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# Black students in transition: A review of the Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition

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# HBCU

**HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES**  
Resource Collection

**Advising at HBCUs:  
A Resource Collection Advancing  
Educational Equity and Student Success**

# Advising at HBCUs: A Resource Collection Advancing Educational Equity and Student Success

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National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience® &  
Students in Transition  
University of South Carolina

in partnership with the  
Advising Success Network

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# About the Advising Success Network

The Advising Success Network (ASN) is a dynamic network of five organizations partnering to engage institutions in holistic advising redesign to advance success for Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific Islander students and students from low-income backgrounds. The network develops services and resources to guide institutions in implementing evidence-based advising practices to advance a more equitable student experience to achieve our vision of a higher education landscape that has eliminated race and income as predictors of student success. The ASN is coordinated by [NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education](#), and includes [Achieving the Dream](#), the [American Association of State Colleges and Universities](#), [EDUCAUSE](#), [NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising](#), and the [National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition](#).

## What We Do and How We Do It

Holistic advising interplays with many other facets of the institution, such as course selection, the student experience, and institutional culture. This means that an effort to redesign these services has broader implications for institutional transformation. This process can quickly become complicated and must therefore be done with intentionality and purpose to achieve the desired improvements in institutional and student outcomes.

The ASN has a deep understanding of the interconnection between advising, broader institutional goals, and student success. As thought leaders and experts in the field of holistic advising, we are able to provide resources on best practices in the field of advising as well as change management services to the institution more broadly. We believe this will result in new and reviewed structures and systems for advising that were designed to address racial and socioeconomic inequities and contribute positively to institutional goals and student outcomes.

We recognize that there is a large amount of variance in organizational structures, advising models, and student needs among higher education institutions. We therefore begin each engagement by aligning on a shared vision for success, including metrics (e.g., equity outcomes, retention & graduation rates, ROI) and reviewing existing advising processes, policies and structures, always with the joint goal of creating more equitable experiences and outcomes for students from low-income backgrounds, as well as African American, Black, Latinx, Indigenous peoples, Alaskan native, Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander students.

## About the Publisher

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition was born out of the success of the University of South Carolina's much-honored University 101 course and a series of annual conferences focused on the First-Year experience. The momentum created by the educators attending these early conferences paved the way for the development of the National Resource Center, which was established at the University of South Carolina in 1986. As the National Resource Center broadened its focus to include other significant student transitions in higher education, it underwent several name changes, adopting the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition in 1998.

Today, the Center collaborates with its institutional partner, University 101 Programs, in pursuit of its mission to advance and support efforts to improve student learning and transitions into and through higher education. We achieve this mission by providing opportunities for the exchange of practical and scholarly information as well as the discussion of trends and issues in our field through convening conferences and other professional development events such as institutes, workshops, and online learning opportunities; publishing scholarly practice books, research reports, a peer-reviewed journal, electronic newsletters, and guides; generating, supporting, and disseminating research and scholarship; hosting visiting scholars; and maintaining several online channels for resource sharing and communication, including a dynamic website, listservs, and social media outlets.

The National Resource Center serves as the trusted expert, internationally recognized leader, and clearinghouse for scholarship, policy, and best practice for all postsecondary student transitions.

# Institutional Home

The National Resource Center is located at the University of South Carolina's (UofSC) flagship campus in Columbia. Chartered in 1801, UofSC Columbia's mission is twofold: to establish and maintain excellence in its student population, faculty, academic programs, living and learning environment, technological infrastructure, library resources, research and scholarship, public and private support and endowment; and to enhance the industrial, economic, and cultural potential of the state. The Columbia campus offers 324-degree programs through its 15 degree-granting colleges and schools. In the 2020 fiscal year, faculty generated \$279 million in funding for research, outreach, and training programs. South Carolina is one of only 32 public universities receiving both Research and Community Engagement designations from the Carnegie Foundation.

## About the Editors

**Jamila S. Lyn** is a strong advocate for student support and success in the Historically Black College and University landscape. Jamila has served in multiple, cross-functional capacities including administration, leadership, advising and faculty positions at HBCUs. Her work centers on coordinating and facilitating strategic initiatives that address student success with a focus on co-curricular engagement and career pathways. As the Director of Specialized Programming at Benedict College, she provides leadership on policy development, project management initiatives and external strategic partnerships, such as Project Success, UNCF, and Student Freedom Initiative. Jamila's most recent focus centers on leveraging course sharing to bridge gaps in delivering quality academic courses and programs; track and eliminate roadblocks to student progress; develop additional guidelines specific to how to best serve students from low-resourced institutions; and develop instructive collateral pieces to guide Benedict's participation in online course share collaboratives.

**Kiisha A. Hilliard** is the Graduate Assistant for Research and Grants at the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. Kiisha is pursuing a Master of Education from UofSC's Higher Education and Student Affairs program with a graduation date of 2023. She previously worked as a college adviser with the Furman College Advising Corps, which sparked her interest in studying student transitions and improving student success. Her research interests include bridge programs and the transition from K-12 into higher education, the experiences of Black students in higher education, and the barriers preventing first-generation, low-income, and historically marginalized groups from entering or persisting through postsecondary education.

**Jenna A. Seabold** is the Research and Grants Coordinator at the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. Prior to this role, she spent 10 years in higher education helping college students define and discover their paths to success through her work in college access, academic advising, retention initiatives, and student success programs. She has worked at a variety of institutions including a community college, regional public university, and large research university. Her many research interests include the effects of early childhood education on college readiness and success, high-impact practices that improve college access and success for low-income and first-generation college students, and the landscape of higher education for displaced worker job retraining.

# Black Students in Transition: A Review of *The Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*

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As the National Resource Center continues to amplify the voice of HBCUs regarding advising and advancing equity in partnership with ASN, it becomes crucial for the center to conduct a content and literature analysis on the scholarship within its scholarly journal, *The Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*. This article's purpose is to focus on the Black student experience at Predominantly White Institutions and HBCUs across the *Journal's* 33 years. There are three sections: a quantitative analysis of the types of articles the Journal has published, a content analysis of the articles exploring the Black student experience at PWIs, and a content analysis of articles exploring the student experience at HBCUs. The research demonstrates important themes surrounding college success for Black students. Most importantly, the analysis identifies the gaps in the *Journal's* literature surrounding HBCUs and highlights where the *Journal* can amplify HBCU voices with content submitted by authors addressing those gaps.

## Holistic Student Support: HBCUs as a Model

In its 33-year history, the *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition* has published peer-reviewed articles covering a multitude of topics about students in critical moments of transition. These transitional periods include from high school to the first year of college, between the first and second year, transferring to another institution, and transitioning out of college through graduation, as well as other changes college students face. The *Journal* is the only peer-reviewed publication dedicated solely to first-year and transition topics in higher education and has served as a resource for scholars and practitioners since it was started by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition (the Center) in 1989.

The National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition is a core partner in the Advising Success Network—a network of five organizations who partner to support educational change and improved student outcomes through a holistic approach to addressing the operational, programmatic, technological, and research needs of colleges and universities in direct support of a more equitable student experience. The mission of the Advising Success Network is to help institutions build a culture of student success, with a focus on students from low-income backgrounds and Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific Islander students (Advising Success Network, 2022).

A primary goal of the *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition* is to understand and share the transition challenges of underrepresented students. To this end, exploring the content of the *Journal* and analyzing how the Black student experience at predominately White institutions (PWIs) and at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) is timely and important. Stemler (2001) describes a content analysis as “a systematic, replicable technique” (p. 1) that is helpful for identifying trends and monitoring changes in scholarship and public opinion. In 2013, Campbell et al., noted the importance of providing scholars, professionals, and practitioners with a content analysis, conducted a broad examination of the first 25 years of the *Journal*. This comprehensive review included an examination of the types of research conducted, types of interventions or programs discussed, the target populations of these interventions or programs, and the overall topics included in articles published by the *Journal*. Researchers concluded that the ideas, methods, results, and recommendations provided by authors over the first 25 years of publication provides a starting point for determining best directions for future research on the first-year experience and points of transition.

The purpose of this article is to provide a content and literature analysis on the scholarship within the *Journal* that focuses on the Black student experience at PWIs and the student experience at HBCUs. This analysis specifically focuses on the research methodology, programmatic interventions, targeted populations, and relevant findings as they relate to HBCUs and the Black student experience across the *Journal's* 33 years.

## The History of HBCUs

The Higher Education Act of 1965 defines HBCUs as “...any historically Black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency...” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., para. 1). After centuries of slavery ended in the U.S. after the Civil War, education continued to be segregated and was used as a form of oppression and marginalization with Black Americans. Colleges were formed to specifically address the higher education needs of Black Americans, but these institutions were significantly disadvantaged because of the lack of federal funding. The Morrill Act of 1890 extended the original federal higher education land-grant funding program of 1865 to Black colleges in the Southern states of the U.S. Although this funding extended higher education opportunities to Black Americans, it continued the establishment of racial segregation and provided even more funds to land-grant institutions that served White Americans (Thelin, 2011). In 1896, the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision codified racial oppression and marginalization in education by establishing the “separate but equal” policy in U.S. public education. This systemic racism remained legal until the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision rejected the doctrine of separate but

equal, leading the way for U.S. public schools to become desegregated (U. S. Department of Education, 1991).

Cheyney University, Lincoln University, and Wilberforce University were established before the Civil War as the first institutions for Black students in the U.S. (Gasman, 2009). Today, although admission at HBCUs is open to all races, there are 101 colleges and universities dedicated to advancing Black student learning and outcomes. The importance and significance of HBCUs is undeniable: Wood (2021) notes that although HBCUs only account for 3% of higher education institutions in the U. S., they enroll 10% of all Black students and account for 20% of all bachelor's degrees earned by Black students. Further, empirical evidence suggests students who attend institutions where most of the student body is of a similar racial/ethnic background as themselves self-report higher satisfaction with their education (Mayhew et al., 2016). However, students at PWIs benefit from racial diversity (Mayhew et al., 2016), suggesting that racial homogeneity is helpful only for underrepresented races that have experienced marginalization in the U.S. Among Black women, students who attended an HBCU reported higher analytical and problem-solving skills (Kim, 2002). HBCUs also have lower tuition rates, and students graduate with less student debt than those at PWIs (Wood, 2021).

There has been a recent resurgence in acknowledging the importance of HBCUs and their value to students. The Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE) Act, signed into law at the end of 2019, secures permanent funding in the amount of \$250 million per year for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and other Minority-Serving Institutions (Long, 2019; St. Amour, 2019). Additionally, in September 2021, President Biden issued Presidential Executive Order 14041, establishing the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity Through Historically Black Colleges and Universities (White House, 2021). The purpose of this initiative is to reduce barriers HBCUs face in fully participating in federal funding and programs. The struggle for equitable access to funding and other resources for HBCUs is an ongoing battle.

## Content Analysis of the *Journal*

### Sample

The sample for this review is comprised of the peer-reviewed articles published in the first 33 years of the *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition* from 1989 through 2022 that contained research on the Black student experience at Predominately White Institutions and the student experience at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The analysis excluded works that were not peer-reviewed, such as editorials, introductions, and notes. There were eight articles about the Black student experience at PWIs and

four articles about the student experience at HBCUs, for a total of 12 articles. There are three sections to our analysis: a quantitative analysis of the types of articles the *Journal* has published on this topic, a content analysis of articles exploring the Black student experience at PWIs, and a content analysis of articles exploring the student experience at HBCUs.

Types of Research by Decade

Like Campbell et al.’s (2013) analysis of the *Journal*, we coded the type of research (qualitative, quantitative, mixed method, conceptual, intervention or program description) and then analyzed the types of articles by decade. The types of articles published in the last 33 years in the *Journal* describe several trends across four decades (see Table 6.1). First, Campbell et al. (2013) noted an overall decline in publication of conceptual and literature review articles in their review of the *Journal*. We noticed the same trend; there were no conceptual pieces about the Black student experience published in the *Journal*. Similar to other higher education peer-reviewed journals, the *Journal* continues to emphasize empirical research from authors and discourages thought pieces and literature reviews. Just one article was identified as a program description, and only one article used mixed methods in our sample.

Regarding method, there is a trend towards qualitative methods and away from quantitative methods. This trend is a turnaround from the tendency toward quantitative research in the first two decades of the *Journal*, which suggests the need to reexamine dominant mythological assumptions and practices when capturing the experiences of Black students and other student subpopulations. Across the four decades of publications, there is now an equal proportion of quantitative and qualitative articles. Within the context of articles focused on the Black student experience and HBCUs, five articles use quantitative methods and five use qualitative methods. However, it is important to note in the most recent history of the *Journal* (2009-2021), none of the Black student experience articles used quantitative methods.

Furthermore, 58% of the articles published about the Black student experience were published in the first two decades of the *Journal*’s history, leaving only 42% that were published since

2009. In the first two decades of publication (1989-2008), there were seven articles published about the Black student experience; more recently (2009-present), there were five articles published. It is important to note that these dates compare 20 years to 12 years, so the *Journal* could continue this upward trend of including more articles about the Black student experience and HBCUs. The increase in qualitative methods brings voice and depth to the scholarship of the Black student experience in higher education. The increase of these qualitative articles in the *Journal* relates to scholars seeking to specifically study the Black student experience. The decrease in quantitative articles may be due to a lack of quantitative researchers specifically seeking to study Black students, thereby leading to insufficient sample sizes when general studies are disaggregated by race. There is a continued need for quantitative research, however, as these studies identify important trends and patterns that relate to Black student success.

The Black Student Experience at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

There were eight articles examining the Black student experience at PWIs in the *Journal*. Of those articles, one describes a program, two use qualitative research methods, one is mixed methods, and four use quantitative methods. The first article to appear in the *Journal* about the Black student experience was published in the *Journal*’s first year–1989–indicating a commitment to understanding and researching this important topic.

The Admissions Process and First-Year Transition for Black Students

Three of these articles examine the student experience starting before the college career begins, focusing on the admissions process. In the first article, about the admissions process, Gold et al. (1992) describes minority “at-risk” students as those “who show academic promise but who have not yet demonstrated academic competence” (p. 102). Their study took place at Georgia State University, which is not technically an HBCU, but is a predominately Black institution that boasts the largest number

Table 6.1 Number of Type of Research Published in The Journal of the First Year Experience & Students in Transition by Decade (N=12)

Type of Research	Number by decade				Total
	1989-1998	1999-2008	2009-2018	2019-present	
Quantitative	4	1	0	0	5
Qualitative	0	0	1	4	5
Program description	1	0	0	0	1
Mixed methods	1	0	0	0	1
Conceptual	0	0	0	0	0



of Black students at any public or private institution in Georgia (Gold et al., 1992). The summer bridge program at Georgia State University aimed to increase retention of Black students through four weeks of classes including math, reading, writing, study skills, and computer skills. Students were also offered free tutoring, academic and career counseling, mentoring, and additional follow-up programs throughout the academic year. Students had to apply to this bridge program after being admitted to the Developmental Studies program, which was designed for students who are at-risk.

Evaluation of this program included a satisfaction survey of both students and faculty, as well as retention data of students for their sophomore year. Although 10% of students admitted into the Developmental Studies program dropped out within the first weeks of the academic semester, no student who completed the summer bridge program dropped out before the semester was over (Gold et al., 1992). Even more impressive, 90% of students who completed the bridge program retained through their first year in comparison to 65% of students admitted into the Developmental Studies program. Researchers attributed this success to the bridge program providing a solid foundation to the start of students' college career.

In a second article, Bryson et al. (2002) used data from a predominately, White institution to predict first-year grades of students. The students in the sample were enrolled in a special admissions program for applicants with below average ACT scores but with what the review committee deemed "potential for success in college" (p. 69) based on their academic and non-academic record. The sample for this study began with 1,078 students (53% White and 42% Black). Of those original students, 937 remained at the end of the study due to voluntary withdrawal, but the racial composition percentage remained the same.

In addition to examining traditional student success markers such as high school grade point average, standardized test scores (in this case, the ACT), and high school rank, researchers used the Noncognitive Questionnaire (NCQ) and Bryson's Instrument for Noncognitive Assessment (BINA) to determine noncognitive traits that were related to academic success for students (Bryson et al., 2002). Non-academic variables examined in this study included racial sensitivity, self-confidence, gender sensitivity, self-esteem, and realistic self-appraisal. Results indicated there were different processes involved in academic success for Black and White students at the PWIs.

Although high school rank, ACT reading, and ACT math scores emerged as significant predictors of academic success for White students, only high school GPA was statistically significant for predicting Black student success. Interestingly, levels of self-confidence and gender sensitivity were more predictive of first-year GPA than any other noncognitive measures. Gender sensitivity represents students' expectations of the level of influence that gender has on personal interactions. Because of these results, researchers urged admissions committees to examine college applicants holistically rather than as a composite score on a standardized test. Results suggest neither the ACT composite

score nor any ACT subscale can accurately predict first-year grade point average for Black students, while ACT reading and ACT math scales are the most effective predictors for White students (Bryson et al, 2002).

In a qualitative analysis of another summer bridge program, McGowan and Perez (2020) examined how 11 Black men gained familial, navigational, and aspirational capital during and after their time in the summer program. The six-week program offered academic and social support for underrepresented, first-generation students at a PWI. Types of support included tutoring, academic advising, career advising, and the opportunity to engage in social opportunities.

Using qualitative methods and citing Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth framework, McGowan and Perez (2020) found that the men in their study identified their time in the program as "critical" (p. 49) in the development of their peer networks. Researchers gathered data through two sources: semi-structured interviews and photo-elicitation interviews. Photos were used to illustrate the close relationships developed between participants. Researchers found two major themes: the program helped students sustain bridges to capital and created bridges to cultural wealth. Once the academic year began, participants noted feeling underrepresented on campus. Indeed, only 4% of the student body identified as Black. However, the program described by McGowan and Perez (2020) provided a solid foundation for participants to navigate through their college experience. Black men in this study gained several types of capital and cultural wealth, making the results significant and of interest to any practitioners or scholars seeking to understand more about the influence of summer bridge programs for minority students.

### **How College Affects Black Students**

In an exploration of the changing attitudes of college students, Regan and Sedlacek (1989) compared the change in social commitment of first-year students who had enrolled in 1988 to first-year students who had enrolled in 1978. In this quantitative study, they examined attitudes towards recruitment of Black students, the use of university influence to improve broad social conditions, and the university's use of financial aid awards. In 1978, 86% of respondents were White, while 8% were Black; in 1988, the sample was 76% White and 12% Black. Results from this study indicate students in 1988 were more in favor of the university actively recruiting Black students and the university using its influence to improve social conditions than students were in 1978.

However, in both 1978 and 1988, Black students were more favorable to the university recruiting Black students than White students were. Although gender differences were considered, there were no statistically significant differences in any of the items examined by gender. Regan and Sedlacek (1989) concluded that, in general, students in 1988 were more favorable to social change than students a decade earlier. However, these researchers urged practitioners to consider taking steps to increase how much students value diversity, specifically

for White students. Noting an imperative to increase Black student retention, Regan and Sedlacek write, "It seems unlikely that an atmosphere conducive to black success on campus can be created without facilitating the development of white students as well" (p. 16). These authors were some of the earliest to bring attention to how the extent to which White students value diversity influences Black student success.

Highlighting the importance of understanding social change, a decade later Schwitzer et al. (1998) studied the social adjustment of Black students at PWIs. In this mixed methods study, researchers describe a model consisting of four elements: sense of "underrepresentedness," direct perception of racism, overcoming the obstacle of approaching faculty, and the effects of faculty familiarity. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the extent to which the proposed model described Black student experiences. Researchers used a qualitative methodology through focus groups and analyzed quantitative data through surveys to evaluate the social support of both Black and White students. Survey scales included the Classroom Environment Scale (CES) and the Faculty Support Scale (FSS). Participants included 123 senior-year students; 101 were White and 22 were Black. Results indicated the model described Black social climate experiences at PWIs. Black students reported feeling underrepresented and experienced specific incidents of racism, while White students did not. During advising and other out-of-class activities with faculty, Black students reported both positive support and more discouragement, a finding Schwitzer et al. note is paradoxical. One explanation offered for this finding is that Black students might be more concerned with faculty responses than White students, making them more perceptive of both positive and negative experiences. The model of Black student social adjustment offered concrete ways in which student affairs practitioners can provide better support to encourage positive adjustment for students.

Another element of the student experience is career advising. Helm et al. (1998) noted the importance of considering differences that might exist for minority students at PWIs. In their quantitative study, they surveyed 343 Black students on their career and advising needs and interests. Gender differences existed, with 42% of Black women planning to attend graduate school compared to 21% of Black men with an interest in graduate study. Black men were more likely to cite higher earnings as a reason for attending college than Black women (29% and 17%, respectively). More women in the sample also expressed interest in career counseling than their male counterparts, which confirms previous studies. Helm et al. urged practitioners to remain up to date on advising issues for Black students, which, in turn, will lead to higher retention of Black students in higher education.

Student sense of belonging and their participation in social and academic opportunities often go together, as behavior is influenced by expectation (Rotter et al., 1972). In a quantitative study, Kim and Sedlacek (1996) surveyed incoming Black students at a PWI on their academic and social expectations and then examined gender differences. All incoming students (N = 2,538) were administered a survey about various aspects

of the college experience, including expectations for involvement in social and academic activities. Of these incoming students, 212 identified as Black and 123 of those students were women.

Results indicated differences by gender for several areas. First, in academic expectations, more male students indicated their main reason for attending college was to make more money. In contrast, most female students indicated they were attending college to develop themselves or to prepare for graduate school. Next, in social areas, more female students expected to belong to a formal social group, except for campus athletic groups. More male students expected to be involved in intramural sports, but more female students expected to belong to a residence hall group. Kim and Sedlacek (1996) urged future researchers to be intentional about assessing different expectations of Black students to assist minority students in their transition to college.

### Black Student Subpopulations

One subset of minority students that are understudied in the college student success literature is Black African immigrants. Stebleton and Aleixo (2016) noted that Black African immigrants are one of the fastest immigrant populations in the U.S. and an emerging area of inquiry. These researchers conducted a qualitative study evaluating student perceptions of belonging at a PWI. Findings included three major categories, including: negotiating stereotypes and perceptions, discovering affirmation through connection, and inhabiting spaces. Researchers found that African immigrant students' sense of belonging is shaped by interactions between the student and intersecting factors within their environments (Stebleton & Aleixo, 2016). Furthermore, this research suggests immigrant Students of Color experience college differently than Black Americans, especially as it relates to sense of belonging.

### The Student Experience at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

There are four articles addressing the student experience at Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the *Journal*. All but one of these articles uses qualitative methodology, and the first of these articles was published in 1998. Washington and Schwartz (1998), noting few studies published at that point on the Black student experience at HBCUs, examined first-year retention of 442 first-year Black students on one HBCU campus. Researchers measured cognitive, non-cognitive, and demographic variables to determine if academic success and first-year retention could be predicted. Cognitive variables in this study included SAT or ACT scores, high school class rank, and high school grade point averages.

To measure non-cognitive variables, they used eight scales from Tracey and Sedlack's (1984) Non-Cognitive Questionnaire, including: knowledge acquired, positive self-concept, realistic self-appraisal, long-term goals, understanding of and ability to contend with racism, availability of support, leadership experience, and community service. They also used four adjustment scales from Baker and Siryk's (1989) Student

Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), including personal-emotional, academic, and social adjustment and attachment. Dependent variables included academic performance, as measured by grade point average at the end of the semester; academic success, as measured by the college's academic probation standards; and persistence, as measured by continued enrollment (Washington and Schwartz, 1998).

The most significant predictors of academic performance for students attending the HBCU in this study were high school rank, personal emotional adjustment, availability of a support person, high school grade point average, and social adjustment. This combination of variables accounted for 30% of the total variance, while high school rank alone accounted for 20% of the total variance. Further, social adjustment and attachment to the college were the best predictors of persistence to the second semester. Washington and Schwartz (1998) note that for Black students at HBCUs, students' ability to integrate into the college environment impacts commitment and satisfaction with their college experience. Consistent with Tinto's (1975, 1987) integration theory, Washington and Schwartz note Black students at HBCU's are at risk for academic failure when they are unable to adjust to the educational and social demands of the university experience. Washington and Schwartz encouraged future researchers to conduct more studies on HBCU campuses and on the Black student experience to improve student outcomes and satisfaction.

More than two decades later, Bryson and Sheppard (2021) heeded this call to specifically examine Black men in their first year at a HBCU. Citing a gap in the current first-year experience literature, Bryson and Sheppard conducted several focus groups of high achieving Black men at five different HBCUs in North Carolina. Specifically, researchers examined the skills, habits, characteristics, and relationships to learning and achievement of 26 students. Noting previous research that has focused on deficits, Bryson and Sheppard focused on academically thriving Black men within the context of a university experience that "offers a culturally authentic sense of belonging" (p. 8).

Sophomore students with grades above the mean GPA at their respective institutions who were involved with at least one non-academic activity were invited to participate in several focus groups. Students shared the importance of confidence and motivation in the first year of college. In addition, these students embraced the significance of believing in their own capabilities and recognizing their own shortcomings. Bryson and Sheppard (2021) urged first-year experience practitioners to help students develop confidence and intrinsic motivation for learning. Further, students in this study noted how they were able to develop good study habits that contributed to their academic success. Bryson and Sheppard suggested that orientation, first-year, and transition programs could further benefit students by embracing a strengths-based approach rather than a deficit-based approach, especially when working with Students of Color. Students in this study showed a strong and positive racial identity and even described the experience of participating in the study as transformational. Finally, Bryson and Sheppard encouraged institutions to support

Black male students with strong programs that address positive attributes and encourage the development of tangible skills.

While Bryson and Sheppard (2021) focused on Black men, Amechi et al. (2020) examined the college choice process for Black students who had been in the foster care system and who chose a HBCU. Four women and three men who had spent between 6 and 20 years in foster care participated in the study. All the students in the study reported experiencing basic needs insecurity, which Amechi et al. defined as lack of food, clean clothing, transportation, access to broadband Internet, and stable housing. Utilizing qualitative methods, researchers identified three central themes: resilience and intrinsic motivation from adverse childhood experiences, the importance of foster care specific support programs, and the role of extended family in the college enrollment process.

In line with previous research, this study found a specific need for students with foster care experience to connect and feel included in the campus community (Amechi et al., 2020). In addition, participants highlighted the usefulness and benefit of the foster youth campus support program (CSP), which connects former foster youth with others of similar backgrounds. Finally, researchers suggested paying particular attention to the importance of affinity groups, organizations, and campus support programs as motivating factors for the college choice process (Amechi et al., 2020). Amechi et al.'s study further highlights the need to understand and study the subpopulations of Black students.

A common thread among the literature on the Black student experience at HBCUs is the importance of culturally relevant practices (CRP) and policies. Wilkerson et al. (2021) examined first-year seminar pedagogical practices at three HBCUs, both public and private. Using qualitative methodology, researchers conducted a case study with six first-year seminar professionals to discuss the ways in which they utilize culturally relevant pedagogy to encourage engaged student learning. They utilized Ladson-Billings' (1995) CRP as a theoretical framework to explore teaching practices.

Wilkerson et al. (2021) found that first-year seminar faculty can utilize culturally relevant pedagogy to express care and concern for students. Application of CRP practices in first-year seminars encouraged engaged student learning. Participants had a holistic approach to instruction, meaning that professionals sought to provide support to engage with their students during office hours, at campus events, and in the classroom. These authors argue for the importance of promoting learning of the CRP framework to build competency in pedagogical approaches to first-year seminars.

## Discussion

Over the past 33 years, the *Journal* has published a rich and important body of literature focusing on students in transition. Although only 12 of those articles focused on the Black student experience at PWIs or at HBCUs, there is a trend of more articles published in the *Journal* on this topic in the last decade. There

are gaps in the literature we can identify, and there is a clear need for more authors to submit content to the *Journal* to address those gaps. Methodologically, qualitative articles capture the stories and experiences of Black students, and campus leaders can transfer the findings from these articles to their students and institutions. However, there is an identifiable need for more articles that utilize quantitative measures as well to grasp larger trends that can lead to big-picture changes on campuses. In addition, the experience of Black women and LGBTQ students at PWIs and HBCUs is understudied, and research on Black student subpopulations is needed. Examples of studies that examined Black student populations include Amechi et al.'s (2020) work on Black students with foster care experience, and Stebleton and Alexio's (2016) study on Black immigrant students.

Two of the 12 articles examined in this review were recipients of the Paul P. Fidler Grant: Amechi et al. (2020) and Bryson and Sheppard (2021). The Paul P. Fidler Grant was established in 2005 by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition to encourage and enable scholarly research on issues pertaining to student transitions in the first year. This grant funding opportunity has helped to encourage empirical research on the Black student experience and HBCUs. Other centers, foundations, associations, and institutions may want to consider using research grant funding as a tool to encourage scholars to pursue scholarship on HBCUs, the Black student experience at PWIs, and other understudied areas of college student transition, learning, and success.

Overall, it can be helpful to understand the principles related to college success for Black students found from the 12 articles in this content analysis and review. Although standardized tests predict college student performance for all students, these tests do a much poorer job of predicting the performance of Black students specifically (Bryson et al., 2002). Instead, high school performance is the best academic predictor of Black student success. Overall, there is a need for colleges to shift from a deficit and remedial approach with Black students to an approach that draws on the assets and strengths of Black students while providing practical help for success (Bryson & Sheppard, 2021).

Such practical help for success can emphasize both academic health and psychosocial health. Regarding academic health, colleges can provide programs that help Black students improve their math skills, reading skills, writing skills, and study skills, as appropriate (Bryson et al., 2002; Gold et al., 1992). But there may be even greater potential for positive impact with psychosocial skills. These programs can help Black students gain academic and social capital on college campuses and help to develop motivation and resilience in students (McGowan & Perez, 2020).

The most important finding from the content analysis is how colleges themselves need to change to foster Black student success, rather than colleges attempting to change Black students. Colleges need to make a compelling case to Black students, and particularly Black men, as to the benefits of higher education that go beyond merely making more money in the future (Bryson & Sheppard, 2021; McGowan & Perez, 2020). In addition, the campus social environment of colleges must proactively seek to include and appreciate Black students while also providing the availability of staunch support resources (Helm et al., 1998). Culturally relevant and inclusive pedagogy can encourage engaged student learning and promote the benefits of diversity to students of all races on campus (Wilkerson et al., 2021).

## Conclusion

Although the current research provides helpful knowledge for campus leaders on promoting Black student success, the need for more scholars to submit works on these topics and issues is a clear need for the improvement of higher education. As the *Journal* and other scholarly entities continue to identify gaps in the literature discussing HBCUs and Black student success, these institutions must recognize the significant ways that publishing research can be inaccessible for scholars, especially scholars of Color, because of systemic barriers and unconscious biases in the process.

The responsibility is not only on scholars to conduct more research; it is also on the academy to create an atmosphere where such research is supported and encouraged. First, as a field, there needs to be an acknowledgement and a reexamination of our assumptions regarding methods and methodology that might represent dominant positions that discount the cultural relevancy of some forms, such as the cultural richness of storytelling in communities of Color. Secondly, scholars cannot submit and share experiences without resources and support from scholarly journals. The Paul P. Fidler grant is an example of providing financial resources for scholars to support their work and share their findings with the community at large.

Furthermore, editorial processes must be inclusive of editors and reviewers of Color while being non-discriminatory and social justice-minded in practice. These processes need to consider research on identity areas and the representation of Black authors as an area of need and priority in the recruitment, selection, and editing of articles. Lastly, citations have a significant role in the reputation of scholars, and the field needs to promote citations of scholars of Color to bolster their status and research.



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