Black Male Community College Students and Faculty-Student Engagement: Differences in Faculty Validation and Time Status

Kara Bauer
San Diego State University

The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not there were differences in faculty student engagement for Black male students experiencing validation by faculty, time status and the interaction of these factors. Drawing upon data from the CCSM$^{©}$, this study delimited to a select sub-sample of 289 urban Black men attending community colleges. Data in this study were analyzed using two-way (3X2) factorial analysis of variance (Factorial ANOVA). Findings of this study indicated that full time Black male students were *not* more likely to engage with faculty than part time students. This study expands on the previous research because it looks at different types of faculty validation and how that can affect levels of faculty student engagement.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of scholarship focused on the experiences of Black male students in community colleges (Flowers, 2006; Hagedorn, Maxwell & Hampton, 2001; Mason, 1998; Perrakis, 2008; Wood & Williams, 2013). However, Black males have a lower likelihood of completing the goals they had upon entering the institution (Harris & Wood, 2014). For example, without completing their intended degree, 11.5% of Black male students will leave the community college after one year, 48.9% will leave after three years and 83% will leave after six years (Wood & Williams, 2013). Prior research has indicated that faculty-student engagement can positively contribute to the success of college students and in particular, increase positive outcomes for Black male students (Wood & Ireland, 2014). However, some Black male students are less inclined to approach faculty fearing that they will be seen as underprepared for college level work, destined for failure in college, and unwelcome in the campus community. Unfortunately, much of this fear is rooted in stereotypical perceptions of Black men in society as being unintelligent and indolent (Wood, 2014).

Extensive research has concluded that interactions with faculty, both inside and outside the classroom, have positive effects on the success of college students (Astin, 1993; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993; Ullah & Wilson, 2007; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). A majority of faculty-student interaction research has focused on White students, but in a study by Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) faculty student interactions were explored as a predictor of learning for six different racial and ethnic groups. Survey results from a sample of 4,501 students who completed the College Student Experiences Questionnaire indicated that frequent faculty interaction contributed to success for all racial groups. However, Lundberg and Schreiner also found that faculty-student interaction was a better predictor of learning for students of color than for White students. Through interviews, Wood and Turner (2011) found that Black men in community college who received attention from faculty members felt more positive about their relationships with them and as a result, experienced greater engagement with faculty inside and outside the classroom. Friendliness, encouragement, checking in, listening to concerns, and monitoring student performance became the five elements of faculty-student engagement identified by Wood and Turner (2011). The positive messages given to Black male students by faculty members may prove to increase the likelihood of faculty student engagement.

If community college students only come to campus for class, it is possible that the only campus agents they have interactions with are the faculty who teach those classes. Therefore, it is important to explore how validation from faculty effects faculty student engagement. The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not there were differences in faculty student engagement for Black male students experiencing validation by faculty, time status and the interaction of these factors. This study contributes to the collection of literature that explores the positive effects that faculty members have on Black male community college students. Specifically, this study focuses on whether or not Black male students report higher levels of engagement with faculty when they experience validation from faculty. The next section provides an overview of the relevant literature.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The theoretical framework employed in this study is Rendón's (1994) Validation Theory. This theory suggests that there is a positive correlation to success when students experience a person, inside or outside the classroom, who takes an active interest in them and their college experience. This person could be a faculty member, a student organization advisor or someone outside the university such as a partner, parent or other relative. According to Rendón, validating experiences might include helping students when they are struggling and reinforcing for them that they are doing good work, making important contributions, and belong at an institution of higher education.

In Rendón's (1994) study, several components of validation for non-traditional students (e.g., first generation students, immigrant students, students from underrepresented groups) were identified. Those components included showing a sincere desire to teach students and helping them believe they are able to learn, being approachable to all students so they feel comfortable asking for help, treating students equally by giving them the same opportunities and guidance and providing them with meaningful feedback. According to Rendón (1994), validation occurs when students have someone actively reach out to encourage and support them in their academic and personal development and this includes their faculty. When students are validated, they feel

accepted and valued for what they bring to the university experience. Students benefit from validation; they feel cared about when faculty take the time to support them and feel more confident when they are recognized as capable learners (Rendón & Munoz, 2001).

Another study of validation focused on community college students examined Rendón's definition of validation and the relationship between validating experiences from faculty, a sense of integrating into the academic culture, and intent to persist in college (Barnett, 2011). This research study took place at an urban community college in the Midwest. Surveys were completed by a sample of 333 students who were enrolled in required classes and were expected to be representative of degree-seeking students. Through Barnett's analysis of the data, she suggested that validation by faculty be segmented into four categories: (1) students known and valued by faculty, (2) caring instruction, (3) appreciation of diversity, and (4) mentoring. Faculty validation strongly predicted how students perceived their academic integration and indirectly predicted their persistence at the community college. She noted that when students feel high levels of validation from their faculty members, they are more likely stay and finish their degree (Barnett, 2011).

Based on Validation theory, it is hypothesized that faculty-student engagement will increase for Black male community college students when they are validated by their faculty members. This study was also interested in exploring whether the effect of validation on faculty-student engagement differed by full time status. It is hypothesized that full time students experience higher levels of validation by faculty than part time students and as a result report higher levels of engagement with faculty. This study is the first to explore how faculty validation impacts Black male students in the community college. In addition, this study is important in raising awareness regarding the differences in validation that exist between part time and full time Black male students in community college.

METHODOLOGY

Data from the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM[©]) were utilized for this study (Wood & Harris, 2013). The CCSM[©] is an institutional needs assessment tool used by community colleges to consider factors that impact the success of men from underrepresented populations at their institutions. The survey has been used by over 40 community colleges in eight states. Data were collected on-line using Qualtrics, a web-based software used to create surveys and generate reports containing survey results. The survey questions were presented in random order to evenly distribute the missing data within the sample.

The data analyzed were delimited to a select sub-sample of 289 urban Black men attending community colleges. The outcome variable employed in this study was faculty-student engagement that assessed the degree to which students interacted with faculty about academic and non-academic matters in and out of the classroom (a=.83). This variable was a composite measure comprised of responses to four items. Faculty validation and time status were the two factor variables employed in this study. *Faculty validation* assessed students' agreement that faculty members regularly communicated to them that they have the ability to complete college level work, belong in college and can be successful at the institution (three items, a= .92). While these items represented a single factor in the CCSM[©], this study sought to determine unique differences associated with each type of validation. As a result, each of the three questions (i.e., ability to complete college level work, ability to succeed, and belonging in college) were examined separately to provide a more holistic understanding of the relationship, if any, between

validation and faculty-student engagement. The factor faculty validation was broken up into three levels, low, medium, and high based on equivalent percentile groupings. This was done to explore whether or not the amount of validation experienced and reported made a difference in faculty-student engagement. *Time status* indicated whether a student is enrolled part time or full time.

Data in this study were analyzed using two-way (3X2) factorial analysis of variance (Factorial ANOVA). Three separate models of validation were employed. The first model focused on perceived levels of faculty members' belief that Black males have the ability to complete community college coursework. The next model investigated Black males' perception of faculty members' belief in them to succeed in community college. The final model of validation focused on the perception Black males have of faculty members belief in their belonging at the community college. Missing data were imputed using the expectation-maximization procedure. All post hoc tests were evaluated at .05 and employed Bonferroni corrections to adjust for potential Type 1 errors. Effect sizes were interpreted using partial eta squared (partial n^2) and R^2 for the full model. Partial n^2 effect sizes of .01, .06, and .14 were interpreted as small, medium, and large, respectively (Green & Salkind, 2009). Given the enhanced likelihood of a Type 1 error due to employing three separate models that tested the same outcome, the alpha level employed in this study was .01. The following section will outline the findings of the study.

RESULTS

The first analysis measured differences in scores in faculty student engagement by time status and faculty validating Black male students' ability to manage the level of work expected at the community college. The main effect for this measure of faculty validation was statistically significant, F=34.901, p<.001. The main effect for time status was not significant, F= 5.927, p>.01. The partial eta indicated that faculty validation of community college coursework accounted for 20% of the outcome variance; this was a large effect size. The interaction effect for faculty validation of students ability to do work and time status on the outcome of faculty engagement was also not significant, F= .393, p>.01. The total model, in consideration of the two main effects and interaction effect accounted for 23% of the variance in the outcome as indicated by the R squared. Students who experienced low levels of faculty validation had lower mean scores than those who reported medium (by 2.27 points) and high (by 6 points) levels of faculty validation (p<.01 and p<.001). Students who experienced medium levels of faculty validation had lower mean scores than those who reported high levels (by 3.73 points) of faculty validation (p<.001).

Next, faculty student engagement differences were gauged by time status and faculty validation of Black males' ability to succeed at the community college. The main effect for faculty validation for community college success was statistically significant, F=38.503, p<.001. The partial eta indicated that faculty validation of community college success accounted for 21.3% of the variance in the outcome; a large effect size. The main effect for time was not significant, F= 5.293, p>.01. Similar to the prior model, the interaction effect for faculty validation and time status on the outcome of faculty engagement was not significant, F= .973, p>.01. The total model, in consideration of the two main effects and interaction effect, accounted for 25% of the variance in the outcome as indicated by the R squared.

For faculty validation, students who reported low levels of faculty validation had lower mean scores than those who indicated medium (by 2.56 points) and high (by 6.3 points) levels of faculty validation. In addition, students who indicated medium levels of faculty validation had lower mean scores than those who reported high levels of faculty validation (by 3.74 points). All sets of pairwise comparisons were statistically significant (p<.001).
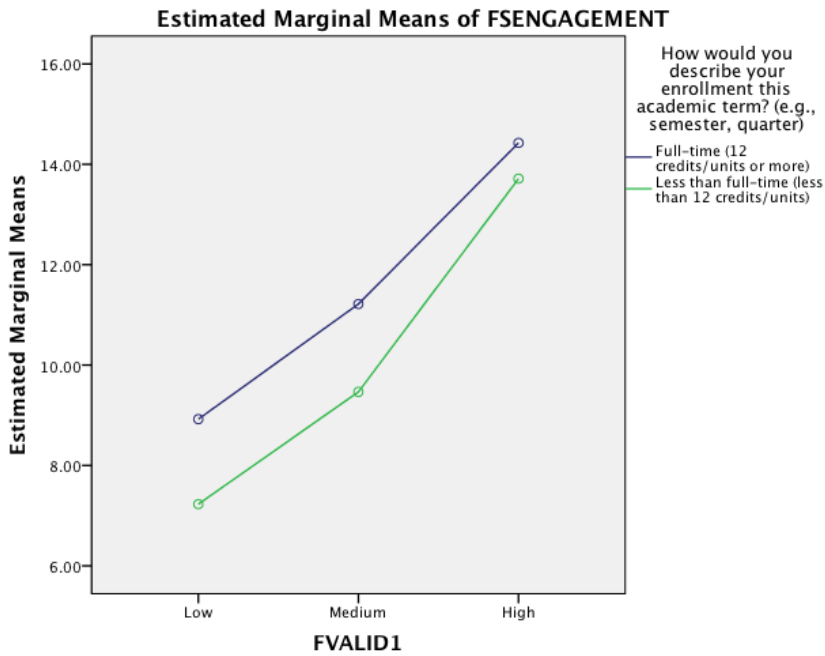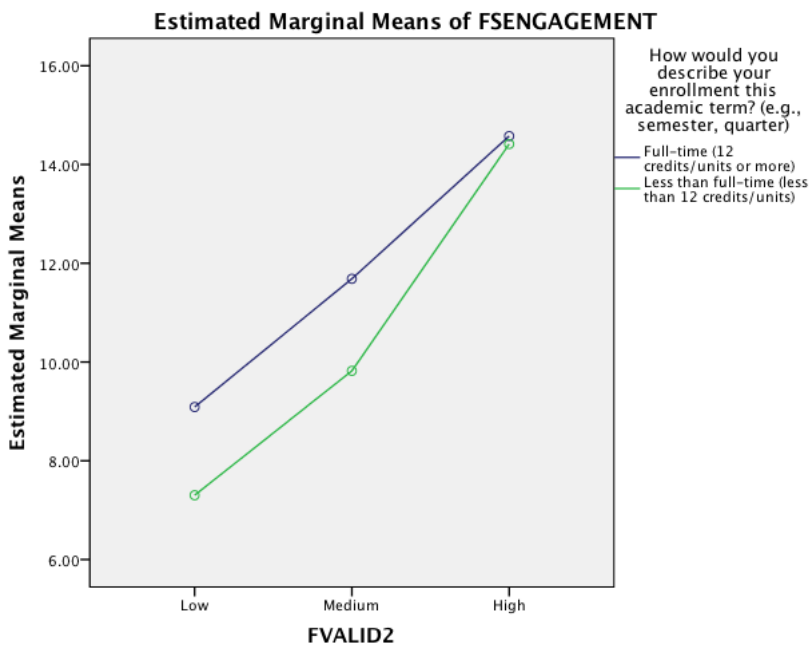

Figure 1. Estimate marginal means for faculty student engagement(FVALID1)

Figure 2. Estimated marginal means for faculty student engagement (FVALID2)

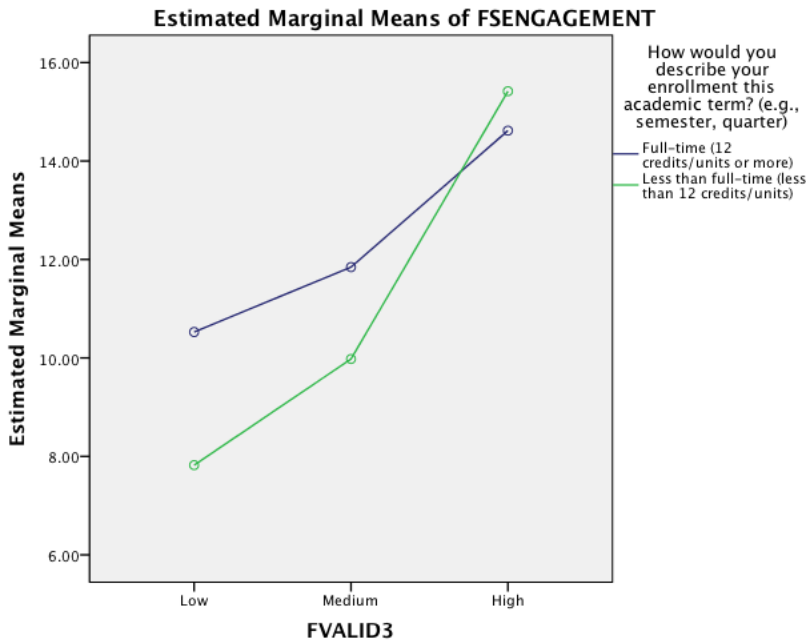**Estimated Marginal Means of FSENGAGEMENT**

Figure 2. Estimated marginal means for faculty student engagement (FVALID3)

The final analysis assessed differences in faculty student engagement by time status and how validated Black men felt by their faculty members with regard to their belonging at the institution. The main effect for faculty validation for belonging was significant, $F=33.695$, $p<.01$. The partial eta indicated that faculty validation of belonging accounted for 19.2% of the outcome variance; this was a large effect size. The main effect for time status was not significant, $F= 5.012$, $p>.01$. Neither was the interaction effect for faculty validation of belonging and time status on the outcome of faculty engagement, $F= 3.082$, $p>.01$. The total model, in consideration of the two main effects and interaction effect accounted for 23% of the variance in the outcome as indicated by the R squared.

For faculty validation, students who had low levels of faculty validation had lower mean scores than those who reported medium (by 1.74 points) and high (by 5.84 points) levels of faculty validation ($p<.05$ and $p<.001$). In addition, students who indicated medium levels of faculty validation had lower mean scores than those who had high levels of faculty validation (by 4.11 points, $p<.001$). In the discussion section, we will elaborate on and provide possible rationale for the findings.

CONCLUSION

As stated previously, this study set out to determine if there were differences in faculty student engagement by Black male students reporting faculty validation, time status and the interaction of these factors. In contrast to the hypothesis, the findings indicated that full time Black male students were not more likely to engage with faculty than part time students. The researcher perceived that differences in time status would be significant due to the fact that full time students are on campus more frequently than part time students, which gives them more

time to spend interacting with faculty after class or at other times such as during office hours. However, this was not the case.

Black male students who report feeling higher levels of faculty validation of their ability to complete college level work, be successful in college, and belong at the institution have higher levels of faculty student engagement. As a result of the validation they receive, these students may feel more comfortable and confident speaking to faculty and asking for assistance throughout their time at the community college. As Rendón (2004) suggested, students from underrepresented groups have a need for validation of their experiences and place at the university. This study expands on the previous research because it looks at different types of faculty validation and how that can affect levels of faculty student engagement.

REFERENCES

Astin, A. W. (1993). What matters in college: Four critical years revisited. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Barnett, E. A. (2011). Validation experiences and persistence among community College students. *The Review of Higher Education, 34* (2), 193-230.

Flowers, L. A. (2006). Effects of attending a 2-year institution on African American males' academic and social integration in the first year of college. *Teachers College Record*, 108(2), 267–286.

Green, S. B. & Salkind, N. J. (2009). Using SPSS for Windows and Macintosh: Analyzing and understanding data (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ. Pearson.

Hagedorn, L. S., Maxwell, W. & Hampton, P. (2001). Correlates of retention for African-American males in community college. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 3(3), 243-263.

Harris III, F., & Wood, J. L. (2014). Examining the status of men of color in California community colleges: Recommendations for state policymakers. San Diego, CA: Minority Male Community College Collaborative, San Diego State University.

Kuh, G. D. & Hu, S. (2001). The effects of student-faculty interaction in the 1990's. *The Review of Higher Education, 24(3)*, 309-322.

Lundberg, C. A. & Schreiner, L. A. (2004). Quality and frequency of faculty-student interaction as predictors of learning: An analysis by student race/ethnicity. *Journal of College Student Development, 45(5)*, 549-565.

Mason, H. P. (1998). A persistence model for African American male urban community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 22(8)*, 751-760.

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

Perrakis, A. I. (2008). Factors promoting academic success among African American and white male community college students. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 142*, 15-23.

Rendón, L. I. (1994). Validating culturally diverse students: Toward a new model of learning and student development. *Innovative Higher Education, 19*(1), 33-51.

Rendón Linares, L. I. and Munoz, S. M. (2011). Revisiting validation theory: Theoretical foundations, applications, and extensions. *Enrollment Management Journal, 5*(2), 12-33.

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

Ullah, H. & Wilson, M. A. (2007). Students' academic success and its association to student involvement with learning and relationships with faculty and peers. *College Student Journal, 41(4)*, 1192-1202.

Umbach, P. D. & Wawrzynski, M. R. (2005). Faculty do matter: The role of college faculty in student learning and engagement. *Research in Higher Education, 46(2)*, 153-184.

Wood, J. L. (2014). Apprehension to engagement in the classroom: Perceptions of Black males in the community college. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 27(6),* 785-803.

Wood, J. L., & Ireland, M. (2014). Supporting Black male community college success: Determinants of faculty-student engagement. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 38(2-3),* 154-165.

Wood, J. L. & Turner, C. S. V. (2011). Black males and the community college: Student perspectives on faculty and academic success. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice, 35*, 135-151.

Wood, J. L., & Williams, R. C. (2013). Persistence factors for Black males in community college: An examination of background, academic, social, and environmental variables. Spectrum: *A Journal on Black men, 1(2)*, 1-28.

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Kara Bauer, Doctoral Student in Community College Leadership, San Diego State University. Email: kbauer@mail.sdsu.edu