to the social and academic college experience, both psychologically and physically (Astin, 1993; J. Roberts & McNeese, 2010). The concept of engagement historically constituted a promise or an oath. Academia defines student engagement as merely paying attention in class and listening to the instructor (Axelson & Flick, 2010; Caruth-Blake, 2018). Based on a study conducted by the

National Learning Communities Project Monograph, Learning Community Research, and

Assessment: What We Know Now (K. Taylor, Moore, MacGregor & Lindblad, 2003), the

literature supported the conclusions that student retention and student success are associated with

student participation in a learning community (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006).

The scholars may argue as to which variables are the most important in retention research.

Nevertheless, they all agree that the student must be engaged in the college experience to be

entirely successful socially and academically.

The researcher observed from sitting in on the Mafanikio Community directors meeting

that the topic of low retention is a continuous discussion. With retention rates not showing

improvements in the community college during the last 20 years, (the researcher observed in

attended meetings), that learning community directors hope the college administrators consider

making a shift in the resources for the program process by being more open and accepting of the

intervention of professional learning communities.

Moreover, the literature supports the positive theoretical connections among student

engagement, learning, and learning communities (Knight, 2003; Kuh et al., 2006; Price, 2005;

Trowler, 2010; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Community college administrators might consider this

information in budget allocation for establishing and supporting learning communities on

campuses. According to Wellman (2002), the budget allocation is directed by federal-, state-, and

local-level policy and legislation with a minimum amount for social engagement in the

community college districts.

Social Engagement

Community colleges seek programs to improve the retention and success rates and the

persistence of students. There are numerous programs in colleges and universities with designs to

improve the retention rates of underrepresented students (Karp, 2011a; Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004; Wilson et al., 2012). The literature supports that the programs alone have a minimum impact on retention rates for African American students (Bailey, 2009; Thomas, 2002; Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, & Klingsmith, 2014). According to research, the students' engagement in the college experience on several different levels improves outcomes.

The literature focuses on four key factors that contribute to student engagement. The four contributing factors are: (a) student learning experiences, (b) student support services, (c) student involvement or engagement, and (d) student interactions with faculty, staff, and administration (Astin, 1993; J. Roberts & McNeese, 2010). Of the four factors, this study explores student support services in the form of an Afrocentric learning community (the Mafanikio Community) as an intervention. According to the literature, the reasons programs were not successful are because of the lack of incorporation of the student's social experiences in the classroom and outside of the classroom (Kuh, 2009a; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014), Research showed that when some community colleges students leave classes, they leave the campus with minimum interaction with peers (Karp, 2011a; Thomas, 2002). Outside obligations such as jobs and dependents demand their time. These students are not fully integrated or engaged in the college experience because of the lack of the students' presence on campus.

Social engagement is one of the focuses of the variables in this study. This study sought to discover the interconnectivity of the related variable for student success, academic, social, and overall engagement (Bailey, 2009; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014) study also focused on intergroup-related differences to determine what variables might explain those differences (Barnham, 2015; Creswell, & Creswell, 2017). This multiple variable analysis provides for a more robust study in seeking answers to the retention problem in community colleges.

According to the literature, a challenge for institutional leaders is how to integrate the two main groups of college students on campuses (Wyatt, 2011). The two groups include all ethnic and gender groups. The two groups are the traditional student, between the age of 17 and 25, and those college students who are 25 and older. The population of nontraditional students is the fastest growing in community colleges at approximately 43% (Wyatt, 2011). The college has a responsibility to cater to the cultural, social, and academic needs of the student. Arguably a professional learning community might asst in filling this need.

Effect of Student Satisfaction on Retention

Community college students' decisions to remain in college or at the particular college they are enrolled in stems from their level of satisfaction with the institution and if they feel as though they are learning. Student engagement in institutions of higher learning is a measure of the educational effectiveness of student learning (Kuh, 2009a; Beachboard, Beachboard, Li, & Adkison, 2011). The Mafanikio Community promotes the importance of engagement in its programs. The organization also designs and implements innovative activities in its programs, workshops, and conferences. The literature supports that students in institutions of higher learning participating in a professional learning community have satisfaction with the college experience, indicating an affirmative link to engagement (Pike, Kuh, & McCormick, 2011; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Moreover, the literature supports that student engagement has a positive impact on retention.

California Community College Student Drop-Out Rates

Retention and success rates of African American students is an issue a concern for the State of California community college districts. According to a study conducted by the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy at California State Sacramento, 70% of African

American male State of California community college students do not earn a degree or transfer to a four-year college or university (Hatch, Mardock-Uman, Garcia, & Johnson, 2018). Of these students who dropped out, 40% did not acquire adequate academic credit hours in the community college to increase their marketability in the workforce (Hatch et al., 2018). The students exited their education process with significant debt and no degree.

According to a state-wide survey conducted by the Mafanikio Organization for the participating students, 89% of respondents indicated that the program improved their ability to take control of their academic future, 88% improved their view on college, and 89% stated the curriculum is relatable and empowering their next steps to transfer to a four-year institution. The study's outcome indicated positive effects on African American student's retention rates.

Stop-Out Dropout

This study uses the terms drop-out and stop-out for students in the community colleges as follows. The term dropout is a student who has withdrawn from the institution of higher learning and who has no plans of returning (Aragon & Johnson, 2008; Dabney-Smith, 2009; Park, Perry, & Edwards, 2011). According to the literature, the term stop-out is a student in higher learning institutions who stopped matriculating before graduation. The difference between the terms is that the stop-out student is taking a break from classes with plans to return and graduate (Dabney-Smith, 2009). The stop-out phenomena are common in community colleges. Some of the reasons for community college students dropping out are (a) academic, (b) social and academic dismissals, (c) lower social status, (d) lower aptitude, and (e) lower intellectual level than predictors (McCubbin, 2003; Porchea, Allen, Robbins, & Phelps, 2010). There are also elements such as voluntary withdrawals and comparably higher social class. Ultimately, reasons for students drop out are lack of student interactions with faculty and staff and students'

commitments to goals and institutions (Doherty, 2006; McCubbin, 2003). The Afrocentric learning community in the community college-based the design of its programs to counteract drop-out behaviors.

Cooling Out

From the founding of community colleges, the institutions practiced an open-door policy toward all students. A significant portion of entering students are not prepared academically for college-level work. Based on achievement test scores, counselors block students with low scores from enrolling in transferable courses and enroll them in developmental or vocational programs (Cohen & Brawer, 2014). The student is discouraged from pursuing degree goals.

Scholars consider the active practice of shunting students from transferable courses as cooling out; the term derives from a thesis written by Clark in 1960 (Bahr, 2008; Cohen & Brawer, 2014). Counselors also direct underprepared students into developmental courses with the unlikelihood of advancing to transferable courses. These courses often serve to entertain the students in developmental courses until they drop out (Hodara & Jaggars, 2014; Bumpus, 2014). The practice of cooling out hurts the retention and success rates of African American community college students. Community college students are primarily from urban high schools where they do not receive adequate academic guidance and preparation for college-level work.

Grit

What many African American community college students lack in preparation for college-level academics, they make up for in grit. According to the literature, the term grit in the realm of education defines a tool for illustrating to American society that achievement comes out of the heroic efforts of students despite the lack of academic and social supports required for scholastic success (Cross, 2014; Derby & Smith, 2004; Ris, 2015). According to Strayhorn

(2010), a majority of African American community college students come from unsupportive academic and social environments.

Inspiration to achieve in college may come late for these students. The students with the most significant degree of persistence and a high level of intelligence, not necessarily the highest, will achieve more considerable eminence than the highest level of intelligence (Almeida, 2016; Duckworth & Duckworth, 2016). Effort and tenacity will overshadow some lack of preparedness on the student's part. A professional learning community might increase the student's level of preparedness for college-level academic work.

Moreover, Duckworth and Duckworth (2016) developed the term grit; the literature uses the term in describing an attribute of African American students in pursuing an education in the United States (Derby & Smith, 2004). One of the aims of the Mafanikio Community is to inspire and encourage students. Everyone needs somebody to tell them to keep pursuing their goals without ceasing, despite the odds against them (Burkhart, Tholey, Guinto, Yeo, & Chojnacki, 2014). Learning communities provide resources and assistance to students toward accomplishing the goals of (a) student engagement, (b) student academic engagement, (c) the completion of an Associate's of Arts degree, (d) completion of an Associate's of Science degree, or (e) transfer to a four-year institution of higher learning. The effort on the part of students develops skills, and productivity emerges from the effort they put into the work (Duckworth & Duckworth, 2016; Ris, 2015). Academic achievement in college and skill are not synonymous (Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Golden, 2017). The building of inspiration and encouragement along the academic path is a crucial goal of the Mafanikio Community.

African American community college students are inspired by the Mafanikio Community to draw from the passion that is within them. For the student to achieve both inside and outside

of the classroom, a unique mix of persistence and passion, not necessarily talent, is the secret to high academic achievement (Duckworth & Duckworth, 2016). According to the founder of the Mafanikio Community, an objective of the program is recruiting highly motivated students with high degrees of persistence and passion for achieving their goals.

History of the Community College

Junior colleges or two-year community colleges were established in the early 1900s with the growing demand for access to higher education (Schneider & Yin, 2011). Community colleges significantly increased in numbers and popularity with the increase of high-school graduates and the number of people entering postsecondary education. By 1924, 30% of the United States population was high school graduates (Cohen & Brawer, 2014). America was coming out of the agrarian era and into manufacturing in growing cities and urbanization, requiring the skills of more college graduates.

Beginning in the 1960s, 75% of America's students graduated high school, with 60% entering college (Cohen & Brawer, 2014). Currently, 70% of high school graduates and 48% of the students entering postsecondary schools enroll in community colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 2014). The majority of first-year African American students in California begin postsecondary education in community colleges (Wood & Harris, 2013). The Mafanikio Community recruits the most highly motivated of these African American students.

Subsequently, community colleges are a primary topic of public policy discussions and decisions, as it pertains to rebuilding the economy and infrastructure of America (A. Smith, 2016). Research showed that beginning in the early 1980s, the State of California community colleges began to incorporate professional learning communities on their campuses. This study

sought to examine the relationships among the related variables, retention, and professional

Afrocentric learning communities in community colleges.

The History of the Professional Learning Community Concept

The learning community concept first emerged in the 1920s with the experimental

college program conceived by Alexander Meiklejohn at the University of Wisconsin (B. L.

Smith, 2001). The promising experimental college initiative is a passing phase that does not last

long. In the 1960s, the innovative college concept was again introduced with some variations in

the model. The model that is in practice launched in the 1980s, intending to humanize the

learning environment.

A professional learning community, by definition, goes beyond the perception of a

gathering of people in a social setting. A professional learning community has a high degree of

integrity with a shared purpose, including caring members empowering truthfulness (Afolabi,

2013; Hord, 2009). The learning community is a fundamental shift from the traditional teacher-

centered method of teaching to the learner-centered style of teaching. In contrast, the teacher-

centered teaching method stresses individual learners with lesson information culminating from

the teacher's lecture. The teachers follow the lecture with directions to the student for a related

assignment for the student to apply a skill or topic (Hord, 2009). The student can connect the

information and conceive how the lessons relate to each other.

With the shift toward enhanced understanding and the various backgrounds of students,

learning communities such as the Mafanikio Community have evolved, promoting ethnic identity

and diversity (Bush & Bush, 2010; Milem, Chang, M., & Antonio, 2005). The learning

community concept takes into consideration the emerging theory that students engage in

organized activities inside and outside of the traditional classroom. The concept is educationally

purposeful and is a predecessor of student personal development and learning (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Student engagement is also a measure of the educational effectiveness of student learning (Kuh, 2008b; Beachboard et al., 2011). Engagement is a crucial component of the education process.

Learning Community Theory

Four theory criteria constitute the definition of a learning community. The first criterion of the definition of the learning community theory is to be explicit and clear. The second is to be concrete with identifiable parts; third, as the term implies, it is warm and intimate; and fourth, it provides a dynamic representation of the maintenance and development of the lived experience (Ahlquist, 2013). The definitions of a learning community's theoretical concept consist of four components. They are: (a) Membership—a sense of belonging, (b) Influence—a sense of mattering, (c) Reinforcement—integration, and (d) Fulfillment of needs (Ahlquist, 2013). Community college students who participate in a learning community have higher persistence rates, which lead to higher retention and success rates with more engagement than students who did not participate (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). An objective of the Mafanikio Community in its program designs is including high-impact activity.

Consortiums of the Mafanikio Community are being initiated on campuses across the State of California because the programs show positive retention results for students. Community college students who are involved in activities that are educational and meaningful devote more effort and time to academics than other students when participating in a learning community (Tinto & Russo, 1994; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). In the Mafanikio Community, the student also is not just a passive receiver of information, but a student takes on more responsibility for his or her

education (Tinto & Russo, 1994; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). The student taking responsibility for himself or herself is part of the student's maturing process.

The Professional Learning Community Model

The students enrolled in a learning community are set apart and grouped into cohorts from the general population of the school. As a component of the program, the students learn a set of values. The students apply the learned values to their educational process. In the professional learning community model, a high degree of truthfulness and integrity is practiced with a shared respect for purpose and caring (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015). Through collaboration and group projects, the students become cohesive.

The professional learning communities staff have a shared responsibility for students' learning and development (Hord, 2009). The concept of learning in the learning community model is that instructors and students engage in activities collectively to increase skills and knowledge. The concept also consists of the collaboration of individuals constituting a group. The objective of the learning community is to learn with peers concerning clearly stated topics collectively (Hord, 2009). The group regularly meets to reflect on the topics and share its members' views.

Goals of the Professional Learning Community

The goals of the professional learning community are to engage students with questions that are of relevance beyond the classroom (Kuh, 2008a). The student's development of critical thinking skills to answer questions and connect subject matter across courses with an integrated learning process is the intended developmental outcome of a learning community (Kuh, 2008a). The professional learning community model considers the growth and development of all involved, including students, faculty, counselors, and staff. The core mission of the professional

learning community is to ensure that the student learns as well as for the student to be taught in the learning process (DuFour, 2004). According to Tinto (1990), retention itself is not the goal of education.

The primary goals for a college learning community are: (a) To pose the students with big questions that take the students' critical thinking skills beyond the classroom (Kuh, 2008a), (b) To promote engagement of learning interchangeably with materials in linked courses, and (c) Students are to collaborate on course work and projects with fellow students and professors (Kuh, 2008a). Joint projects and activities promote familiarity and peer support with students. Linked or clustered courses address shared course subject matter and work through the lens of the various curriculum disciplines (Kuh, 2008a). The Mafanikio Community considers the students' needs beyond just the academic aspect of college life. An ethnic-centered learning community is not a silver-bullet solution to the retention problem in higher education. However, positive results are coming out of them that impact retention. The objective is to keep the student involved in the process.

An additional goal of a learning community in higher education is to remove barriers that impede students' success and faculty performance, eliminating excuses for why faculty cannot work together collaboratively. Some examples of excuses given by teachers for not participating in a professional learning community are lack of training, not enough time, and lack of commitment to the concept of collaborative work by other staff members (DuFour, 2004). The education of faculty members on the outcomes of professional learning communities is instrumental in getting the faculty member involved. Moreover, the students' primary elements of the construction of meaning and understanding and knowledge may derive from the process of negotiation and interaction with their agreed-upon understanding (De Latt & Lally, 2005).

Professional learning communities encourage the process of collaborative learning with innovative programs.

There are numerous programs within colleges and universities designed for improving the retention rates of minority students. According to Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2014), the programs alone have a minimum impact on retention rates for African American students. A result of the study determined that programs have not been successful because of the lack of incorporation of the student's social experiences inside and outside the classroom (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014). The professional learning communities should consider the shortcomings of other organizations in designing programs and activities.

With the shift toward enhanced understanding and the various backgrounds of students, learning communities such as the Mafanikio Community have evolved, promoting ethnic identity (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Nieto, 2015). Faculty involvement and commitment is an issue overall in learning communities. Some faculty members do not consider retention as their responsibility (Styron, 2010; Tinto, 2006, 2012). Faculty involvement is a critical component of retention (Styron, 2010; Tinto, 2006, 2012). Students establishing a relationship with the institution inside and outside of the classroom give the student a sense of belonging (Walton & Cohen, 2011). The students begin to feel that they are part of the college environment.

Situational Learning

Scholar's theoretical perspectives for learning communities consist of a social constructivist view of learning, where the sensitivity of the learning process is taken into consideration during the design and implementation of the program (De Latt & Lally, 2005). Group learning is a primary element in learning communities. Individual cognition and

conceptual processes are directly affected by situational learning and group meetings that influence the thinking of the students (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Pehmer, Gröschner, & Seidel, 2015). The factor of tension between the understanding of the problem or idea and a concept in the group discussion can be the driving force to create a collaborative group process (De Latt & Lally, 2005). Open-group discussions within the learning community are a common practice in the Mafanikio Community.

Constructive Leadership in a Professional Learning Community

This section of the study discusses the concept of constructive leadership in a professional learning community. The concept of constructive leadership in a professional learning community consists of six key components to ensure the success of the community of professionals (Hord, 2009). The six key components are: (a) Leadership, conducting meetings with clear objectives and purpose, promoting collaborative discussions concerning the needs of the students, and the role they play in the learning process; (b) Membership of the community, the students are grouped into cohorts according to their matriculation level. The cohorts take classes together and meet weekly to discuss academic issues and plan social activities. The learning community counselor, faculty, and staff meet monthly to plan activities, define learning goals, and evaluate data to determine what is needed to accomplish their goals. The third component that ensures the success of the community of professionals in a professional learning community is having (c) A designated space for the students to meet in conjunction with the counselors. The Mafanikio Community calls its space The Village. The fourth is (d) Time for learning, the community members (students, faculty, and staff) must be committed to the process of the learning community, understanding the time commitment it takes in their daily schedules. The fifth component of Constructive Leadership in a professional learning community is, (e)

Distributed leadership, the leader understands the concept of shared power of authority, allowing the staff to collaborate on methods such as conflict resolution. The leader works side by side with the membership fostering a democratic culture; and (f) a staff member is responsible for the management of data for the learning community. The deliberate, collaborative efforts of the administration, faculty, staff, and the students are what make the learning community work.

The foundation of the learning community is an accurate analysis of the data. The data provide insights into the status and direction in which the learning community is moving (Hord, 2009). The professional learning community routinely participates in the learning and improvement of staff and faculty.

The professional behavior of the staff and faculty influences the students positively as role models. The staff utilizes data to invoke innovation and creativity in the course and assignments for the students. The professional learning community concept materializes with the practice of the above six components (Hord, 2009).

Moreover, in congruence with the above six components, there are three pivotal questions that direct the functions of the faculty and staff in a learning community. They are: (a) What do we want each student to learn? (b) How will we know each student has learned it? and (c) How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning (DuFour, 2004)? Professional learning communities are differentiated from traditional schools with the answer to the third question (How will we know the student has learned it?). In contrast, the student receives proactive support and resources from the learning community staff (DuFour, 2004; Louis, 2006). The staff supplies constructive feedback to the student, on which the student can build upon their learning process.

Four Fundamental Forms in a Professional Learning Community

There are four fundamental forms in a professional learning community. They are (a) Students enrolled in several courses that share a theme linkage; (b) Integrating pedagogical approaches such as group process learning activities with cooperative learning techniques, with the classroom as the locus of community building; (c) Students residing on campus, create residential learning communities. The on-campus living communities and, the general course work, increase supplemental learning activities and out-of-class interaction; and (d) Student-type learning communities such as the Mafanikio Community purposefully direct and are designed to meet the needs of historically underrepresented students, academically underprepared students, and other groups with common goals and interests (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Lieberman, Miller, Von Frank, & Wiedrick, 2011).

The outcome of this study might benefit all marginalized community college students by introducing them to the learning community concept. Positive outcomes from learning communities are social tolerance, a higher level of academic engagement, interpersonal skills, and openness to diversity (Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, and Nora, 2001). The Mafanikio Community does not exclude any student from joining the learning community based on ethnicity or race.

Developmental learning theory promotes educators' environments that support students in their challenge to shift to increased levels of psychological and intellectual development (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). The developmental components of the learning community are a process that induces disequilibrium into their usual ways of reacting to novel and different situations (Smith, Shaw, & Tredinnick, 2015; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). The learning community provides an

environment that is both supportive and challenging for the student (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The learning community establishes a safe place in which the student can thrive.

Taking measures to assist students in adapting to the challenges they encounter in the community college setting; the learning community provides support components designed to help the student adapt to such challenges. The efficacy of learning communities are positive environments (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). In social-cultural theory, the individual is part of the environment of social-constructivists.

Social and academic engagement is an essential element of community college students' learning. The process of learning is not understood strictly in the consciousness of the learner; it constructs in joint activity engagement, a constructed process in the learning settings (De Latt & Lally, 2005; Van Boxtel, Van der Linden, & Kanselaar, 2000). The student emerges into the college environment with activities based out of the learning community.

Learning Community Rationale

Students in higher education are more successful in academic achievement when they are actively engaged in the learning process, as found in the literature (Kuh, 2008a). When the learning environment includes an active role for students, this develops a sense of community among students. The students have a joint and cooperative pursuit of educational goals and respect for cognitive diversity (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Shea, Li, & Pickett, 2006). The cohort develops into a community of learners with a common interest.

The rationale behind a learning community is andragogy that is personally meaningful to the student, incorporated into the courses in a cohort. The Mafanikio Community offers Afrocentric culturally relevant andragogy to African American and other students in community colleges and four-year institutions. Various positive personal growth and learning outcomes

result in community college students' participation in a learning community, including deep

learning (Kuh, 2008a). A learning community promotes active participation among the students,

emphasizing academic success.

Addressing Retention in Professional Learning Communities

Retention in higher education is an ongoing issue that learning communities strive to

address. Research showed that in some institutions, the retention rate is 55%; however, in the

learning community housed in that institution, the retention rate is 95% (Sperry, 2015). The

provision of subject matter that is culturally real to the student is a driving force for retention

improvement. They are working in conjunction with coordinated studies that link to course

clusters in the learning communities where the subjects and course work are of interest to the

students.

The learning community creates the opportunity for students to learn from each other in

their own time and space, with diverse perspectives that engage them (K. Hill, 2016; P. Hill,

1985; Lee, Zhang, & Yin, 2011). Peer engagement is a powerful learning technique. Students

connecting with positive persisting peers is key to student retention; active participation in

learning communities fosters such activities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1998; Wolf-

Wendel et al., 2009). The Mafanikio Community focuses on activities that are of interest to the

students, taking into consideration the student's input.

Background of the Mafanikio Community Organization

The Mafanikio headquarters is in California. The Mafanikio Community has consortiums

at more than 51 community colleges in more than 20 counties throughout the state of California.

There are more than 51 consortium members, and more than 4,000 students served. The

Mafanikio Community receives $2.5 million in annual funding from the State of California. The

purpose of the organization is to increase retention and completion rates for African American students enrolled in community colleges in California and other states such as Washington and Nevada. More than 65% of the student population in this area are people of color (Zumeta & Frankle, 2007).

The Mafanikio Learning Community has the highest representation of people of color in a learning community in the country. The Mafanikio Community serves the highest population of low-income students in the United States. Factors that cause low academic achievement among underrepresented students throughout California and America are reductions in budgets and resources designed for student success and fewer classrooms. Outcomes from this study might influence California to increase budgetary support for professional learning communities.

The Mafanikio Community is a learning community that promotes an environment where there is respect for diversity, and students engage in collaboration with faculty and counselors toward their academic objectives. The rationale for the need for a learning community for historically underrepresented students attending the community college stems from the problems identified in higher education. The problems are over and above the academic and financial issues of low retention rates, lack of student engagement, and a sense of belonging (Harper, Smith, & Davis, 2018). Some consortiums administer food banks and transportation vouchers. A large portion of the community college population is homeless (Gupton, 2017).

The Mafanikio Community is a professional academic learning community of college educators and students committed to academic success, personal growth, and self-actualization of African American and other students. The organization was founded at a community college in a metropolitan area in California in 1981. The Board of Governors of Community Colleges

officially recognized the Mafanikio Community as a legitimate statewide student success program in 2008.

There are more than 51 consortiums of the Mafanikio Community at community colleges across the State of California. Learning communities are learner-centered environments, as well as knowledge-centered and assessment centered (Shea et al., 2006). A successful learning environment structure is inclusive of an atmosphere that is free of unconstructive judgment— also, perceptions of unwarranted discouragement (Shea et al., 2006). The Mafanikio Community is evaluated across the organization by each consortium, region, and overall organization against a professional learning community standard.

The Organizing Principles of the Mafanikio Community

The following are the Organizing Principles of the Mafanikio Community. The principles formulate a guide for the consortiums located at each university. The consortiums utilize the principles in the design of their programs. The objective is uniformity throughout the entire organization in the formation and organizational objectives.

- "We have committed to collaborating with campuses at a local level so that there is the integration of the core Mafanikio Community with the particular college mission goals, strategic plan, and student equity efforts."

- "We share a name with a core set of pedagogies and promising practices."

- "We support the academic success of all students."

- "We support the persistence and retention of all students toward defined educational goals: transfer, certification, associate degree."

- "We integrate both instructional and student services."

- "We integrate direct instruction of information and technology literacy."

- "We integrate sound assessment strategies and a set of core benchmark measures."

- "We recruit and train students, staff, and faculty through seminars, conferences, and other professional development."

"We facilitate the sharing of resources: financial, curriculum, methodologies, pedagogies." (Mafanikio Community a pseudonym to protect the organization confidentiality).

The following are the Components of the Mafanikio Community. The counselors and staff of the learning communities indoctrinate into the components of the organization. They are recommitting themselves to the components at their staff meetings. The components are also utilized as a base for each consortium site's agenda and planning calendars.

Components of the Mafanikio Community

- Assist students in achieving goals;

- Academic counseling;

- Cohort model;

- Learning communities;

- Priority registration for the class;

- Career advisement and counseling;

- Student orientation;

- Mandatory classes for the first two years;

- Math tutoring;

- Academic workshops;

- Cultural workshops and field trips;

- Tours of four-year colleges and universities;

- College success skills and preseason development;

- Book loans and vouchers;

- Scholarships;

- Madaba (a Kiswahili word meaning Mentoring) assistance from faculty and staff;

- Peer Madaba;

- Parent orientation; and

- Service-learning. (Mafanikio Community.)

Students Engagements Link to Student Satisfaction

Student engagement in institutions of higher learning is a measure of the educational effectiveness of student learning (Kuh, 2008b; Beachboard et al., 2011). Research showed that students in institutions of higher learning participating in a professional learning community have satisfaction with the college experience, indicating an affirmative link to engagement (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). As a best practice, 64% of students in learning communities participated in a discussion group, facilitating the integration of the students learning across disciplines (Kuh, 2008b). Community college students enrich social lives and gain deep learning as a result of participating in out-of-class activities as a requirement of the learning community (Kuh, 2008b). Research from the latter part of the 1980s indicated high levels of personal development and growth among students resulting from in and out of classroom educationally purposeful activities (Kuh, 2008b; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). The Mafanikio Community designs programs with student activities outside of the classroom and off-campus.

A factor that affects community college student retention is the level of preparation of staff and faculty as it pertains to interacting with African American students in community college, where biases and preconceived assumptions about African American students' ability to perform college-level work can grow. This perception of the student among the faculty hurts the

students' retention. In turn, the probability that the student will drop out of the class or program increases (Stambaugh & Ford, 2015). There is also an adverse effect on other students in the classroom (Stambaugh & Ford, 2015). The behaviors of students affect fellow students.

Faculty-Student Relationships

A key component to the Mafanikio Community is faculty-to-student relationship building. Another significant predictor of student retention is faculty-student relationships and interactions (DeWitz et al., 2009). Faculty-student interaction also has a positive relationship with the number of units in which community college students enroll. As a result of the positive faculty-student relationship, the variable is a predictor of student retention (DeWitz et al., 2009).

Improving persistence rates for African American students in community colleges is essential for equity in community colleges (Palmer et al., 2010). Decreasing numbers of college students in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math compromise the United States from a global economic perspective (Palmer et al., 2010). According to Bybee (2011), the United States is losing global competitiveness in the sciences. The community college is where the county might get on the right track to improve the United States' global academic competitiveness.

Student Motivation

Morrow and Ackermann (2012) concluded from their study on student motivation that a sense of belonging is not significantly related to intention to persist in college. On the other hand, motivation was shown to be a factor in students' persistence and retention for second-year retention. For underrepresented students, there is a significant relationship between motivation and persistence. D. Allen (1999) argued that this relationship is not significant for underrepresented students (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012). Research showed the most African

American students need a support network such as an Afrocentric learning community to support their success in college.

Noninterventionist Andragogy

The misalignment of noninterventionist andragogy offered by the community college with the fundamental passivity of the students is another issue identified in the research (P. Hill, 1985). The lack of interaction among students with the faculty is an identified issue. The issue contributed to the initiation of the learning community movement. According to the research, the interaction of students with teachers consists of only examinations and term papers with minimum educational value because of their routinized and mechanical nature (P. Hill, 1985). The Mafanikio Community promotes regular student-faculty activities to assure the student has a relationship—inside and outside of the classroom—that fosters relatable course work.

Furthermore, in the traditional community college curriculum, there is a lack of congruency in the course's coherence with the majority of the courses in which the students enroll (Kuh, 2008a). This lack of relationship provides a fragmented discipline with insufficient curricular support to the student from the teacher as a result of a lack of vested interest. The professional learning community explores relatable general subject matter, utilizing the lens of various disciplines, and creating a cohesive learning environment where the student has a sense of belonging (Kuh, 2008a). The Mafanikio Community considers students holistically in designing its activities and programs.

Ethnicities and Race

According to mid-century anthropologists, Whiteness is racially indivisible. However, it is ethnically divided (Painter, 2010). From this theory, Mongoloid, Negroid, and Caucasoid are the only three races with numerous ethnicities (Painter, 2010). The literature, geneticists, and

biologists do not support this theory (Painter, 2010). After 200 years of debate, scholars concluded there is only one race, the human race, notwithstanding the way people readily recognize the power of racism is by the color of melanin in a person's skin (Blay, 2011). Skin tones vary, even within siblings. One's appearance and cultural association are how people might classify themselves as Black or White.

Historically the plight of Africans in America in the pursuit of education was plagued by oppressive practices and legislation such as laws prohibiting the learning of reading and writing, segregated but not equal schools, and systematic racist policies (Gaines, 2007). Higher education beyond high school, in particular, has been one of numerous social and legal challenges and adversities for this population in America from the inception of the country.

Scientists Herrnstein and Murray postulated that there are intellectual differences between classes, and Africans have a lower intellect than Whites, affecting their ability to learn at higher levels (Belkhir & Duyme, 1998; D. Roberts, 2015). These scientists propose that genes and proteins determine IQ differences among gender, classes, and ethnicities (Belkhir & Duyme, 1998; D. Roberts, 2015). According to Nisbett et al. (2012), history does not support this theory.

The Relationship of Variables in the Study

This study sought to understand the effect of an Afrocentric learning community and the relationships among variables. The variables for this study are (a) degree applicable retention rates; (b) success rates or academic engagement; and (c) awarding of the Associates of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, or transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the Afrocentric learning community. The study's purpose is determining if there is a statistically significant difference in them. The focus of this study was on African American students, retention, and success rates in the State of

California community colleges. This section of the research explores the differences among the terms: student retention, student satisfaction, and student persistence and their relationship to each other. The literature showed that there are significant relationships among the three concepts as well as distinct differences (Styron, 2010)

Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature relevant to the topic of retention as it relates to the achievement of African American community college students in the State of California. The chapter explored the theoretical framework with the applications to the research topic. The synthesis of the relevant literature identified a gap in the literature that this study sought to address. There is a minimal amount of research on African American students' retention rates in the community college as it pertains to Afrocentric learning communities. The chapter also gave the background and history of African and African Americans in higher education, as well as the history of community colleges and professional learning communities.

Moreover, the chapter covered several concepts and their relevance to the topic of retention in community colleges and African American students' achievement in higher education. The chapter also provided some background information on a professional Afrocentric learning community in the State of California community college. Finally, the chapter elaborated on the goals of a professional learning community.

Chapter III: Methodology

This study takes into consideration the foundational theoretical work of Tinto (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000; Guiffrida, 2006). The researcher sought to make contributions to the research on the achievement gap of African American students and add to the understanding of the issue of low retention and success rates for this population in the State of California community colleges. Having open-door policies, community colleges are enrolling the majority of first-year African Americans in secondary-education programs (Wood & Harrison, 2014). The problem is the low retention and persistence rates, of males in particular, in the African American population of community college students.

The study takes a predictive-nonexperimental quantitative inferential statistics research approach as opposed to a qualitative approach in the analysis of the data of a cohort of African American community college students. According to B. Johnson (2001), when the researcher seeks to predict an outcome as the main objective, the research method is considered predictive-nonexperimental research. Moreover, for further research, a mixed-methods approach utilizing qualitative and quantitative with a cross-sectional approach might allow for higher utilization of secondary data because of limited or no access to the student (Bell & Jones, 2015). With the predictive-nonexperimental quantitative inferential statistics research approach, there is no regard for cause and effect. The study's interest is to examine the relationships of the variables associated with student retention and not to affect or influence them. The study examined the effect of the Afrocentric learning community on community college student retention and success rates.

Numerous variables might exist that affect an African American student's capacity to increase retention and persistence behavior through degree completion or transfer in community

colleges. A cause of low student retention and success rates for community colleges is dropout and is often student specific (Berge & Huang, 2004). The purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental study was to determine if there is a statistically significant relationship, if any, among variables of an Afrocentric learning community, the independent variable, and the retention and success rates of African American students' populations in California community colleges. The independent variables for this study are: (a) degree applicable retention rates, (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associate of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the Afrocentric learning community.

The study compared two groups of students for analysis. The researcher gathered sample populations for the study from two groups of African American community college students: One group that participated in an Afrocentric learning community and those that did not participate. Moreover, the study did not use a correlational research design approach because a correlational design examines the effect of one or more variables on the dependent variable within the one group (Brewer & Kuhn, 2010). The comparison approach is appropriate over a correlational design for the study.

The researcher sourced two sample populations for examining the variables in the study from the secondary data source CCCC–Data-Mart. The researcher analyzed the data using a descriptive statistics analysis statistical approach. The researcher performed the analysis with the program IBM SPSS statistical software for descriptive statistics analysis.

The study examined data to understand the possible effect of an Afrocentric learning community on retention and success rates of African American community college students and

academic success in completing the Associates of Arts degree, Associates of Science degree or transferring to a four-year institution (Barnham, 2015; Creswell, 2014). Improving the retention and persistence rates of African American students might contribute to increase success rates, closing the achievement gap for this group in community colleges. Moreover, the retention and success rates of the colleges might improve.

This chapter describes the purpose and validity of the study as well as restates the research questions and hypotheses guiding the study. Moreover, the chapter provides a detailed explanation of the research design, the dependent and independent variables for analysis, and secondary data sources. The chapter also explains the process of examining the secondary data and provides information on the instruments used on the secondary data for outcomes. The chapter concludes with explanations of the researcher's role, ethical issues, and an explanation of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. Finally, the chapter concludes, summarizing, and connecting all the research methods.

Restatement of Problem Statement

Because of the financial impact of attrition on community colleges, the subject of student retention is a high-priority issue in community colleges nationally. Research showed that African American males have the lowest retention rates compared to all subgroups (Hagedorn et al., 2001). The majority of African American community college students who begin postsecondary educational pursuits do not graduate within six years, establishing the lowest postsecondary completion rate in America, considering all racial and subgroups (Harper, 2012; Levin, 2007; Wood & Palmer, 2013). The retention and success rates for the State of California African American male community college students are 62% and 69%, respectively, representing the lowest rates of all student population segments, including race and ethnicity and gender (State of

California, n.d.). The national rate of Associate's Degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions for African American students for the 2011–2012 cohort is 14% compared to Whites at 63% (Snyder & Dillow, 2018a). For the State of California, credit-course retention and success rates for African American in the 2011–2012 cohort is 80% and 58% respectively (State of California, n.d.). The study sought to explore the effect of the Afrocentric learning community to address this issue.

Moreover, this quantitative nonexperimental study examined the relationships among the variables that might explain the effect of an Afrocentric learning community on retention, success, and transferability rates of African American community college students in California. In conjunction with that, it also sought to find what, if any, affect the Afrocentric learning community has on the other critical variables of social engagement and academic integration of African Americans in the community college. The researcher sought to determine if there is a statistically significant difference in variables affecting African American community college retention rates.

The retention and success rates for White male students in the same cohort is 87% and 75% (State of California, n.d.). This nonexperimental study using secondary data examined the possible relationships of an Afrocentric learning community with the retention and persistence rates, social engagement, academic engagement and the awarding of the Associates of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, or transfer to a four-year institution of higher learning for African American students in the State of California community colleges.

Of all associate's degrees by postsecondary institutions conferred for the cohort 2011–2012 Fall, African American male students were awarded 14.2%, compared with 63% conferred to White males (Snyder & Dillow, 2019). Measuring all academic outcomes, grade point

average, persistence rates, and percentage of college degrees earned, African American students are underachieving disproportionately in community colleges nationally in comparison to other groups, including ethnic and gender subgroups (Goings, 2016; Harper, 2010; Wood & Harris, 2013). The rates for males were aggregated in this section to show the performance contrast. According to the literature, African American males are the lowest-performing group of all subgroups. The researcher sought to make positive contributions to the research of closing the achievement gap of African American students in community colleges (Harris & Wood, 2013). The African American male academic achievement in community college is a topic for further research.

Research showed a significant increase in enrollment, matriculation, retention, and graduation rates in institutions of higher learning for the majority of underrepresented ethnic groups in America for the last 30 years, except for African American students (Farmer & Hope, 2015; Harper, 2006). Subsequently, 48% of African American students in the State of California enter postsecondary education at community colleges (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011; Shapiro et al., 2017). Community colleges have an open-access policy for all students.

African American students in the State of California's community colleges are underachieving disproportionately in comparison to other groups, including ethnic and gender subgroups in all measures of academic outcomes such as grade point average, persistence rates, and percentage of college degrees earned (Bush & Bush, 2010; Harper, 2012; Hickman, 2008). There are significant disparities among African American students as they pertain to outcomes, including certificate attainment, transfer to a four-year institution, and attaining Associate's degrees (Wood & Harris, 2013). Several factors contribute to the students' disparities.

According to Venzant Chambers and McCready (2011), most African American community college students are marginalized, where they are not part of mainstream culture and do not feel a part of the college environments. A primary factor influencing achievement for African American students in institutions of higher education is a sense of belonging (Perrakis, 2008; Strayhorn, 2012a). An outcome of a learning community on college campuses is the association with the group, which contributes to the student's sense of belonging (D. R. Johnson et al., 2007; Strayhorn, 2018). The student has the opportunity to connect with and develop positive connections with faculty and peers.

In response to the bleak statistical realities of low retention rates academic achievement gaps of African American community college students, this study sought to uncover the potential positive effects that an Afrocentric academic learning community can have with African American students in community colleges in the State of California. Specifically, the study sought to discover positive outcomes, such as increased retention, success, and graduation rates. Other significant factors not explored in this study are noncognitive factors. Research showed that higher education students' retention, persistence, and degree completion are empirically and theoretically connected (Astin, 1993; D. R. Johnson et al., 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The study examined the variables that connect the outcomes of learning communities to student success in community colleges.

Noncognitive factors are essential variables in retention. Noncognitive factors continue to be instrumental for institutions to improve outcomes for African American students (Adebayo, 2008). Research showed positive results of noncognitive factors are significant variables connected to institutional support, as they pertain to student persistence, engagement, and retention (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012). Noncognitive factors also include motivation, self-

efficacy, identity, and a sense of belonging as they connect to student retention. Through the analysis and outcomes, the study sought to assist institutions with more efficiently determining how to allocate resources to programs that improve academic success for African American students.

Restatement of Research Questions

This chapter describes the research methodology concept used for the study to examine the following research questions. Inferential statistics analysis with a dependent group paired *t*-test, also known as repeated measures, was the research method that the researcher used to answer the questions the researcher addressed in the study.

The following research questions lead the study:

1. Is there a relationship between African American community college students' retention and participating in an Afrocentric learning community?

2. Is there a relationship between African American community college students' success or completion of Associates of Arts degree, Associates of Science degree, and participating in an Afrocentric learning community?

Hypotheses

H_{0a}: No statistically significant relationship exists between the degree applicable retention rates of African American community college students who participate in an Afrocentric learning community and those African American community college students who do not.

- H_{0b}: $\mu_1 = \mu_2$ or ($\mu_1 = 0$)

- H_{1a}: A statistically significant relationship exists between the degree applicable retention rates of African American community college students who participate in an Afrocentric

learning community and those African American community college students who do

not.

- H_{1a}: $\mu \neq {}_2$ or $(\mu_1 \neq 0)$

- H_{0b}: The participation of African American community college students in an

   Afrocentric learning community does not have a statistically significant relationship in

   predicting the success rates or the awarding of an Associate's of Arts degree or Associate

   of Science degree.

- H_{0b}: $\mu_1 = \mu_2$ or $(\mu_1 = 0)$

   H_{1b}: The participation of African American community students in an Afrocentric

learning community has a statistically significant relationship in predicting the success rate or the

awarding of an Associate's of Arts degree or Associate of Science degree.

- H_{1a}: $\mu \neq {}_2$ or $(\mu_1 \neq 0)$

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative nonexperimental research methodology in higher

education. Quantitative research is a methodological research process that tests objective theories

with the examination of the relationship of variables (Creswell, 2014; Quinn, 2009). The

approach to studying education using nonexperimental methods has a long history in education

and program-evaluation literature. The design is appropriate for this study of college students'

retention rates in the community college setting.

The research design for the study is quantitative inferential statistics using a paired

samples *t*-test. The paired-samples *t*-test or repeated measures is used when data are gathered for

one group during two different periods (Pallant, 2013). The researcher compared the mean

retention and success rates for 17 consortiums of an Afrocentric learning community located on

the State of California community college campuses. The study examined cohort Fall 2016–2019.

The study sought to determine if any relationships might exist among variables, with a statistically significant difference in variables after the occurrence of the event (Brewer & Kuhn, 2010). Research in the study is centered on the relationships between multiple variables and the effects of an Afrocentric learning community, if any, on the retention rates of African American students in community college. The researcher used an inferential statistics approach with IBM SPSS statistical software for analysis.

In this nonexperimental research study, the researcher chose a quantitative nonexperimental approach for the study with the interest to examine, not influencing or effecting, the relationships among the following variables for this study. The independent study variables were: (a) degree applicable retention rates, (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associate of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study was the Afrocentric learning community. The dependent study variable was enrollment in an Afrocentric learning community. The study objective was to add to the body of knowledge of what possible predictor variables will improve retention and persistence rates for African American students in higher education. Moreover, improved students' persistence rates will drive the institutions' retention and success rates.

The study analyzed secondary data with a quantitative inferential statistics analysis research method to determine what effect if any Afrocentric learning community might have on the retention rates of African American community college students. This study employed a quantitative inferential statistics analysis of nonexperimental design; the purpose was not to

affect or influence the behavior of community college students (Creswell, 2014). This research design drew inferences about a sample population of African American community college students enrolled in an Afrocentric learning community on the State of California community college campuses.

Quantitative Nonexperimental Design

The study applied the quantitative inferential statistics analysis methodology to the research questions and hypotheses, as are restated in this chapter. Research conclusions based on quantitative inferential statistical analysis are not as likely to be subject to bias. The results are consistent, for any basis that is part of the decisions that are explainable to a measurable degree (Armstrong, 2011). Quantitative inferential statistics analysis in education research provides a systematic process to analyze data with objectivity.

The researcher applied a nonexperimental quantitative inferential statistics analysis method to secondary data. This section explains the sample populations, instruments, and tools. The researcher's role, with the methods applied in the study, is expanded, with the procedures for the study. Finally, this chapter provides the study's findings and implications for further research.

This study compared quantitative secondary data. The researcher did not manipulate variables in this study, and the research depicted the Fall 2011–2014 cohort of African American California community students (Barnham, 2015). The quantitative inferential statistics analysis research method examined the relationships among variables that already existed. The quantitative inferential statistics analysis research method allowed the collection of secondary data from a population of African American California community college students, including a sample size ample enough for statistical purposes (Creswell, 2014; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990;

Palinkas et al., 2013). The two groups of students examined in this study were already formed, and the outcomes already existed. The secondary data had no identifiable information about the organization, particular institutions, or participants, which protected the students' privacy.

Researchers widely use predictive nonexperimental quantitative inferential statistics analysis research in educational research (Creswell, 2014; McKenzie, Stillman, & Gibson, 2010). Predictive nonexperimental quantitative inferential statistics research, with an independent group t-test, involves two or more existing groups with one independent variable (Creswell, 2014; B. Johnson, 2001). This study consisted of two groups of African American community college students: One group of students that did participate in a learning community compared with another group of students that did not participate in the learning community.

This study used secondary data from the State of Community College Chancellor's Office–Data-Mart for the State of California for a sample of Afrocentric learning communities. The learning communities are located on community college campuses statewide. California community colleges use this large-scale instrument to develop further research on student retention, persistence, and learning (McClenney, 2009). The researcher compared the outputs from the analysis.

The researcher analyzed the data to determine if there are relationships between the criterion's variables and the predictor variables (Barnham, 2015; Creswell, 2014). The quantitative inferential statistical analysis using paired samples t-test research methodology is appropriate for the study based on the design's ability to construct trends and differences in the one cohort of students with 17 different learning communities. Paired samples determine if there is a statistically significant difference in variables without bias.

In quantitative research, the process initiates a detailed plan with a list of research questions and or hypotheses (C. M. Roberts, 2010). The researcher examined the data to predict a positive effect on the retention rates of African American community college students as a result of the students' engagement in a professional Afrocentric learning community. The study used secondary data, and there was no manipulation of the independent or dependent variables in the study; the predictive nonexperimental research design was appropriate for the study. The outcomes of this research were instrumental in answering research questions and hypotheses for this study (Creswell, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2013; Pan, 2016). The researcher analyzed the outcomes in an unbiased manner.

A quantitative nonexperimental approach was appropriate for the study because the study sought to examine only, not affecting or influencing the relationships among the independent variables. The independent variables are: (a) degree applicable retention rates, (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associate of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study was the Afrocentric learning community.

The analysis for statistical significance identifies the effect size allowance of trends and differences in the data. This approach does not identify the characteristics and qualities that emerge from data (A. Field, 2014). The researcher drew data from two single points in time for cohort Fall 2016 and Fall 2019, forming pre- and post-groups for a paired samples t-test analysis.

Further research with primary data obtained from a predictive nonexperimental cohort design might provide a more in-depth study of African American male community college students. A research design with a mixed-method research method with surveys from students, faculty, and staff might also provide for a more robust study. The primary data would provide the

means to perform analysis from multiple sources to draw from more possibilities (Creswell, 2014). The researcher made interpretations from the analysis of the databases from quantitative inferential statistical analysis, examining the relationships among the dependent and independent variables. In this study, the treatment is the intervention of the professional Afrocentric learning community, and the outcomes are the retention rates of the African American community college students.

Purpose of the Study Restated

The purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental study was to explore the effect of an Afrocentric learning community in improving retention rates of African American students in a public community college, as well as determine if there is a relationship among the variables to the completion of an Associate's of Arts degree, Associates of Science degree, or transfer to a four-year institution. The independent variables for this study are (a) degree applicable retention rates; (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associates of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution; or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the Afrocentric learning community.

The intervention for the study is a professional Afrocentric learning community. The expected outcomes are increased retention, the completion of an Associate's of Arts degree, Associate of Science degree, or transfer to a four-year institution. As a result of the study, African American California community college students, college administrators, faculty, and counselors will understand the merit of including participation in a professional Afrocentric learning community as part of the students' success plans. Administrators might consider implementing Afrocentric learning communities where these marginalized students attend.

The researcher conducted a predictive nonexperimental research analysis of the data to decipher the effect and relationships among identified variables. There was no manipulation of the variables; the data depict a particular time frame for African American California community student's cohort Fall 2011–2014 (Barnham, 2015; B. Johnson, 2001). The comparative analysis method of research examined the relationships and interactions of variables that are instrumental in answering research questions (Barnham, 2015; Creswell, 2014; Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2013).

The comparative analysis method allowed the collection of secondary data from a population of the State of California community colleges, including a sample size ample enough for statistical purposes (Barnham, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2013; Quinn, 2009). The study did not collect interviews or questionnaires, as with correlational research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). According to B. Johnson (2001), because of the noninvasive nature of nonexperimental research, it is one of the most used in education.

The quantitative descriptive statistics analysis nonexperimental study is appropriate based on the method's ability to construct trends and differences in the secondary data identified for effect size and statistical significance. A qualitative method would identify the characteristics and qualities of the data as the information emerges from the research process (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative methodology utilized interviews in the data compilations (Creswell, 2014). Interviews consider the students' voices and views, providing insight and valuable information for the researcher to analyze.

Variables

The variables for this study are (a) degree applicable retention rates, (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associate of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and

transfer to a 4-year institution or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the Afrocentric learning community. Race and gender are not included as variables in the analysis because the study is specifically on African American students in the State of California community colleges. On the other hand, for further study, scholars recommend research to include gender and sexual orientation as an independent variable in the analysis (Reason, 2003). The justification for sourcing secondary-data for analysis in this study is expanded on in this section of the chapter. The data collection process removes identifying information of participating students. The IRB approval for the safety of the participant's approval is on an expedited basis.

Sources of Data and Data Retrieval

This study accessed data from the CCCCO–Data-Mart, an open-source data Web site. After retrieving the secondary data through the Internet, the researcher analyzed and examined the data for comparison of outputs. The information was collected virtually over the Internet by a secure personal laptop computer. This study retrieved secondary data virtually for cohorts Fall 2016–-Fall 2019.

By using secondary open-source data, there is no influence by the researcher on the variables. Moreover, secondary data reduce biases on the part of the researcher, with the events already taken place (Boeren, 2018; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). Appropriate data collection procedures were adhered to, protecting and securing the institutions', organizations', faculty, staff, and students' information. This study retrieved secondary data virtually for cohorts Fall 2016-Fall 2019.

The purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental study is to examine the effect of an Afrocentric learning community in improving retention rates of African American students in the

State of California community college, as well as determine if there are relationships among the variables. The variables for this study are: (a) degree applicable retention rates, (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associate of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the Afrocentric learning community. The researcher compared the retention and success rates of those students participating in a professional Afrocentric learning community with those African American students who did not participate in the learning community. In the process of collecting data, the researcher made no direct human contact. The researcher did not conduct surveys for the data retrieval process. On the other hand, the researcher participated in one of the six Mafanikio Communities consortiums region's staff meetings for firsthand observational information on the organization's concerns.

Table 4 provides information for Cohort Fall 2018—Statewide Student Count and Retention Rates. The table shows the retention rates for the State of California Community College's total population. The total population for African American students in the community college system is provided in the table, showing contrast.

Table 4

Population; Cohort Fall 2018—Statewide Student Count and Retention Rates

	Student Count	Retention Rate
Statewide	3,313,342	85.63
AA Statewide	245,473	80.39

Note. Nondistance education methods only, the State of California Community College Chancellor's Office. AA= African American.

Table 5 depicts the population count for data set 1 cohort Fall 2016 and Fall 2019. The table depicts the sample populations of Afrocentric learning communities for the study. The sample sizes are provided for data sets 1 and 2 for the degree applicable and transfer retention and success rates for the learning community.

Table 5

Population Data Set1 Cohort Fall 2016 and Fall 2019

Data Set	Afrocentric Learning Communities	Population	Consortiums
Set1	Degree Applicable Retention Rates	$N = 60$	$n = 17$
Set 2	Transferable Success Rates	$N = 60$	$n = 17$

Note. African American students, all ages, and genders enrolled in California community colleges, the State of California Community College Chancellor's Office.

Samples

As a result of the size, locations, and student privacy concerns, the research used secondary data from an open-source Web site. According to the literature, the probability sampling techniques sourced from secondary data provided an ample sampling frame size to represent the entire population of African American students enrolled in professional learning communities in the State of California community colleges. The goal of probability samples is to achieve representativeness, which is the level to which the sample accurately represents the whole population (Acharya, Nigam, Prakash, & Saxena, 2013; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The researcher used cluster sampling of the secondary data because the researcher wanted to generate a more efficient probability sample in terms of time resources.

This study used secondary data: CCCCO–Data-Mart. Because of the geographical locations of the community college students spreading over many states, the researcher sampled groups (clusters) that occurred naturally in the schools' population of African American students (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). According to the literature, the cluster approach is the most appropriate for the study.

The sample size represented a statistically significant sample to determine the outcomes of this study (Creswell, 2014). A random or stratified sampling process is not appropriate for a study of this nature. The purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental study was to examine the effect of an Afrocentric learning community in improving retention rates of African American students in a public community college, as well as determine if there were relationships among the variables. The variables for this study are: (a) degree applicable retention rates, (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associate of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the Afrocentric learning community.

Instruments

This section of the chapter describes the two instruments or tools that are used in this study to collect secondary data for analysis in answering research questions. It also explains the purpose and format of the tools. Finally, this chapter section provides validity, limitations, and procedure for studies instruments.

The first tool is Data-Mart, an open-source for archival data that is built and controlled by the Management Information Systems unit at CCCCO. Each community college district submits data for the college(s) at their term-end by login to the Chancellor's Office secure site. The

CCCCO assembles data from all community colleges and multiple source systems, filters the

data, and then loads them into the Data-Mart server, which serves as a central data warehouse

(State of California, n.d.) The district updates the data each semester.

Data-Mart contains information with demographic stratification on students, faculty,

staff, student services, courses, and student outcomes. The data are available to the public by

each community college, district, or statewide. The data require no permission for access. The

emphasis of Data-Mart is to answer the questions of administrators, educators, parents, students,

state leaders, and professional organizations, and it suits the purposes of this study.

Description of Instruments and Tools

The process of gathering data is considered instrumentation. This collection of data

consists of the selection of the instrument and the process this study utilized to conduct the

research (Creswell, 2014). The sourcing of the secondary data through the Internet for the study

was the collection process, which took place in a private home office. The researcher

downloaded the data onto a private laptop computer, secured with a password and security

software. The Internet connection was through a private server with an additional layer of

security through the service. The study used no commercial cloud storage for data files or the

statistical output of data.

The researcher retrieved data for the study after approval was obtained from the

Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology to perform research, along

with IRB approval. Data for the research were sourced via the Internet one time for the study

from CCCCO–Data-Mart. The Pepperdine University doctoral candidate under the supervision

of the chapter chair and committee member collected the data for the study. The purpose of

collecting data was to research the effect of a professional Afrocentric learning community on

the retention rates of African American community college students in California. The data for

the study were secondary, with no identifying information on the institution or students.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role in this study was that of an observer and researcher. As a parent of

an alum of the Mafanikio Community, the researcher had an opportunity to observe the merits of

the program through the development of the researcher's child as a college student. The

researcher became involved in the Mafanikio Community as a parent advisor and steering

committee member. The active involvement with the staff of the Mafanikio Community

provided insight into the activities and programs the organization offers.

The researcher is not formally involved in the Mafanikio Community from an

administrative, recruiting, program planning, or design level, and the chance of bias in favor of

the program or the students was minimal. All the secondary data used in the study were

anonymous, with no identifying information. The researcher's use of the source secondary data

in this study provided minimal to no ethical challenges. There was a chance that the outcome of

this study might impact the funding and budget allocations from the State of California for the

program. As a result, the researcher concluded the study carefully.

As an African American male college graduate, the researcher has a lived experience and

understanding of the institutional and social challenges African American male college students

encounter in navigating through an institution to earn a college degree. The researcher is a first-

generation college graduate with two older siblings with advanced degrees, one sibling with an

Associate's of Arts degree, and one with some college. However, both of the researcher's parents

are college attendees; however, they did not complete a degree. The researcher used a

nonexperimental quantitative inferential statistics methodology for this study; therefore, the

conclusions were based only on the data and not the researcher's personal experiences.

Methods

Procedures

Below is a strategic set of procedures for conducting this study.

- A successful preliminary oral defense of the study to chapter chair and committee members occurred in March 2019.

- The researcher obtained approval from chapter chair and committee members to proceed with the study—March 2019.

- Submitted the Form P1—Study Description and Form P2 Preliminary Oral Schedule Requested to Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology IRB for approval to conduct the study—April 1, 2019, and receive approval, April 2019.

- The study received approval from the Pepperdine University IRB exempt status to conduct the study in April 2019.

- The researcher successfully defended the dissertation with modifications.

- Log onto the Internet from a personal laptop computer with a private server through Frontier Communications Internet provider that has security protection built-in, connect the State of California Community Colleges' Data-Mart Web site.

- Customize a report with the following operation; (a) click on Student, (b) click on Enrollment Status, (c) Select for the following Parameters, (d) State-District-College-Statewide Search, (e) Select Term–Fall 2016, Click on View Report. Go down the report to The Enrollment Status Report–Data & Format Area, (f) Click on the subsections–to aggregating for Gender, (g) Ethnicities–showing all, (h) At the bottom of the report, click on the Update Report button, generating the data for the Data Set Number.

- For African American's group 1 not enrolled in the Afrocentric learning community.

Generate the report for group 2 enrolled in the Afrocentric learning community.

1. Follow the same steps generating the report for the sub-group, except for clicking on

Special Groups–formulating the data for African Americans enrolled in the Afrocentric

learning community.

2. *From the Enrollment Status Summary Report–Select Export To ->, next to this section–*

highlight the radio button–Excel. Title the spreadsheet-according to the researcher system

and save the Excel spreadsheets in a folder.

3. Repeat the same process as above - generating a report for the cohort 2019–or Third year

after the first cohort examined.

4. Upload the Excel titled spreadsheet into the IBM SPSS program.

5. Process the statistical analysis with the IBM SPSS program.

6.Perform a 2-tail independent paired sample *t*-test analysis for data set numbers 1 and 2,

conduct comparisons of outcomes, formulating results, conclusions, and recommendations

for Chapters IV and V of the dissertation.

- The study utilizes secondary data for quantitative data, requiring no consent from

  participants represented in the quantitative secondary data.

- Analyze data findings and write Chapters IV and V of the dissertation.

- Present a modified final dissertation for approval to Chapter Chair and Committee

  Members.

- Submit approved modified final dissertation to the Pepperdine GSEP APA

  department for publication.

Validity and Reliability

This section of the study provides information on the validity of the instruments utilized by the researcher. Understanding the influence these factors have on the lives of African American students can create opportunities to improve student retention, persistence, and success rates, as well as provide researchers opportunities to expand the use of current instruments to assess the possibilities of improving retention and persistence rates of marginalized and nontraditional students.

The validity and reliability of data and instruments are vital for an accurate, empirical, meaningful, useful study. Validity is proof that a study uses accurate inferences concerning the research questions the study intended to answer (Barnham, 2015; Wine et al. 2002). Reliability refers to the study instrument's ability to render consistent test results, utilizing the same entities under a different set of conditions (Barnham, 2015; Quinn, 2009). The researcher collected data for this study from events that already occurred. The study researcher did not approach the study as a duplicatable experiment.

Trustworthiness

The attributes of truth value, neutrality, applicability, and consistency are what Lincoln and Guba (2002) listed as vital for a trustworthy researcher to practice. Lincoln and Guba described trustworthiness as paradigm-specific criteria displayed by rigor in the naturalist realm. By the scholar's definition of trustworthiness, this study sought to research with a truth value, neutrality, applicability, and consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 2002).

This study sought to obtain results that are credible with new information in the field of retention rates in community colleges in the United States. The researcher took a neutral stance for the study with the collection and analysis of the secondary data. The objective in the

secondary data collection and analysis in this study was to perform a reliable, trustworthy, confirmability, dependable, credible, transferable, and honest study.

Ethical Considerations

This study used secondary source data. The researcher contacted no human subjects for interviews or observations. The researcher followed IRB procedures, confidentiality, privacy, and the rights of the community college students and the learning community; the secondary data are protected with no identifying information in this study. The data source Data-Mart removed information that might potentially identify the students and organization and community colleges.

This study presented no ethical or visible dilemmas to any human being. The researcher used pseudonyms for the organization and community colleges' secondary data sourced and analyzed in this study. By following IRB requirements, the researcher will delete all secondary data sourced after three years from the laptop computer.

Possible Risks to the Participants

The IRB application requires the following items: proof of human subjects training for the researcher and faculty chair, detailed information on the location for the production of research, and the level of the study such as expedited or exempt. The application also requires information on the purpose of the study, details on the subject population, funding sources, benefits and alternatives risks, conflicts of interest, informed consent, consent process, privacy, confidentiality, and qualification of the researcher (Musoba, Jacob, & Robinson, 2014). The data for the study were secondary. The researcher removed all identifying information for students and colleges from the data.

The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Investigator Education course certificate is in place. There is a thorough understanding of the essential components for conducting an ethical study to assure the protection of participants and the State of California community colleges. The study has no identifying information on community college student's data examined.

Confidentiality

Secondary data from the CCCCO–Data-Mart exclude identifying information on the individual participants. Anonymity assures confidentiality in the secondary data collection process; no audio or videotaping took place in the data collection process. The researcher used a password-protected personal computer for analysis. The assurance of confidentiality process included a password-protected external hard drive as a backup measure for saving the secondary data sourced for this study for a minimum of three years. At the end of the three-year term, data from this study are subject to be deleted or stored similarly. Reported findings are reported in aggregate only.

Means to Ensure Study Validity

The validity of the findings from the study is only as accurate as the data collected and the instruments the researcher used (Creswell, 2014). For an accurate defense of research inferences, with empirically meaningful outcomes, the installation of a recent version of Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet software on a private password-protected laptop computer was conducted. Secondary source data were used in the study to assure the accuracy of outcomes and conclusions.

Reporting Findings

The study's plan for reporting research findings is providing the answers to the research question and hypothesis with an analysis of the data used in the 2-tail dependent group paired samples t-test method design of research. The answers from the research questions' findings sought to find evidence for a positive shift in the State of California community colleges' education student retention issues and success plans for African American students.

However, the benefits from the research do not apply only to African American students; the information applies to most underrepresented, marginalized community college students who need support in their educational endeavors. Therefore, the analysis of comparative data presented in the research findings guides the directions for community college administrators, faculty, and staff. Ultimately, the information benefits the community college student.

Implications for Further Research

Subsequently, this study adhered to the suggestion of Milem, Berger, and Dey, (2000) as it pertained to conducting future research of retention on students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Milem et al. (2000) suggested utilizing midrange theories exploring the interaction between specific identifies of students and campuses, contributing to the theory on a micro level. Scholars proposed the implementation of the theory for providing information on African American students in the State of California community colleges (Tinto, 2006, 2012). For future research, the use of a mixed-methods research process for a study of African American males and females with the interaction between those who achieve high academic success in higher education, compared to those students who do not have success academically.

What to Expect in Chapter IV

Chapter IV of the study includes the findings from the analysis of the secondary quantitative data. The samples are of African American students in community colleges participating in Afrocentric learning communities and African American community college students not participating in a learning community. The study sought to determine if there was an effect that the learning community had on the retention rates of students, social engagement, academic engagement and completing an Associate's of Arts degree, Associates of Science degree, or transferring to a four-year institution.

The reports from the findings indicate whether the questions are answered and provide meaningful empirical information for community college administrators, faculty, counselors, staff, and students. The researcher sought to predict without regard for a cause or affect the outcome of retention and success rates of African Americans in community college (B. Johnson, 2001). The chapter presented the findings from the research questions in an unbiased and ethical manner.

IRB and Protection of Human Subjects

This study obtained IRB approval and certification before the commencement of any research. The researcher applied for approval through the electronic management software for the Pepperdine University eProtocol IRB system. This study received expedited or exempt category seven classification status. This study did not anticipate any risk to the participants beyond the risk encountered generally in daily life.

Chapter IV: Research Results

Chapter I of the study stated the problems; the study reported the problems associated with the achievement gaps in the retention and success rates of African Americans in the State of California community colleges. The chapter is organized in terms of the two specific research questions posed in Chapter I. The chapter first reports the purpose of the study. The researcher examined the secondary data gathered from the State of California community colleges aggregated by African American students enrolled in the Afrocentric learning community. The researcher analyzed the outcomes of the data with paired samples t-test to determine the statistical effects of the learning community on the problems of low retention and success rates of African American community college students in the State of California.

The purpose of this quantitative nonexperimental study was to assess the effect of an Afrocentric learning community on the retention rates of African American community college students and the completion of Associates of Arts degree, Associates of Science degree, or transferring to a four-year institution. This quantitative nonexperimental study aimed to assess the statically significant effect if any, of an Afrocentric learning community on the retention, success, and completion rates of African American students in the State of California public community colleges statewide. The study compared the degree applicable retention, rates, degree applicable success rates, transferability retention, and success rates of African American students. The data were gathered from the outcomes of the students from populations of the State of California community colleges that have a consortium site of the Mafanikio Community, an Afrocentric learning community on campus for cohort Fall 2016–2019.

This chapter presents the results and findings of this quantitative nonexperimental study. The data were collected virtually via the Internet from CCCCO–Data-Mart, an open-source

secondary-data resource. This chapter consists of an overview of the research study and

quantitative analysis, utilizing descriptive statistics to answer Research Questions 1 and 2, as

well as confirmation for the hypotheses for the study.

The premise of this study was based on the following parameters: student retention,

social engagement, academic engagement, the completion of an Associate's of Arts degree or

Associate of Science degree, and transferable to a four-year institution. Secondary open-source

data were used to answer the research questions and hypotheses. Student persistence is the first

process toward institutional retention and, ultimately, student success. Retention, as the CCCCO

defines it, is adhered to in this study. Community college districts in other states may define the

term retention to describe a student's completion of a course rather than a progression from one

term to another.

This section of the study reiterates the research questions and hypotheses with answers.

Furthermore, the formulas for the independent samples t-test quantitative method utilized in the

study are provided. The outputs for the analysis performed with IBM SPSS are depicted.

Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between African American community college students'

    retention and participating in an Afrocentric learning community?

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the effect of the intervention of an

Afrocentric learning community on the degree applicable retention rates of African American

California community college students who participated in an Afrocentric learning community.

There was a statistically significant decrease in the degree applicable retention rates from cohort

Fall 2016 ($M = 87$, $SD = 7$) to cohort Fall 2019 ($M = 9$, $SD = 9$), t (15) $= 7$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed

s). The degree applicable means of cohort Fall 2019 of the post group decreased significantly.

This result was in line with the overall retention rates of African American California community college students. The retention rates of these students decrease with attrition throughout three years or 150% of the average time to matriculate and graduate (Bush & Bush, 2010; Wood & Harris, 2013). The results were inconclusive as to whether the Afrocentric learning community had a positive effect on the community colleges' retention rates.

2. Is there a relationship between African American community college students' participating in an Afrocentric learning community and success or completion of Associates of Arts degree, Associates of Science degree, or transferring to a four-year institution?

The results of the data analysis were inconclusive. It could not be determined that an Afrocentric learning community had a significant effect on the degree applicable success rates of the African American California community college students.

Hypotheses

H_{0a}: No statistically significant relationship exists between the degree applicable retention rates of African American community college students who participate in an Afrocentric learning community and those African American community college students who do not.

- H_{0a}: $\mu_1 = \mu_2$ or $(\mu_1 = 0)$

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate the effect of the intervention of an Afrocentric learning community on the degree applicable retention rates of African American California community college students who participated in an Afrocentric learning community. There was a statistically significant decrease in the degree applicable retention rates from cohort Fall 2016 ($M = 87$, $SD = 7$) to cohort Fall 2019 ($M = 69$), $SD = 12$, $t(17) = 6$, $p < .001$ (two-

tailed). The mean decrease in degree-applicable retention rates was 9.375, with a 95%

confidence interval ranging from 13.89, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.037 to

25.86. The eta squared statistic (.09) indicated a moderate effect size.

The researcher accepted the null hypothesis stating that there is not a significant

difference between the two means for the degree applicable retention rates of African American

students participating in an Afrocentric learning community. There was enough evidence to

suggest that there is a significant difference between the two means of the degree applicable

retention rates. The level of significance is less than 0.05.

H_{1a}: A statistically significant relationship exists between the degree applicable retention

rates of African American community college students who participate in an Afrocentric learning

community.

The researcher accepts the hypothesis that a statistically significant relationship does

exist between the degree applicable retention rates of African American community college

students and their participation in an Afrocentric learning community.

- H_{1a}: $\mu \neq 2$ or ($\mu_1 \neq 0$)

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the effect of the intervention of an

Afrocentric learning community on the degree applicable success rates of African American

California community college students who participated in an Afrocentric learning community.

There was a statistically significant decrease in the degree applicable retention rates from cohort

Fall 2016 ($M = 88$, $SD = 6$) to cohort Fall 2019 ($M = 87$, $SD = 9$), t (16) = 2.13, $p < .001$ (two-

tailed). The mean decrease in degree-applicable success rates was 4.07, with a 95% confidence

interval ranging from 4.71with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.037 to 9.375. The eta

squared statistic (.09) indicated a large effect size.

H_{0b}: The participation of African American community college students in an

Afrocentric learning community does not have a statistically significant relationship in predicting

the transferable success rates or the awarding of an Associate's of Arts degree or Associate of

Science degree.

- H_{0b}: $\mu_1 = \mu_2$ or ($\mu_1 = 0$)

H_{1b}: The participation of African American community students in an Afrocentric

learning community has a statistically significant relationship in predicting the success rate or the

awarding of an Associate's of Arts degree or Associate of Science degree.

- H_{1a}: $\mu \neq_2$ or ($\mu_1 \neq 0$)

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the effect of the intervention of an

Afrocentric learning community on the applicable success rates of African American California

community college students who participated in an Afrocentric learning community. There was a

statistically significant difference in the degree applicable retention rates from cohort Fall 2016

($M = 88$, $SD = 7$) to cohort Fall 2019 ($M = 66$, $SD = 9$), $t(16) = 2.12$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed). The

mean increase in degree-applicable success rates was 21, with a 95% confidence interval ranging

from 21 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 16 to 25, not crossing 0. The eta squared

statistic (.08) indicated a moderate effect size. The hypothesis is accepted. The participation of

African American community college students in an Afrocentric learning community had a

positive effect on the success or completion rates of the students.

The tables below provide the outcomes of the independent samples t-test analyzed with

IBM SPSS software. The information provided the researcher with the information necessary to

answer the research question and make the decisions to reject or accept the hypotheses. The

above decisions made by the researcher are based on the data outputs.

Table 6 depicts the Degree Applicable Retention Rates for Data Set 1. The information is broken out by sample pairs for cohort Fall16 and 2019. The output from the analysis performed through IBM SPSS is provided.

Table 6

Data Set 1–Degree Applicable Retention Rates

Pair 1	Mean	*n*	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
2016	87	17	7	2
2019	68	17	10	2

Note. Independent Paired Samples t-test Statistics Outcome

Table 7 below depicts the degree applicable retention rates 95% confidence interval of the deviation difference comparing Cohort Fall 2016 to Cohort Fall 2019. The output from the analysis performed through IBM SPSS is provided.

Table 7

Data Set 1—Degree Applicable Retention Rates 95% Confidence Interval of the d\Difference

Pair 1	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	Lower	Upper	*t*	df	Sig, (2-Tailed)
2016–2019	19	7	3	12	25	6	16	.001

Note. Cohort Fall 2016 and Fall 2019. Independent Paired Samples *t*-test Statistics Outcome

Table 8 depicts Transfer Success Retention Rates as outputs from IBM SPSS for the Paired *t*-test independent samples statistics analysis of Data Set 2. The sample means, standard deviation, and standard error are provided. The independent samples were gathered for cohort Fall 204 and Fall 2019.

Table 8

Data Set 2–Transfer Success Retention Rates Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	*n*	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Pair 1 2016	88	17	6	2
2019	87	17	5	1

Note. Independent Paired Samples t-test Statistics Outcome

Table 9 depicts outcomes from the paired *t*-test mean standard deviation error differences 95% confidence interval of the mean deviation difference for the transfer success retention rates as outputs from IBM SPSS. The table compares data gathered from Cohort Fall 2016 with Cohort Fall 2019.

Table 9

Paired Differences 95% Confidence Interval of the d\Difference

Pair 1	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	Lower	Upper	*t*	df	Sig, (2-Tailed)
2016–2019	6	6	1	-2.394	3.6	.4	16	.681

Note. Independent Paired Samples *t*-test Statistics Outcome

Table 10 depicts Transfer Success Retention Rates as outputs processed from IBM SPSS for the Paired Samples Statistics analysis of Data Set 3. The sample means, standard deviation, and standard error are provided. The independent samples data were gathered from The State of California Community College Chancellor's Office, Management Information Systems, Data Mart for cohort Fall 2014 and Fall 2019. Table 11 is a continuation of the IBM SPSS output.

Table 10

Data Set 3–Degree Applicable Retention Rates

	Mean	*n*	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Pair 1 2016	88	17	6	2
2019	87	17	5	2

Table 11 below depicts the independent samples paired *t*-test differences 95%confidence intervals for the means standard deviation difference for transfer Success Retention Rates as outputs from IBM SPSS for the Paired Samples Statistics analysis of Data Set 3.

Table 11

Paired Differences 95% Confidence Interval of the d\Difference

Pair 1	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	Lower	Upper	*t*	df	Sig, (2-Tailed)
2016–2019	.6	6	1	-2	4	.4	16	.7

Note. Independent Paired Samples *t*-test Statistics Outcome

Overview of the Design

The purpose of the quantitative nonexperimental study was to determine the effect of the Mafanikio Community, an Afrocentric learning community on the retention rates of African American students in the State of California community colleges. The research methodology design for the study was a descriptive statistics nonexperimental process with postpositive assumptions using paired-samples *t*-tests. The study sought to review retrospectively secondary data with an examination of differences from archival secondary data to determine if the Afrocentric learning community affected student retention, success, and transferable rates.

The variables were not manipulated in any manner. The data represented a particular time frame for African American California community students, cohort Fall 2016-Fall 2019 (Barnham, 2015). For this study, the researcher used archival data from the CCCCO–Data-Mart from Fall 2016 as the base year data, through Fall 2019. The descriptive statistic research design examined the relationship of variables that are instrumental in answering research questions (Creswell, 2014).

The quantitative research design allowed the collection of secondary data from CCCCO– Data-Mart with populations of the State of California community college. The data include African American students from the Afrocentric learning community, with sample sizes from the studies ample enough for independent samples t-test analysis. The quantitative study was appropriate based on the method's ability to use descriptive statistics.

The dependent paired samples t-tests were performed to determine the differences in the African American students' academic performances while participating in the Afrocentric learning community. The purpose of the t-test was to determine if there is a significant difference greater than .05, between the means of the retention and success rates for cohort Fall 2016 and Fall 2019 of African American students enrolled in the Afrocentric learning community on California community college campuses.

Secondary Data Information

The archival secondary data for the study is sourced from CCCCO Management Information System Data-Mart are presented along with descriptive statistics, utilizing paired samples t-test for analysis of the data outcomes. The data for retention success and completion rates represent the Fall 2016-Fall 2019 cohort of African American students. The researcher filtered the general data to generate data reports for retention, success, and transferable rates for

the students by the groups for cohort Fall 2016 and 2019, indicating the ethnicity of African

Americans. Based on the pattern of community college students entering colleges at untraditional

older ages, or not the traditional 17–24 age bands (Cohen, & Brawer, 2014), the researcher did

not aggregate the data by age in the study. The Afrocentric learning communities in the study

have varying ages of students, not just entering traditional-aged first-year college students.

Each California community college reported data to the CCCCO–Data-Mart that included

information detailing and identifying student information, such as birth dates and social security

numbers; however, only the aggregate data appear in the CCCCO–Data-Mart. This process

protects the personal information and identities of the students and the colleges. The reliability of

these data is established through syntactical and referential editing at each college and the

CCCCO Management Information Systems Division.

Population and Sample Selection

The objective of this quantitative nonexperimental study was to determine if there is a

relationship among the means of the retention, success, and transferable rates of those African

American community college students who participated in the Afrocentric learning community

and those students who did not participate. The State of California has 115 community colleges

within 72 community college districts, with a total enrolled student population of 2.1 million

students. The total African American population is 6,199. The Afrocentric learning community

has six regions throughout the State of California, located on 61 community college campuses

and three consortiums on university and out-of-state schools. The researcher determined the

sample population for the study from the total population of the Afrocentric learning community

located on the State of California community college campuses. The Mafanikio Community has

50 consortiums for the cohort Fall 2019 organization-wide, and 10,876 African American

students enroll in nondistance education, degree applicable, and transferable programs, receiving

student support services.

The sample size for the study consisted of 17 State of California community colleges

with African American students enrolled full time in degree-applicable and transferable

programs with the Afrocentric learning community ($n = 17$), representing a total population of

African American students of 5,760. The sample mean is normally distributed. The study utilizes

the two means of the groups for analysis with IBM SPSS (Pallant, 2013). The full-time enrolled

calculation is essential in community colleges because there is a large percentage of part-time

students who enroll in less than full-time status (Cohen & Brawer, 2014). The population

selection process included indicating the instruction method, which is nondistance education

only—eliminating the distance education students from the data. The distance education students

do not qualify for participation in the Mafanikio Community because they are not physically on

campus to engage in academic and social activities.

Table 12 provides information on the size of the entire student population for the State of

California Community College for Cohort Fall 2016. The number indicates how extensive the

State of California community college district is.

Table 12

Cohort Fall 2018—Statewide Student Count and Retention Rates

	Student Count	Retention Rate
Statewide	3,313,342	85.63
AA Statewide	245,473	80.39

Note. Nondistance Education Methods only. According to the State of California Community

College Chancellor's Office. AA= African American.

Another control variable to select the community colleges for the research sample identified the size of the college gauged by full-time enrolled student numbers. The sample size of 17 community colleges from each of the governance structures was adequate. The research questions are restated. Relevant data were collected, analyzed, and aligned back to research questions. Key points included the overall guiding research questions which are: (a) Is there a relationship between African American community college students' completion of Associates of Arts degree, Associates of Science degree, and participating in an Afrocentric learning community?; (b) Is there a relationship between African American community college students' participating in an Afrocentric learning community and transferring to a four-year institution?

Table 13 provides information on the population of African American students enrolled in the California community college district. The table also provides information on the number of African American students enrolled in the Afrocentric learning community. Moreover, the community college district has the highest population of African American community college students in the world (State of California, n.d.)

Table 13

Population Cohort Fall 2011

Populations	Groups African American Students	Population Size	
1	Statewide District-colleges-Non-Distance Education Degree Applicable	245,473	390
2	Statewide Mafanikio Community	15,016	417

Note. 1. African American students, all enrolled in California community colleges. 2. African American students, all enrolled in the Afrocentric learning community.

Demographics of the Study

The collected open-source secondary data for this study consisted of the following demographic data: Inclusive of State of California District Colleges; Cohort-Fall term 2016-Fall2019; All Program Types; Nondistance Educational Method; and Report Area including Ethnicity (State of California, n.d.) The collected open-sourced secondary data had no individual student identification information in the reports. The researcher followed IRB procedures of saving all statistical outputs and data sets on a password-protected computer on an encrypted network.

No commercial cloud storage systems were utilized for data files. All information on this study will be downloaded onto a flash drive and stored in a secure locked fire and waterproof cabinet. The information will then be deleted from the personal computer. All information from this will be destroyed after three years. The researcher followed the appropriate procedures in managing secondary data to protect the privacy and confidentiality of organizations, institutions, faculty, staff, and students.

Study Procedures

A strategic set of procedures followed in conducting the study are outlined in the list below.

1. The researcher presents a successful preliminary oral defense of the study to chapter chair and committee members in March 2019.

2. Obtain approval from the chapter chair and Committee member to proceed with the study with recommended modifications—March 2019.

3. Submit the Form P1—Study Description and Form P2 Preliminary Oral Schedule Request to Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology IRB for

approval to conduct the study—April 2019 and receive approval, April 2019.

4. Submit the Pepperdine University eProtocol application for an IRB exempt status

approval for the study.

5. Log onto the Internet from a personal laptop computer with a private server through

Frontier Communications Internet provider that has security protection built-in, connect the state

of CCCCO Web site, connect Data Mart data retrieval system—obtain secondary data on the

African American community college students.

6. Analysis of secondary data in March 2020 and write Chapters IV and V of the

dissertation in March 2020.

7. Submit dissertation to Pepperdine's Writing Center of APA clearance, March 2020.

Confidentiality

Secondary data from CCCCO and the Mafanikio Community excluded identifying

information on the individual participants. Anonymity assures confidentiality in the secondary

data collection process; no audio or videotaping took place in the data collection process. The

researcher used a personal computer for analysis with password protection. The assurance of

confidentiality process included a password-protected external hard drive as a backup measure

for saving the secondary data sourced for the study for a minimum of three years. The data was

removed from the hard drive and downloaded on a flash drive for storage. At the end of the

three-year term, data from the study are subject to be deleted or stored in a similarly secure

manner. Reported findings were reported in aggregate only.

Findings of the Study

After retrieving data, the secondary data from the CCCCO–Data-Mart, the researcher

performed an analysis of the data with IBM SPSS. The researcher performed paired samples *t*-

tests on the sample population of the Afrocentric learning community at 17 California community college consortiums. The researcher constructed four sets of data for input into IBM SPSS.

The researcher performed the paired samples *t*-tests on the cumulative learning center consortiums degree applicable retention and success rates, and transferable retention and success rates for cohorts Fall 2016. The students consisted of the full-time entering students, and Fall 2019 for the full-time students after matriculating for three years or 150% of the matriculation time for graduation or transfer to a four-year institution. The average graduation time for African American California community college students is six years (Bush & Bush, 2010; State of California, n.d.).

Table 14 provides the means for the degree applicable retention, success, and transferability rates for African American students enrolled in the Afrocentric learning community for cohort Fall 2016 and 2019. The data were gathered from the State of California Community College Chancellor's Office, Management Information Systems, Data Mart, on a sample of institutional retention, success, and transferable rates from California community colleges with the Afrocentric consortium on a community college campus. The researcher processed the data with IBM SPSS analysis. The comparative degree applicable retention rate means of the Fall Cohort from 2016 to 2019 -10 point-decrease. The degree applicable success rate means for the same period also show a decrease of -09.

Table 14

Degree Applicable Retention Rates Afrocentric Learning Community

Cohort Fall	2016	2019
Degree Applicable Retention Rate Means	87	67
Degree Applicable Success Rate Means	87	66
Transferable Retention Rate Means	88	87
Transferable Success Rate Means	88	87

Note. Data sources from CCCCO–Data-Mart and analyzed with IBM SPSS software.

Conclusion

Secondary data sources were used in this study to measure California community college institutional rates of African American community college students in the following areas: (a) retention rates, (b) transferability to a four-year institution, and (c) degree completion or success rates. There is a statistically significant difference in the degree applicable rates among the students. However, the means of the degree applicable retention rates decreased. The decreasing trend is in alignment with the overall population of African American California community college students, whereas the population of students has the lowest retention rates compared to all other groups.

Notwithstanding, the results are inconclusive. A more in-depth mixed-methods experimental study might produce different results. The tracking of individual students throughout three to four years would provide a more robust study with more accurate results. The analysis of the transferable success rates also had no statistically significant difference in means, and the null hypothesis was accepted. The results of the data analysis are inconclusive. It is not

determined from the data gathered, and the analysis of the data, whether an Afrocentric learning community has a positive effect on the degree applicable success rates of the African American community college students. The Afrocentric learning community had a positive effect on the success or completion of Associates of Arts degree, Associates of Science degree, or transferring to a four-year institution.

In the analysis of data from the secondary source, outcomes of the sample population of Afrocentric learning centers degree applicable and transferable retention rates produced means that were consistently lower for the postintervention or students participating in the Afrocentric learning center. The means for the retention and success rates decreased form Fall 2016 to Fall 2019. Research shows that because of several uncontrollable variables, retention, and success rates of African Americans in California community colleges are significantly below the rates of the majority of community college students, it is not unexpected to see decreases in retention and success rates of the population in this study.

The secondary data gathered for the analysis to answer the research questions were analyzed utilizing an independent samples t-test with IBM SPSS software. The tables of the outputs are presented in the chapter providing insight into the California community college student demographics. California has the largest community college district with the most substantial number of African American community college students in the world.

Examining the retention rates for the African American students participating in the Afrocentric learning community was between 59% and 77%, compared to the nonparticipating students with retention rates between 33% and 55%. From the results of the study performed by the Afrocentric community's headquarters, the students who participated in the Afrocentric

learning community consistently outperformed the students who did not participate in the learning community.

Summary

This Chapter restates the research purpose of determining if an Afrocentric learning community has a significant statistical effect on African American students in California community colleges. The problem of the comparatively low retention, success, and transferability rates of the African American community college students was examined. The researcher gathered secondary-data from the CCCCO–Data-Mart for institutional retention, success, and transferability data for the students.

The chapter presented the results from the data analysis for the community colleges' institutional retention, success, and transferability rates. The two research questions were answered, and the hypothesis was addressed as follows. The results of the research study on the effect of an Afrocentric learning community on the retention, success, and transferability rates of African American students enrolled in California community colleges are inconclusive. The paired independent samples t-test output provided a significant difference. However, the results were negative. There was a decrease in degree-applicable retention rates. The degree-applicable success rates showed no significant difference. The results of the data analysis are inconclusive. It cannot be determined that an Afrocentric learning community had a significant effect on the degree applicable success rates of the African American California community college students.

The null hypothesis stating that there is not a significant difference between the two means for the degree applicable retention rates of African American students participating in an Afrocentric learning community was accepted. The researcher accepted the hypothesis that the

participation of African American community college students in an Afrocentric learning

community had a positive effect on the success or completion rates of the students.

      Chapter V provides explanations for the findings from the analysis of the secondary data.

The chapter provides answers to the problem stated in Chapter I. The researcher reflects on the

findings from the study. The researcher provides meaning to the findings of the study and

integrates the findings with current theory research and practices.

Chapter V: Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overview of the Problem

As the researcher states in Chapter I, the study reported here examined the problems associated with the low retention and success rates of African American students in California's community colleges. African American students are underachieving disproportionately in community colleges in California and nationally in comparison to other groups, including all ethnic and gender subgroups (Goings, 2016; Harper, 2010; Wood & Harris, 2013). The retention and success rates drive graduation rates. African Americans community college students in California have the lowest graduation rates within the standard time of all other groups at 34%. The national graduation rate for African Americans from community colleges is 42%, the lowest of all groups (Snyder, 2018b). Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this comparison, a nonexperimental study, was to assess the effect of an Afrocentric learning community on the retention of African American community college students and the completion of Associates of Arts degree, Associates of Science degree, or to transfer to a four-year institution and the students participating in a learning community. The variables were: (a) degree applicable retention rates, (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associate of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The one dependent variable for the study is the Afrocentric learning community. Included also was participation in the Mafanikio Community, an Afrocentric learning community, and being awarded an Associate's of Arts degree, Associates of Science degree, or transferring to a four-year institution.

Review of the Methodology

The research methodology design for this study was a quantitative nonexperimental

process with postpositive assumptions. The study sought to understand the possible relationships

of variables, such as what community college and student retention rates had on the variables.

The intervention is an Afrocentric learning community. The expected outcomes were the

improvements in institutional retention and success and completion rates. The improvements in

the retention and success rates drive the improvements in the student's completion of an

Associate's of Arts degree, completion of an Associate's of Science degree, or transfer to a four-

year institution. As a result of the study, California community college students, college

administrators, faculty, and counselors will understand the merit of including participation in a

professional learning community as part of the student's success plan. The State of California

will recognize the financial gains of increased retention and increase the amounts of annual

grants awarded to programs such as the Mafanikio Community.

Findings Related to the Literature

This section of the chapter relates the findings from the study to the literature the

researcher reviewed in Chapter II. Chapter II gave a descriptive account of facts, supporting the

conclusion in Chapter V. The researcher links literature strands from the literature review to the

implications herein. The literature review contains several literature strands, as recommended by

Butin (2009); the researcher linked only the five primary literature strands relating to the study.

The five primary literature strands are: (a) Student academic engagement, (b) Student social

engagement, (c) Retention, (d) Student persistence and completion, and (e) Student satisfaction.

For this study, the researcher examined whether an Afrocentric learning community

affected the retention, success, and completion rates of African American community college

students. The study compared the degree applicable retention, success, and degree completion rates of a cohort of community college students. The anticipated time to graduate from the two-year community college is three years or 150% of the usual time. The California community college students' average graduation time is six years. The researcher compared the institutional retention, success, and transferability rates from the students the first year to the fall of the third year.

The researcher hypothesized that there would be a statistically significant difference in retention, success, and completion rates after the African American community college students who actively participated in an Afrocentric learning community. The results of the analysis were inconclusive for the degree applicable retention rates of the students, or whether there is a positive effect. The means for the retention rates decreased. The cumulative institutional retention and success rates were insufficient in deciphering the outcomes because of other uncontrollable variables associated with the students.

The study utilized Tinto's SIM model of attrition. The results of the paired samples t-tests to determine the effect of the Afrocentric learning community for degree appliable retention rates of the African American students were inconclusive. The mean of the scores decreased from 2014 to 87 to 2019 at 67. There was a statistically significant difference in the scores $p < 0$. However, the researcher does not interpret the decreasing output as the Afrocentric learning community having a negative or positive effect on the institutional retention rates of the students. Numerous variables associated with the retention and success of community college students are not controlled in the analysis. Because of the invasiveness required to obtain data on variables and personal information at the risk of breaching their privacy, the data were not collected for analysis.

There is a considerable amount of research on the issues related to student departure from college presented by Tinto (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005; Deil-Amen, 2011). Tinto emphasized in his research an issue that is pivotal for community colleges in evaluating institutional retention and success rates. The exiting of a student from a community college does not confirm that the student is dropping out. It is a common practice for the California community college students to take classes at several different community colleges. Within urban areas of California, there are multiple colleges within commuting distance. If there is a required class needed by a student that is full at their community college, that student may take the class at another community class across town. The CCCCO Accountability Department does not consider the student's multiple college enrollments in order for them to meet their goals. The district is not accurately tracking the students in the system, resulting in misleading information. The student may have transferred to a four-year institution before completing an Associate's degree.

The literature supports the essentialness of a student's formal and informal engagement in college to achieve academic success (Karp, 2011b; Tinto, 1975, 2006). The level of student engagement is not measurable from the secondary data gathered from the community college's Data-Mart. Conducting a longitudinal qualitative study with surveys of the students and the staff will provide more accurate data for the research on the student's engagement.

The open-door admission policy of the community college attracts a cross-section of students. The students do not have a common goal of earning a degree. The students' desires and preconceived value of a degree should be considered when evaluation retention and success rates

(Chapin, 2008; Derby & Smith, 2004; Tinto, 2017, 2006). The data gathered for the study

aggregated for degree-applicable nondistance students in the Afrocentric learning community.

Moreover, the Mafanikio Community aims to recruit highly motivated students into the

program. The program does not deny enrollment if the students meet the basic requirements for

the program. The basic requirements are that the student must be enrolled in college and be

willing to participate in the classes and activities. The issue of poor retention in the past was

blamed on the abilities and effort of the student. Tinto incorporated the concept of shifting the

blame for poor student retention from the student to the institution (Chaves, 2006; Lawrence,

2002; Tinto, 2006). Tinto adapted the philosophy from Spady (Aljohani, 2016; Spady, 1971).

The Mafanikio Community, an Afrocentric learning community program, is designed

around student academic and social engagement. Chapter II has a list of the learning

community's goals and objectives. The entire premise of their program involves the student in

high-impact formal and informal activities (Reason, 2003; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). The institutional

retention rates are not reflective of students matriculating in the Afrocentric learning community.

The reports generated by the learning community provide an accurate accounting of the retention

and success rates of the students.

Tinto's SIM model of attrition is based on the theories of Spady (1971), who, in turn,

based his theory on the works of Van Gennep's theory of rites of passage (Swail, 2014; R.

Taylor, 2012). The student's matriculation in the Mafanikio Community is a rite of passage. The

components of Van Gannep's theory are (a) separation, (b) transition, (c) incorporation (Metz,

2002; Swail, 2014). Scholars continue to build on Tinto's model with the changing

demographics.

The rites of passage may be a concept that is familiar to those students involved in the Boy Scouts of American, Girl Scouts of America, or other organizations that develop youth. These programs incorporate these concepts into their programs. The students' engagement in college garners social capital that benefits them beyond college.

The research builds on the scholar Vincent Tinto's SIM model and theory of student departure. The research includes the learning community component in the framework (Figure 1). With student connectivity and engagement being essential to the academic and social achievement of the community college student, the professional learning community fills the gap by providing a formal connectivity structure in their programs.
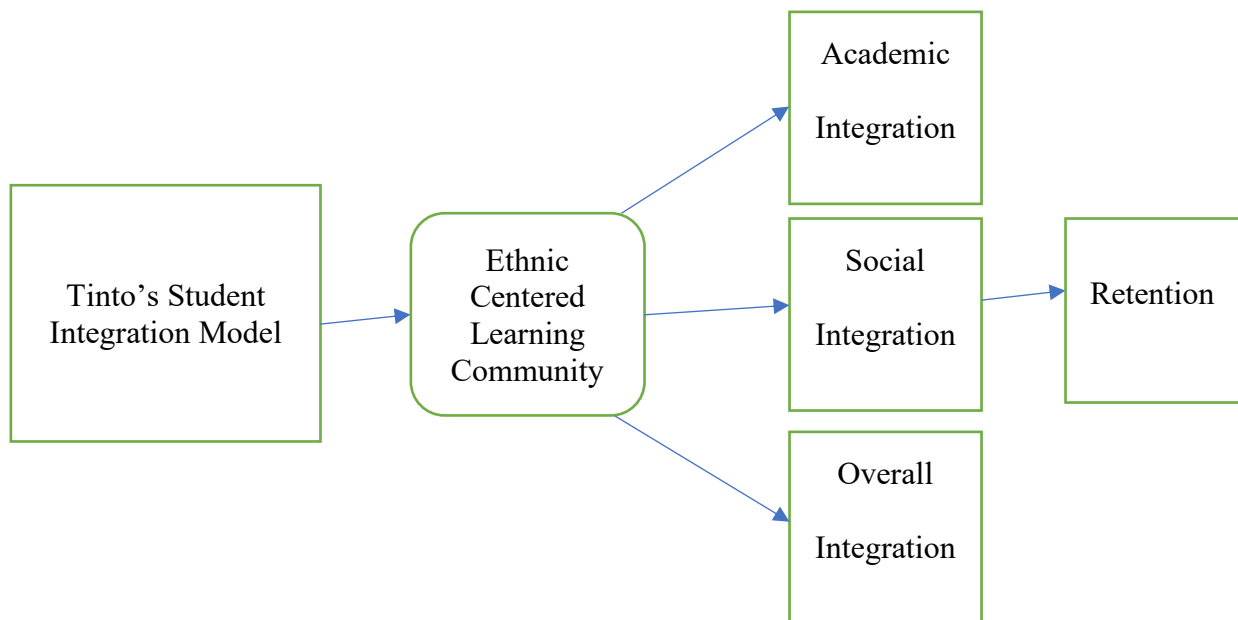
Figure 1. Tinto's (1975) modified student integration model. Ethnic Centered Learning Community = Afrocentric learning Community for the study. This model is modified to include the components in Tinto's Model of Student Integration from "Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research", by V. Tinto, 1975, *Review of Educational Research, Volume 45,* pp. 89-125. Copyright [1975] by Sage. Adapted with permission.

The model in Figure 1 depicts a modified version of Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model. The researcher included the Afrocentric learning community as an input variable to affect students' performance in the student's process for academic and social progress in the community college setting. The mutually interdependent integration variables will affect students' performance, with students' persistence intention, institutional commitment, and academic engagement.

The Mafanikio Community's calendar links classes and social activities. The program's implementation of Tintos theory is instrumental in designing assessment systems for the learning community. The model allows for evaluations of formal and informal academic and social connections in assessing the student's level of engagement in the college (Barker & Avery, 2012; Tinto, 1975). This process assists the learning community counselors in maintaining the students' progress academically and socially. Academic and social skills are tracked by the staff, assessing the student's level of commitment to the college (Min & Chau, 2012). The students in the Mafanikio Community sign a contract each semester, committing themselves to the programs.

According to Tinto, the connected academic and social experiences in college pay benefits for the student's life and into their professional careers. The researcher is witness to the success of the programs. For the last six years, the researcher has attended the learning community's culmination banquets for one of the learning community' consortiums.

Each year between 25 and 40 African American and Latino students who participated in the program have either earned enough academic credits to transfer to a four-year institution or graduated with an Associate's of Arts Degree. The institutional retention and success data maintained by the CCCCO does not tell the full story of the students' achievements and social

growth. Even though this is not a qualitative study, the researcher has experienced the outcomes of academic and social achievements.

The researcher observed the students' progress in the learning community each year. The researcher is acquainted with formal learning community students by association, whereas the formal students have graduated from a four-year institution and with an advanced degree such as Medical Doctor. There are cases where the formal students have become professionals working with the Mafanikio Community in various capacities such as councilors, administrators, and faculty. They reaped the merits of the program and have a desire to give back to the learning community. A typical comment the research hears is that they want to make sure the learning community continues to grow and develop because they gained so much from it.

According to the literature, a student's desire to participate in the full college experience and earn a degree is essential in the process (Chapin, 2008; Derby & Smith, 2004; Tinto, 2006, 2012; Zell, 2010). The Afrocentric learning community provides a safe place for the student to socialize and work on academics. The community gives the student who desires it a sense of belonging in the college environment and the greater community beyond where he or she lived during high school.

When the student is isolated socially with no sense of belonging, there is a high probability he or she might drop out of college. The Mafanikio Community's SIMS model has built-in safeguards circumventing isolationist behaviors. The program offers high-impact designed student activities academically and socially.

Student Engagement—Academic and Social

The Mafanikio Community learning community is, in essence, a rite-of-passage program with an induction process and a set of requirements the student meets in order to progress

through the program. With Tinto's theory of academic and social engagement being derived

from Van Gennep's theory of rite of passage (Swail, 2014; R. Taylor, 2012), the program is

ceremonial in its programs. Van Gennep's theory consists of the following elements: (a)

separation—At this stage, the student moves on from his or her former life, which consists of

former habits, friends, and family members, to emerge into college life; (b) Transition—The

student takes into consideration the stress factors related to separating from his or her former life;

and (c) Incorporation—The student is integrated and accepted as a member in a new academic

centered community (Metz, 2002; Smith et al., 2015; Swail, 2014). With each participating

semester, the student moves to the next phase of the rite-of-passage process until transfer or

graduation from the college.

Upon entering college, Tinto suggested the students separate and transition from their

former lives, such as neighborhood friends and prior, perhaps harmful activities. This separation

process is accomplished by engaging in the right activities associated with the college experience

(Hu, 2010). The literature supported the Mafanikio Community's robust social and academic

resources, supporting the success of the student, and yielding positive social and academic

outcomes success of the student (Hu, 2011). The organization's staff plans activities in

collaboration with the students. An essential component to improve student retention in

community colleges is creating opportunities for students to participate in at least two high-

impact activities (Kuh, 2008a). The students participating in the learning community engage in

several high-impact activities each semester.

Tinto focused on the stages of development in his theory, and it is the basis of retention

research program designs (Swail, 2014; Tinto, 1998). Lifelong friendships have developed with

students participating in the Mafanikio Community. They are extending their connections and

friendships by attending the same four-year institutions and pursuing professional careers together.

With student engagement defined as an investment of the students' energy and time and commitment, the students must engage themselves in the right activities. The students involving themselves in the right activities is not the sole responsibility of the students (Price, Handley, & Millar, 2011). The institution must take some responsibility in providing organizations and activities for the student to engage with practices that are empowering academically (Afolabi, 2013; Harper, 2009a; Kuh et al., 2008). The professional learning community is a program that fills these gaps for students socially and academically in community colleges. The literature supports the learning community's purpose in higher education based on Tinto's theory (Greene et al., 2008). The Mafanikio Community places a high priority on student engagement, both socially and academically.

With the institution balancing the engagement activities in which college students participate (Harper, 2009b), sufficient policy and funding are essential for the program to operate. An Afrocentric learning community caters to the needs of African American community college students. However, the learning community enrolls students of all backgrounds. The Afrocentric culture is not part of the college's regular programs. The learning community does not discriminate, regardless of ethnicity or creed, all students are welcomed into the program. Ethnicities other than African Americans have the opportunity to emerge themselves in a different culture from their own, and to learn about the African American experience in an authentic environment. The researcher has attended several programs celebrating the student's achievements. There is a cross-section of ethnicities represented, reflecting the community, with each cohort for the six years the researcher has witnessed.

The researcher has observed the outcomes of the students who participated in the Mafanikio Community's programs and activities for more than six years. The students impacted by the right activities in the Afrocentric learning community were fully engaged. The literature supported this theory (Astin et al., 2012). The outcomes are positive retention and success rates, with the majority of the students graduating or transferring to a four-year institution. Four-year universities actively recruited the students coming out of the Mafanikio Community.

Recruiters are aware that this group of students is highly motivated and well prepared to complete college-level work successfully. Recruiters from historically African American universities and colleges travel to California each semester during the days of the colleges' recruitment programs, and a large percentage of the transferring students from the learning communities choose historically African American universities and colleges to attend. The assistance in students completing and transferring that the learning community continues to provide to community college students contributes to closing the disparity for students and non-students of color.

Retention

The outputs from the analysis of the institutional degree-applicable retention rates of the groups of Mafanikio Community consortiums were inconclusive. There was no statistically significant difference in retention rates of the students from the first year of the students' enrollment to three years out or 150% of the standard time for completion. The results are a reflection of the nature of the secondary data gathered from the CCCCO. The data do not incorporate the various circumstances of each student, such as the student dropping out or being in the system throughout several years. Moreover, many students enroll in different community colleges in order to take the classes they need to graduate.

The inconclusive findings from the study are in line with retention rates in general. For the last 20 years, community college institutional retention rates results have not improved (Caruth-Blake, 2018). Several circumstantial factors negatively influence the retention of African American community college students, such as the barriers to financing a degree. The cost of a degree continues to rise disproportionally to inflation, extending the time for completion. The community college student is not the typical college student found in four-year institutions, which is generally white, male, and between the ages of 18 and 25. The fastest-growing population of community college students is older than 25, living off-campus, and working part-time or full-time. Moreover, a large number of students have responsibilities for some type of dependent care, be it a child, siblings, or a parent.

According to some scholars' takes on assessing community college retention, depending on how college campus retention rates differ, the variables that determine retention should vary accordingly in conducting assessments and research (Astin, 1999; J. Roberts & McNeese, 2010). The qualitative and quantitative variables should be considered in the research process, as each campus is different.

Effect of Persistence on Retention

The literature supports that terms persistence and retention have different meanings (Smith et al., 2015; Tinto, 1998). Retention rates are more of an evaluation of the institution, whereas persistence is an effort of the student. The literature supports the concept of community college students participating in a learning community. The students' engagement in the learning community produces higher persistence rates that most likely will lead to higher retention and success rates. According to Zhao & Kuh (2004), those community college students who are participating in a learning community are more engaged than students who did not participate in

the learning community. The students' level of engagement is pivotal to their social and academic success.

On the other hand, the literature shows three primary situations that negatively affect student retention. They are (a) institutional, (b) cognitive, and (c) social (Escobedo, 2007; Swail et al., 2003). The professional learning community incorporates components in its programs to circumvent such negative situations in the life of the student. Additionally, other factors for students dropping out of community college are: (a) enrolling in a class that will not lead to credits toward a degree or acceptable for transfer to a four-year institution, (b) inadequate time, and (c) financial shortfalls (Bers & Nyden, 2000; Escobedo, 2007). The students' academic counselors have a pivotal role in this process of proper guidance for classes that will have the proper credits for graduation or transfer.

Keeping in line with Tinto's attrition theory, indicating shifting the blame of students' low retention and success rates from the student to the institution, the faculty and staff must buy into the learning community's program for them to be successful (Escobedo, 2007; Thomas, 2002). The Mafanikio Community directors are continuously challenged by involving and training the college faculty members in the learning community concepts and programs. Some faculty members do not take on responsibility for the retention of students. The majority of the community colleges are not staffed with a sizable African American faculty.

Student retention is a college-wide responsibility. Community college students are motivated and engaged in the college experience when they notice that faculty are taking an interest in their learning. A component of the Mafanikio Community is having each student linked with a faculty member as a mentor. The researcher has observed this mentorship

component of the Mafanikio Community create student-faculty mentorships well beyond the

community college students' duration as an undergrad.

The researcher agrees with Kuh (2008), whereas the learning community has the

following components: (a) Staff tracks the participation of the student in programs and activities;

(b) Outcome of the information is a component of the student's counseling sessions, and (c) High

impact activity is the objective of the student's participation in the program. These components

can be incorporated into any professional learning community. There are other ethnic and

academic types of learning communities at community colleges.

The researcher agrees with Kuh (2008) that the community college students' involvement

in a learning community and other campus engagements are most active during the students' first

year of college. The first-year student should receive as part of new student orientation an

introduction to the learning communities on campus. The counselors have the student commit to

activities and involvement in programs at their registration in the program.

Students Engagement's Link to Student Satisfaction

This section of the chapter links the part of the literature review covering student

engagement as it links to student satisfaction. The African American community college students

consider their level of satisfaction with the institution they attend vital, particularly in

California's larger urban areas where there are several community colleges from which to

choose.

Significant differences between campuses are course offerings and course availability. In

the researcher's observations, African American community college students tend to gravitate to

the campuses with a high number of African American faculty members on staff. The students

seek a supportive environment in college.

Empirical research supports an increasing amount of literature, stipulating that the social adjustment of students may be an essential factor in predicting persistence (Kara & DeShields, 2004). The scholars argued that integration into the social environment is a vital element in commitment to a particular college (Kara & DeShields, 2004; Spady, 1971; Tinto, 1975).

According to the literature, student satisfaction is a crucial element of community college retention and success (Wood & Vasquez Urias, 2012). Student satisfaction levels, along with engagement in community colleges, is a measure of the educational effectiveness of student learning (Barnett, 2011; Kuh, 2008b; Beachboard et al., 2011) despite the study's outcomes on student retention rate improvement for students participating in an Afrocentric learning community being inconclusive.

Furthermore, the literature supports that students in institutions of higher learning participating in a professional learning community have satisfaction with the college experience, indicating an affirmative link to engagement (Daly, 2011; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). The researcher spoke with several graduating and transferring students from the Afrocentric learning community concerning their satisfaction with the learning community program. All of the responses from the student were favorable. They all indicated they would recommend incoming students to enroll in the program. The departing students indicated a gain of deep learning by their participation in out-of-class activities with the Afrocentric learning community (Kuh, 2008b). The students spoke about how the learning community enriched their social lives (Daly, 2011; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). The Mafanikio Community designs programs with student activities outside of the classroom and in the community.

African American students in community college are sensitive to perceptions of faculty where biases and preconceived assumptions about African American student's ability to perform

college-level work can grow. Subsequently, the students' level of satisfaction with these faculty members is low, ultimately adversely impacting the students' persistence and retention rates (Stambaugh & Ford, 2015), Interactions and behaviors between these faculty affect fellow students. An objective of the Mafanikio Community is to create a supportive, inclusive, and inviting learning environment.

Surprises

The researcher did not uncover any starling surprises from the outcomes of the study. The results were inconclusive. The analysis of the secondary data for the variable to determine if an Afrocentric leaning community affected degree applicable retention and success rates and transferability success rates produced output from the independent paired samples t-test produced on the IBM SPSS software was not statically significant. The null hypothesis was accepted.

The secondary data from Data-Mart does not take into consideration the trends in retention and success rates. Whereas according to the literature, retention and success rates have not improved in the last 20 years. The researcher expected the rates to decrease with the same cohort throughout three years. The California community college retention and success rates cumulatively for a cohort are not reflective of what the rates would be for a group of students who remained consistent, and Not a group of students who are dropping in and out or having revolving enrollments in multiple colleges.

Conclusions

This qualitative study allowed the researcher to present evidence as to the effect of an Afrocentric learning community on the retention and success rates of African American community college students in California. The researcher made recommendations for community

college administrators in the study through the lens of the study's conceptual framework, SIM. The secondary data were collected from the CCCCO and analyzed to determine if there was a statistically significant effect of an Afrocentric learning community on the retention, success, and completion rates of African American community college students in California. The results of the study are inconclusive.

The researcher gathered samples from secondary data for 17 consortiums at 17 California community colleges. The majority of researchers perform studies on a single college to evaluate program effectiveness. Because the effects of the study are based on characteristics of the one college, the outcomes are not generalizable. Databases such as the National Center for Education Statics might consider improving research effectiveness by incorporating programmatic data to make a positive shift in student outcomes on a national level.

The literature supports the concept of professional learning communities benefiting community college faculty and students. Some of the benefits to faculty increased collaboration with colleagues, more appreciation of the students learning, enhanced curriculum by topic cluster connections and, shared purpose (Pike et al., 2011; Rocconi, 2011). The faculty retention rates also improve with their level of satisfaction.

The community college students' retention, engagement, and completion rates improve with participation in a learning community. The student's benefits by engaging in the learning community also include improved critical thinking, social skills, communication skills, improved self-esteem, and community involvement (Pike et al., 2011; Rocconi, 2011). The students learning community involvement improves their academic achievements and experience.

Implications for Action

The literature supports the learning community concept in higher education. The Afrocentric learning community in this study has been operational in California community colleges for more than 25 years. The results in graduation and transfer rates of African American and other marginalized students continue to produce the majority of this group of students west of the Mississippi River (State of California, 2018)

The stakeholders in the California community college system, along with the district and college administrators, should take action to implement policies that will increase funding and budgets for the Afrocentric learning community. Additional funding will support the growth and stability of the organization. The districts should include the hiring of faculty to teach primarily in the clusters for the Afrocentric learning community.

According to empirical research, community college learning communities have positive effects on completion, success, and persistence (Bailey, 2005; Crisp & Taggart, 2013). Moreover, studies controlling for scores for assessment tests and high school transcripts will provide background information on the entering student. The researcher makes recommendations for such further research in the following section

Recommendations for Further Research

The problems with community college outcomes should have continuous rigorous monitoring collaboratively. In the study, the researcher analyzed three variables: (a) degree applicable retention rates, (b) success rates or academic engagement, awarding of the Associate of Arts, Associates of Science Degrees, and transfer to a 4-year institution or (c) transfer retention rates to a four-year institution of higher learning. The three variables are pivotal in community college research, considering the vastness of the problems of achievements in the community college system, a more rigorous and in-depth study should include other variables.

The researcher recommends further research on other variables that are relevant to community college retention rates. According to Slanger et al. (2015), these four are essential in predicting retention and academic success. These variables are: (a) secondary educational performance, (b) demographical and socioeconomic characteristics, (c) college integration, and (d) institutional support, financial support, financial aid conditions, and overall quality of integration. Further research on these variables in the community college setting enriches the literature.

Chapter I of the study provided statics for African American male's academic achievement rates. According to Strayhorn (2012), African American males have the lowest retention and success rates nationally and in California. The researcher recommends further study mixed-methods research design of African American males in community colleges. African American's constitute the only ethnic group where the females are outperforming the males academically. Further research should explore the causes of this phenomenon and discover solutions to improve the academic gap of the African American male. The research should include input from administrators and faculty based on their involvement with the data (Cole, 2008).

Ethnic-centered professional learning communities are becoming standard practice in community colleges nationally, mainly where there are large populations of underrepresented students (Case & Hernandez, 2013). The information and outcomes from this study will empower community college administrators and stakeholders to include ethnic-centered learning communities in all community colleges, as well as increase funding and resources for those ethnic-centered professional learning communities already operating in community colleges.

More than 15 years ago, (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010) conducted a study, providing acritical analysis of where the research is for effectiveness in evaluating practices in increasing

completion and persistence at community colleges. However, the issues with student outcomes in community colleges have not improved. The four types of practices under evaluation are as relevant today for effectiveness improvements. A summary of the areas of practice in the report for improving community college completion and persistence as identified by (Bailey et al., 2010) is (a) advising, orientation programs, counseling and, mentoring; (b) learning communities; (c) developmental education; and (d) Reform college-wide. These research areas are critical for further research; however, because of the lack of resources and interest, empirical research is yet to go forward.

Moreover, for further research, the effects of the educational history of African Americans on the retention, social engagement, and academic engagements of African Americans in community college. Such as the era of African American's struggles for legal rights to receive a just and equal education, enduring numerous barriers and challenges in pursuing an education in America. As well as insights into the effect of history it is having on retention, social engagement, and academic engagement of African American students in community college.

The researcher recommends that the United States Department of Education increase its focus on developing effective policy and institutional practices to improve the academic outcomes for the country's community colleges. America has the resources to invest in the country's most valuable asset, that is, youth and adults who are willing to learn. By educating the students effectively, and investing in practical research. The President of the United States should consider the state of America's community college academic outcomes as a national emergency, allowing resources for collaboration with national-, state-, and local-level researchers. Without the necessary budget and allocations to support public community colleges,

the probability of an improvement shift in the retention, success, and completion rates for

America's community colleges are unlikely.

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APPENDIX A

Addendum Executive Summary

Overview

Following the Final Dissertation defense on May 3, 2019, the Committee and

Chair recommended that the project "Effects of an Afrocentric Learning Community on the

Retention of African American Students in California Community Colleges: A Causal-

Comparative Non-Experimental Study," passes with significant modifications. This Executive

Summary describes how the modifications were addressed through specific areas

within the manuscript.

I.Formatting and Editing

A) Specific Modifications: Revisions needed for chapters (1- 5) to address numerous

errors. This modification was addressed through a revision of Chapters 1-5. The author also

worked with a professional editor to address formatting, grammar, and APA issues. Iterations of

the manuscript were also revised to conform to Pepperdine University GSEP, dissertation

formatting guidelines. Standard Dissertation formatting was applied to the manuscript and

verified by the editor.

B) Specific Modifications: The second modification required the author to revise

Chapter 4 to include quantitative data analyzed using IBM SPSS Software. The author revised

the chapter by changing the methodology to include an independent samples *t*-test data analysis.

These methodology changes are displayed in the following pages, 71, 78, and 80. The author

revised the methodology and design to reflect a quantitative design, resulting in provide

additional rigor in examining the problem of low retention and completion for African American

California community college students.

II.General Content Changes

    *A) Specific Modifications: "*The choice to include three reports created confusion,

especially when the data points contained in the reports were compared and calculated. The

committee recommends focusing instead on one of the reports and offer a deeper analysis."

Based on the recommendation from the final defense and review of data sources, the author

decided to focus the analysis on "Data Source #1" because it consists of data gathered from The

California Community College Chancellor's Office Data-Mart.

    The database provides in-depth data for the college's retention and success rates. The

data is aggregated by cohort, education method, gender, and ethnicity. The database also

provides break-downs of the institutional enrollment and retention counts, as well as the

retention and success rates. The database is particularly useful in the study because the database

contains aggregated information for Special Groups, such as learning communities. Therefore,

Data Sources #2 and #3 were eliminated. ". The author utilized Data Source #1, in the study for

analyzing and evaluating the data using IBM SPSS Software, these modifications are displayed

in Chapter III, on pages 78- 88, and 90.

    B) Specific Modifications: The Current manuscript uses causality language, which must

be removed throughout." To address this modification, the author removed all causality language

as a method used for the studies analysis. Specifically, this language was removed from Chapters

I, III, and IV. Further, the author changed the method design and performed a quantitative

analysis using independent samples paired *t*-test; these modifications are displayed on pages 78-

87. This process aligns with the stated research questions as it allowed the researcher to consider

the output from the analysis of the variables in a scientific manner, looking beyond just the

average means of the data and determining any statistical significance from the output. The

changes in the analytical processes ensure that the research questions are answered by using an

independent samples t-test analysis, a commonly used research method in the field of education

(Singh & Mehta, 2016).

The Data-Mart is a valid and reliable instrument for research, providing information

about students, courses, student services, outcomes, and faculty and staff (State of California,

n.d.). Additionally, the Data Mart is an open-source secondary data source, and the unit collects

academic data from 115 community colleges and 73 college districts in a general repository. The

data source is a reliable instrument utilized widely from administrators and educators to

professional organizations (State of California, n.d.).

C) Specific Modifications: "Retention, Completion, Attainment, and Persistence used

interchangeably throughout the document." The discussion of these terms was clarified in

Chapter I. Definition of Term, pages 15-17. The discussion distinguishing between the uses of

definitions, with applications of terms for the studies purpose, was analyzed on pages 17, 18, and

99. Chapter I contains a discussion of these terms with clarification in The "Definitions of

Terms," page 15-18; also pages 41 and 99. In particular, according to Petty (2014), completion

is defined as the student graduating from college, or the number of students finishing the

programs they started. While different from completion, Persistence Rates was defined as "The

percentage of students enrolled in courses from one term to the next," as displayed on page 17

and 18 (Tinto, 2006). The terms retention and persistence are often used interchangeably in the

body of educational literature (Mamiseishvili, 2012; Reason, 2003a; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, &

Kinzie, 2009). This study uses the term persistence in accordance with Tinto's definition (see

page 3).

To further clarify the use of these terms, the manuscript also describes how the terms attainment and completion is relevant. The terms attainment and completion are not interchangeable or synonymous (Adelman, 2006). Attainment measures the highest level of education that individuals have completed, while completion describes how many people finish the programs they begin' (Hagedorn, 2005) as displayed on pages 16, 18, and 38. The term attainment is primarily used in the study as it pertains to community college certificate attainment as opposed to degree completion as displayed on pages 12, 16,19, 26, 41 and 75. The author uses attainment in the document according to the definition, whereas the students have attained a degree, as displayed on pages 26, 41, and 75. In the manuscript under Definitions of Terms, educational attainment is defined as the number of years of schooling completed or degrees earned (Pascarella & Terenzini 2005).

However, according to Jensen (2011), *"Retention"* is defined as, "The measure of student continuation or progression in school from term to term. The definition of retention is given in the Definition of Terms on pages 17 and 18. The author is not analyzing individual student retention in the study. The analysis is performed on institutional retention for the California Community College Districts. Institutional retention is the measure of the proportion of students who remain enrolled at the same institution from year to year (Hagedorn, 2005) as displayed on pages 12, 17, 21, 29, and 112).

D) Specific Modifications: Remove the language of high probability—take out significance (because you are not looking at statistical significance) or prediction or estimates**.** Based on the recommendation from the final defense the author revised the methodology for the study to quantitative –using independent paired samples t-test for the analysis to determine if

there are statically significant differences in the outputs with IBM SPSS Software for data

processing as displayed on the following pages 81, 82, 95, 98.

      E) Specific Modifications: Clarify references to the use of "data" throughout the

document given you are using reports and secondary data. The author removed the Data Set # 1

from the study. Instead, the secondary data used in this study is the sample population and

gathered from the California Community College Chancellor's Office, Data-Marts (Skaff,

2019). This discussion can be found on the following pages: 5-7, 22-27, 72 and, 87-91.

      F) Specific Modifications: Deepen discussion of how the results were calculated:

What does weight average mean? The author removed the language about weighted averages

from the study. The methodology was changed to a quantitative-independent sample paired *t*-test

– analyzed with IBM SPSS Software, a process used in education (Nurianfar, Azizi, & Gowhary,

2014; Singh & Mehta, 2016). The author described the analysis in Chapter IV, pages 99-110,

with detailed descriptions of the analysis from SPSS outputs, to determine any statistical

significance results from the analysis. The change in the methodology for the study is more

accurately aligned with the study's research questions and hypothesis by using a quantitative

analysis methodology to address the following institutional variables (a) retention rates (b)

success rates and, (b) completion rates, as displayed on pages 1,12 and throughout the

manuscript. The author was able to apply a scientific approach to answering the research

questions with the secondary data by aligning each research question with the quantitative

method for analysis determining if there was any statistical significance in the retention and

success rates of the cohort after the intervention of the Afrocentric learning community.

      G) Specific Modifications: Considering amending IRB to include interviews to

strengthen methodology—moving into a qualitative approach instead of a quantitative approach.

A qualitative method would be insightful with interviews of students for further study. However, the researcher feels that a quantitative approach is more appropriate, considering the study analyzes institutional retention and completion rates of the community college students. The study is non-experimental. Also, the privacy of the student is protected by using secondary data.

   H) Specific Modifications: In your discussion of disparate success rates and Tinto, clarify why a Learning Community would close the disparity for students and non-students of color. Revise Chapter 5 to include this discussion. The author revised Chapter 5 to include a discussion of why a Learning Community would close the disparity for students and non-students of color in Chapter V, as displayed on page 125,126.

   I) Specific Modifications: Description of purpose statement varies throughout the document. The author revised the Purpose Statement for consistency as displayed on pages 20, 26, 27, 40, 43, and 81.

III Analysis Changes

   A) Specific Modifications: The statistical analysis included in the paper is unclear and inaccurate. This needs to be addressed throughout the manuscript by a greater alignment to the selected methodology. Needs to choose between analyzing conclusions from the reports and run a new analysis. The analysis is not consistent with the methodology described. The author revised the research method and design in the study to provide the study more in-depth analysis of the data for greater rigor in determining if there was any statistical significance in the outputs. The author used a predictive-nonexperimental quantitative inferential statistics research approach in the study; by using quantitative independent samples paired t-test analysis. The author performed an analysis with IBM SPSS Software, on secondary data from CCCCO Data Mart.

The analysis of the studies *p*-values for the paired t-tests provide a heuristic value for the study's

conclusions. The tables for the SPSS output are on pages 6-11.

APPENDIX B

Approval for Quantitative Non-Experimental Research

PEPPERDINE

Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Notice Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: April 18, 2019

Protocol Investigator Name: Andre Crenshaw

Protocol #: 19-03-1009

Retention of African American Students in California Community Colleges:

A Quantitative Non-Experimental Study by Andre Crenshaw

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology Dear Andre Crenshaw:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above-entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects. Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your

protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and

require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite

the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected

situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as

possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response.

Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the

timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event

can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research:*

Policies and Procedures Manual at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or

correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional

questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On

behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research