Examining Perceptions of Academic Support: An Exploratory Analysis of African American and Latino Male Students Enrolled in a New York Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) at a Predominately White Institution

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Abstract
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Examinaig Perceptions of Academic Support: An Exploratory Analysis of African American and Latino Male Students Enrolled in a New York Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) at a Predominately White Institution

By

Jonathan Woney

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

Dr. Janice Kelly

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Dr. Byron Hargrove

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Dedication

To God be the glory for all the things He has done! First and foremost, I give thanks to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. For, with You, all things are possible. The journey to obtaining my doctorate was long and had its moments of darkness. Trusting the process was hard at times, however, I made it.

I would like to thank my mother who encouraged me to remain steadfast by giving me words of wisdom when I needed it most. Thank you to my wife who has stood by my side during this journey. I want to dedicate this doctorate to my son, Jonathan Jr. As your father, I want to show you that with God all things are possible. I want to give you the formula to achieve academic success. You are my motivation. To my grandmother and grandfather, who have passed away, I hope I am making you proud. To my team, DrEdD, this would not have been the same great journey without you. I thank you for continuously contributing to making DrEdD a high-functioning, cohesive team. It was a true pleasure going through this process with you.

To my extended family and close friends, thank you for understanding how important this was to the culture and being supportive all the way to the end. Thank you to my dissertation committee, Dr. Kelly and Dr. Hargrove, for all the support and direction.
Biographical Sketch

Jonathan Woney is a student affairs leader as well as an educator. Mr. Woney graduated from the College of New Rochelle with a Bachelor of Arts/Sciences degree in 2010. He graduated from the College of New Rochelle with a Masters of Sciences degree in 2012. He came to St. John Fisher College in the spring of 2016 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Mr. Woney pursued his research in the Persistence Factors Among African American and Latino Male Students Enrolled in a New York Higher Education Opportunity Program at a Predominantly White Institution under the direction of Dr. Janice Kelly and Dr. Byron Hargrove and received the Ed.D. degree in 2019.
Abstract

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to discover how a focus group of African American and Latino male sophomore, junior, and senior undergraduates participating in New York State’s Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) perceived the role of HEOP student involvement and peer support in helping them persist beyond the first-year at predominantly White Institution. The focus group participants reported generally positive and consistent perceptions. They believed that the HEOP services (e.g., academic advisement, workshops, and career counseling) helped them to persist and change their (academic) mindsets. They also appreciated the available HEOP services, the staff commitment, and the tuition scholarships, book vouchers and Metrocards. Although the participants believed that the HEOP peer support allowed them to take better accountability, some students still struggled utilizing the HEOP services and support. Recommendations for future research include examining other HEOP subpopulations and using other qualitative designs.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the study and provides the problem statement, theoretical rationale, significance of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, and the definition of key terms. This study was derived from Streeter’s (2011) future research recommendations.

Each year, higher education institutions provide opportunities for students to enroll. For many African American and Latino male students, the opportunity to attend college is an initial step to creating sustainable success (Bush & Bush, 2005; Grier-Reed, Madyun, & Buckley, 2008). Opportunities available to African American and Latino male college graduates have life-changing potential (Bush & Bush, 2010). While many students enter college with dreams of being successful, groups of students, namely minorities (racial and ethnic), struggle to succeed more than others (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). The historical lack of persistence and completion for African American and Latino male students in higher education has been widely documented, yet it remains a cause for concern (Harper, 2006; Harris & Wood, 2013). To address this issue, academic institutions in some states have developed special types of support programs. The New York State (NYS) Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) is a partnership between the State of New York and its independent colleges that provides the possibility of a college education to its residents and helps to promote retention and persistence for students from economically and educationally disadvantaged
backgrounds. The 2009 *HEOP Works* (The University of the State of New York [USNY], 2009) publication states,

In 1966, the Governor and the Legislature approved a bill to provide access to higher education for the “educationally and economically disadvantaged” (The University of the State of New York, 2009, p. 5) students in NYS:

The program known as Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK) began at The City University of New York (CUNY). The College Discovery Program, which was already in existence at community colleges in New York City, was continued, and the State University of New York (SUNY) started The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). In 1969, legislation established the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) at independent colleges and universities in New York State. In 2006, the Governor and the Legislature approved a name change in honor of the important role former Assemblyman Arthur O. Eve played in increasing access to higher education in New York State (USNY, 2009, p. 5).

These opportunity programs within the CUNY system are designed to meet the special needs of students from under-resourced backgrounds. Among the strategies available to meet these needs are testing, pre-freshman summer programs, counseling, tutoring, remedial and developmental coursework, and financial assistance (New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2017). Opportunity programs are available for students living in urban and rural areas. They are available at 2- and 4-year levels, at public and independent colleges, and in every academic discipline and career field. “Students are selected without regard to age, color, religion, creed, disability, marital
status, veteran status, national origin, race, gender, genetic predisposition or carrier status, or sexual orientation” (USNY, 2005, p. 5).

To qualify for HEOP, students must be from low-income households based on NYS guidelines. Students must also exhibit potential for success at the college level, but they may need additional academic support to acquire “college readiness” skills that sustain them during the college experience (NYSED, 2017). To help participants to achieve a 4-year degree, there are many support services offered by HEOP, such as remedial and developmental courses, tutoring, and counseling services in the areas, academics, personal counseling, and career counseling (SUNY, 2009).

The concept of student involvement as a factor in academic achievement has its foundation in late 20th-century research that suggests that students who are actively involved in their education and the educational process perform at higher levels of achievement than their less engaged counterparts. Students who talk about substantive matters with faculty and peers are challenged to perform at high levels; they receive frequent feedback on their performance, and they typically get better grades, are more satisfied with college, and are more likely to persist (Kuh, 2006). While these and other educationally purposeful activities are positively linked to desired outcomes for all types of students, historically, underserved students and those who are less well prepared for college tend to benefit even more from these services (Cruce, Wolniak, Seifert, & Pascarella, 2006; Kuh, Kinzie, Cruce, Shoup, & Gonyea, 2006b).

There are some key factors for student involvement. Goals and aspirations may be a motivator for participation in campus clubs and organizations. Students are sometimes attracted to these groups to develop a sense of purpose (Strauss, 2005). Cooper, Healy,
and Simpson (1994) found that leaders of campus organizations had higher scores for developing purpose than uninvolved students. Students also gravitate to these groups to garner skills for their future careers and to strengthen their resumes (Strauss, 2005).

Jorgenson, Farrell, Fudge, and Pritchard (2018) suggested that working within this idea of learning and building on connectedness from the students’ perspective provides academics with the ability to further cultivate healthy and successful students. Through social identity theory and student involvement theory, it becomes possible to explore the processes, sites, and values used by students to develop their sense of connectedness.

This study examined the extent to which student involvement promotes the graduation of African American males in HEOPs in Eastern New York. The remainder of this chapter provides the general context for the study and includes the problem statement, theoretical rationale, research questions, purpose of the study, limitations of the study, and definition of terms.

**Problem Statement**

College completion rates for African American males are a national concern. African Americans face a number of barriers in the college environment. African Americans are often viewed as an at-risk population and described in negative terms such as “endangered, dysfunctional, dangerous, and lazy” (Strayhorn, 2010, p. 27). In addition, two-thirds of all Black men who enter higher education leave before completing their degree program and have the highest attrition rate among all races and both sexes (Strayhorn, 2015). The number of bachelor degrees that African American females earn nearly doubles black males (66% vs. 34% respectively) a gap not shown in other racial
groups (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2013). Furthermore, evidence shows that almost 70% of African American males do not complete college degrees within 6 years, compared with 57% of the overall undergraduate student population (Harper, 2006). African American males can benefit from the support of colleges to help guide them through the academic process. In addition, the completion rates and transfer rates are very low among minority males. Hispanic males are unevenly represented in higher education and face serious challenges. Many Latino males may struggle with language barriers or inadequate preparation for academic demands (Strayhorn, 2010).

From 2000 to 2010, the overall percentage of Hispanic residents in the U.S. population grew from 12.5% to 16.3%, accounting for more than half (15.2 million) of the nation’s total population growth (27.3 million; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; as also interpreted in Ramirez, 2011). The Census Bureau (2010) projects that Hispanics will make up 30.3% of the population by 2050 (see also Ramirez, 2011). With the majority of 2000 to 2010 Hispanic growth coming through births (64.2%) rather than immigration (35.8%), it is no surprise that Hispanics account for nearly one quarter (23.1%) of the total U.S. population under age 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; Ramírez, 2011). This growth brings serious implications for the nation’s public schools as they seek to meet the needs of Latino students.

While Latino high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates in some years have grown in accordance with the overall population, the rate of degree attainment remains low and lags behind their counterparts. This is especially the case for Latino males, who have the lowest percentage in degree attainment when compared to both their racial and gender counterparts. In 2013, the percentage of Latino males that attained their
bachelor’s degree or higher was 13%, while their Latina (19%), Asian/Pacific Islander (55%), White (37%), and African American (17%) male counterparts’ attainment were higher. Because education has an impact on the social mobility of Latino males as well as an influence on labor market outcomes (Reimers, 1985), it is important to pay attention to the under-education of this population.

Disparities persist among minorities and other underrepresented students in educational attainment. In 2008, 49% of White Americans ages 25-34 had attained an associate degree or higher, while only 30.3% of African Americans and 19.8% of Hispanic Americans had achieved degree completion (USDOE, 2014). African American males have the highest attrition rates, and overtime, 11.5% of African American males will leave the community college before degree attainment after the first year, yet the rates jump to 48% after the third year and 83% after the fifth year (USDOE, 2014). Ironically, females outperform their male counterparts across all racial lines (College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, 2010). One must ask why the persistence and degree attainment rates are the lowest among African American and Latino males, and what interventions could be implemented to increase retention?

Given the significant educational, social, and economic consequences of this issue on society in general and the urban community in particular, this study has identified and examined the extent that student involvement may enhance persistence factors of men of color in HEOP. This study has helped to provide the missing gaps in the literature about HEOP and opportunity programs. In addition, Cropper (2000), Peyton, Morton, Perkins, and Dougherty (2001), and Fox and Stevenson (2006) suggested that persistence factors can be attributed to student involvement. There is a need for research documenting
student involvement, peer support, and services assisting Black and Latino males in their pursuit of a college degree. This study has added to the knowledge and provides educators within higher education and provides tools to meet the needs of this group of students and more.

Theoretical Rationale

The theoretical rationale for this study is based on Astin’s (1984) involvement theory. The theoretical construct that involvement by college students in activities, such as in classrooms, laboratories, studying, and other curricular and cocurricular experiences, promotes student retention and graduation in higher education is at the center of Astin’s (1984) involvement theory. Astin’s (1984) research on the involvement factors in the retention and graduation of students in higher education was originally shared in 1984 and republished in 1999, states, “student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518).

Astin (1984) defined involvement as the amount of physical and psychological energy a student commits to the academic experience and noted that an “involved student is one who devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and frequently interacts with faculty members and other students” (p. 297). A large degree of students’ success is attributed to the students’ proximity to campus because students living on campus have more convenient access to peer socialization events, campus activities, and services (Astin, 1984).
Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement serves as the theoretical foundation for this study. Student involvement incorporates both the number of time students are engaged, and the value students place on the time spent being engaged (Astin, 1999). Astin’s (1984) involvement theory has been at the center of significant bodies of research in higher education over the last two decades (Flowers, 2004a, 2004b; Grier-Reed et al., 2008; Hernandez, Hogan, Hathaway, & Lovell, 1999; Moore, Lovell, McGann, & Wyrick, 1998). The body of research using involvement theory, according to Flowers (2004a, 2004b), indicates that “student involvement experiences positively impact college student development in a variety of important ways” (p. 635). Flowers (2004a, 2004b) “identified cognitive and moral development and leadership skills as examples of these competencies” (p. 635). Flowers’s body of research supports Astin’s (1999) theory, and the continued use of this theory has been used in examining the impact of involvement factors on the persistence of college students. An important goal of this study is to extend the body of research specifically to African American and Latino males in HEOPs by exploring the impact of their involvement in promoting graduation for this population of college students. This theory indicates how important student and peer involvement is when it comes to graduating men of color.

Astin studied and wrote extensively in the area of student involvement in higher education (Astin, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1985, 1993). Perhaps Astin’s most significant work in this area was his theory of student involvement. This theory defined the amount of physical and psychological energy that a student devotes to (Astin, 1984). Astin referred to the academic experience in a broad sense that encompassed both classroom learning...
and out-of-class experiences. Astin’s (1984) theory was predicated on five basic assumptions:

1. Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects.
2. Involvement occurs along a continuum.
3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features.
4. The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program.
5. The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement. (p. 298)

Astin’s (1984) theory presented a paradigm for viewing student participation in cocurricular activities, stressing the concepts of commitment and time. Commitment refers to the qualitative or content components of involvement, and time refers to the quantitative component. Learning and development are the primary factors in the degree of effort and energy committed by students to a particular learning experience—whether it is a chemistry course or a student-affairs-sponsored developmental program. In Astin’s (1984) view, involvement is an active concept that requires students to invest time and energy in achieving educational excellence.

Astin (1985) made the point that “students were mostly interested in the college experience, meaning, and among others, the subjective satisfaction associated with extracurricular and academic involve” (p. 21). This premise supports the significance of cocurricular involvement in higher education.
Astin’s (1984) theory serves as a connector between pedagogical theory and student outcomes with a link between the variables emphasized in these theories and the learning outcomes desired by the student and the professor (Astin, 1984). Astin stated that any program, whether academic or cocurricular, should provide students with intrinsic motivation to commit both the time and the effort to it. Programs in Astin’s study that motivated students to make such a commitment were the most successful. The focus was on the student and his or her reaction to a program, rather than just on the program itself. Even a well-funded, sophisticated, cocurricular program will only meet its stated objectives if students are motivated to commit the time and effort necessary to succeed. Astin’s (1984) theory suggests that students need to be active, committed participants in the learning process.

Astin’s other works, particularly his study of college dropouts (1975) and his studies of the impact of college on students (1977, 1993), also relate to his formal theory of involvement. In the former work, Astin (1984) determined that student involvement was a prime factor in keeping students in school; in the latter study (1993), he determined that a number of factors related to college attendance, including involvement in academic honors programs, student government, and athletic programs, had an overall positive impact on student development. Astin (1993) also determined that involvement was directly related to students’ satisfaction with college and with retention. Astin (1984) summed it up best, perhaps, when he stated: “A considerable body of higher education research indicates that these various forms of involvement can have substantial effects on the student” (p. 71).
Statement of Purpose

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of Black and Latino male HEOP sophomores, juniors, and seniors regarding the influence of student involvement in cocurricular activities in persistence to their senior year. This provides insight into the challenges of the persistence of men of color in HEOP. To this end, a qualitative study was conducted to identify and examine the college experiences and peer support of HEOP students who were enrolled in higher education institutions in Eastern NYS.

Research Questions

The following research questions helped to guide this study:

1. How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors perceive the role that HEOP supportive services play in achieving success in college?

2. How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors perceive the role that peer support in the HEOP community plays in achieving success in college?

Potential Significance of the Study

The historical lack of persistence and completion for African American and Latino male students in higher education has been widely documented, yet it remains a cause for concern (Harper, 2006; Turner & Myers, 2000). Early research supports the data from this study that indicates the effectiveness of the HEOPs. In addition, this study investigated Black and Latino male students who were participating in student involvement and cocurricular activities in hopes of persisting toward graduation.
Furthermore, this study contributes to the body of knowledge and informs professional practice in higher education.

The significance of this study is that it used a **strength-based** approach by focusing on factors that promote the retention and graduation of Black and Latino males as opposed to a **deficit model** that focuses on factors that impede retention and graduation. The findings from this study may assist institutions, administrators, parents, and future HEOP students in successfully navigating the undergraduate college experience (Streeter, 2011).

The Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU, 2017) stated that there are 51 HEOPs at 46 colleges and universities. HEOP students graduate at rates above the national average for all students at 59% versus 52.5% (CICU, 2017.) Fordham University’s Student Information System and Office of Institutional Research (2016) reported that the last graduating cohort from HEOP was the 2012 cohort. This cohort graduated 76.5% of its cohort. Although there are not many studies on opportunity programs, this study gives insight into the effectiveness of HEOPs to help future researchers gain insight into why involvement is so instrumental to African American and Latino students who persist in higher education. In addition, little has been done to focus on the successful experiences of this group, let alone the male population. By understanding the successful experiences of Black and Latino males, researchers, and practitioners can effectively promote implementation strategies that positively impact these males’ retention and graduation. Harper and Associates’ (2014) research on Black and Latino males’ achievement focused on the aspects of students’ lives that produced success. Reports such as these, in turn, can serve to inform action-oriented strategies for
administrators, researchers, and faculty. Scholarship about successful students will help reframe research that solely focuses on the low-performance of Black and Latino male students.

**Definition of Terms**

The following key terms are used throughout this study:

*African American* – an individual whose ancestors were of African heritage, but who were born in America. America is where the individual was born; therefore, that makes them *American* as well as an *African* because of their roots.

*Black* – a term that is used interchangeably with *African Americans* to identify students who self-identify as being multiracial with Black or African Americans as one of their racial groups.

*College* – refers to any 4-year public or private college or university. It is also used interchangeably with an *institution of higher learning*.

*Cocurricular Activities* – activities such as socializing with friends, attending parties, spending time in professors’ homes, participating in student clubs or organizations, being a member of a fraternity or sorority, being elected to a student office, participating in intercollegiate athletics or intramural sports, exercising on campus, reading for pleasure, volunteering on campus, attending religious services or meetings on campus, participating in hobbies or being involved in a romantic relationship on campus.

*Curricular activities* – attending classes, studying, doing homework, using a personal computer for academic reasons, working on an independent research project, tutoring another student, being tutored, talking with faculty outside of class, working on a
professor’s research, discussing course content with students outside of class, and discussing racial or ethnic issues with others.

*Disadvantaged students* – individuals from low-income families with potential for successful collegiate experiences but have not acquired the verbal, mathematical, and other cognitive skills required to complete college.

*Dominant culture* – the majority White population within a college setting.

*Education Opportunity Program (EOP)* – a NYS program serving academically and economically disadvantaged students who are enrolled in NYS public colleges.

*Extracurricular Activities* – undertakings not falling within the scope of a regular course of study, specifically of or relating to officially or semi-officially approved and usually organized student activities (such as athletics) connected with the school and generally carrying no academic credit.

*Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP)* – NYS program serving academically and economically disadvantaged students who are enrolled in NYS colleges.

*Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)* – institutions of higher education established before The Civil Rights Act 1964 with the intent of educating primarily the African American community.

*Institution Involvement Activities* – campus-sponsored concerts; lectures; forums; athletic events; and campus leadership positions, such as resident assistant, campus activities planning board, and admissions tour guide.
Involvement/Engagement – a term used interchangeably throughout this document referring to Astin’s (1984) quote “quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience” (p. 552).

Latino – a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

Men of Color – African American and Latino males.

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) – any college or university in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment.

Students of Color – Asian Pacific Americans, Native Americans, Black, and Latina/o people as a collective group (Yasin, 2008).

Summer Institute (SI) – a mandatory HEOP pre-college summer program in which students are brought to campus for courses prior to the start of the fall semester. (The University of the State of New York, 2009).

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the importance of academic intervention programs that promote the opportunity for college success and how it serves as a support for disadvantaged students. In addition, this chapter focused on student involvement as a catalyst for succeeding through college. Student support, student-faculty interaction, and peer interaction are likely to contribute in positive ways to the decision to participate in clubs and organizations. Case (2011) found that students with higher participation levels in campus organizations and activities had a higher sense of community than students with lower levels. A person’s level of choice to belong to a group has been found to
correlate positively with a sense of connections to college completion and completion (Obst & White, 2007).

A review of the literature is presented in Chapter 2. The research design, methodology, and analysis are discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis of the results and findings, and Chapter 5 discusses the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research and practice.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Background

The background information relating to African American and Latino students graduating from high school and entering colleges and universities is presented for an understanding of this topic. The history of HEOP and the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act for the State of New York is included as a matter of historical context. An overview of the studies considered for this research is provided. The chapter concludes with the principles and rationale for framing the research using the involvement theory.

There are mitigating variables to consider before many Black and Latino males are able to seriously consider education beyond high school. Wilson-Sadberry, Winfield, and Royster (1991) studied data from Black males participating in the National Opinion Research Center for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). These males identified five variables of influence for pursuing postsecondary schooling: family background; familial and extra-familial (counselors, teachers) influence; educational preparation; educational aspirations; and mediating factors, such as age, parental status, father’s presence in his life, and county unemployment. The researchers identified “a father’s influence” (Wilson-Sadberry et al., 1991, p. 128) as a high predictor as well as “best friends’ or peers’ influence” (p. 128) for Black males choosing to attend college. Wilson-Sadberry et al. (1991) cited that “along with other direct programmatic interventions, the nurturance of belief in self in young African American and Latino men is critical to their resilience and persistence” (p. 93).
This qualitative study examined the extent to which student involvement promoted the graduation of African American and Latino males in HEOPs at predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in Eastern New York. The qualitative study was conducted to identify and examine the college experiences and peer support of HEOP students who were, at the time of this study, enrolled at a higher education institution in NYS.

**HEOP at a Glance**

For many African American and Latino male students, the opportunity to attend college is an initial step toward personal development and professional success (Bush & Bush, 2005). Postgraduate opportunities available to African American and Latino male college graduates have life-changing potential (Bush & Bush, 2010). However, racial and ethnic minority students often struggle to persist through and graduate from 2- and 4-year undergraduate programs, particularly at PWIs (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). NYS has been at the forefront of the effort to increase participation and graduation rates among African American and Latino males since 1969. The NYS Governor and the State Legislature passed legislation that was designed to increase access to independent colleges and universities in NYS for students who were “educationally and economically disadvantaged.” (The University of the State of New York, 2009, p. 5). This legislation established the “Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP)” (p. 5).

The published empirical literature on NYS HEOP outcomes over the last several decades has been limited. For example, Wolf (1976) quantitatively investigated the post-college experiences of HEOP graduates and dropouts at three institutions in Western New York using mail surveys and telephone interviews. The college graduates reported that
the support from HEOP helped them graduate. A majority of HEOP-college graduates are employed in white-collar jobs, they are in relatively high positions, and 40% of the HEOP-college graduates pursued graduate degrees. Wolf (1976) also reported that many of the HEOP dropouts left their institutions before the end of their second year of college due to financial issues. While this study focused on college graduates, there continues to be empirical neglect on the persistence factors of current HEOP students who persist beyond the first year.

In a statewide 2010 report on NYS HEOP graduation rates, NYSED (2017) indicated that HEOP students who persisted beyond their second year were much more likely to complete an undergraduate program of study and graduate from college. HEOP students reported that their participation in activities and the HEOP staff support were instrumental in getting them to graduation.

In another key study, Glazer and SUNY (1985) examined archival HEOP data from annual state reports, along with self-reported questionnaires and qualitative interviews with a sample of 37 HEOP directors. Glazer and SUNY (1985) concluded there was a need for continued funding for HEOPs, the replication of programs and services, and that more systematic efforts were needed to work with public schools to improve college preparation.

Streeter (2011) conducted a quantitative study to identify and examine the college experiences and persistence factors of African American male HEOP students who were enrolled at the time of the study and were recent college graduates from four higher education institutions in NYS. Streeter (2011) revealed that for these African American HEOP students, academic activities (e.g., attending class and engaging with faculty in
and outside of class) and their participation in cocurricular activities contributed to their higher graduation rates.

Therefore, given the outdated and limited number of published HEOP studies, the overreliance of quantitative analyses of HEOP outcomes, the lack focus students beyond their first year, and also the overreliance of the perspectives of HEOP directors only (Glazer & SUNY, 1985; Wolf, 1976), more research is needed to (a) address and document meaningful current HEOP persistence factors, (b) expand the approaches to focus on qualitative or mixed methodologies, and (c) explore the self-reports of HEOP-enrolled students as to how HEOP and other interventions helped them persist beyond their second year. In a report on HEOP graduation rates, NYSED (2017) indicated that the HEOP students who persisted beyond their second year were much more likely to complete an undergraduate program of study and graduate from college. HEOP students reported that with the support of HEOP and their participation in activities were instrumental in getting them to graduation. To date, the perspectives of HEOP students on how HEOP services may have helped in their persistence beyond the second year remains unclear. How do current HEOP students from sophomore to senior year describe the impact of HEOP services on their own persistence in college?

**Historical Overview of Opportunity Programs**

As stated earlier, although the existence of state-funded, student-support services programs date back to the 1960s, studies have been scarce. One of the only studies published for the state-funded Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) program was a report published in 1992 in The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) by Hudson County Community College (HCCC) of New Jersey (Fujita & Oromaner, 1992).
HCCC researched why enrolled students left school for reasons other than graduation. A small section of the report discussed the research completed at the institution on the EOF program. In the report, HCCC addressed the previous research that the institution had done on specific cohorts or programs at the institution. In their findings, Fujita and Oromaner (1992) expressed concern that the type of research strategy of choosing only specific programs at the institution to research should be considered a weakness but also a strength. Moreover, the studies did not permit comparative analysis across the entire college-wide spectrum or for comparable analyses over time (Fujita & Oromaner, 1992). Although program reviews of the basic skills students had attained, and the EOF program had carried out annually, the institution-wide surveys of enrolled students, former students, and graduates were missing for a few years. For the report, HCCC began an inventory and comparative analysis of their previous research. Students admitted through the program from the fall of 1983 through the fall of 1985 had lower retention rates than regularly admitted students. However, the retention rates appeared to have improved during that period and continued to improve until the report’s publication date (Fujita & Oromaner, 1992).

A more recent study, which focused on a state-funded program called the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), which was launched in 2007 and is operated by CUNY, the nation’s largest public urban university system (Scrivener, Weiss, Sommo, & Fresques, 2012). ASAP is a multifaceted and long-term program aimed at helping community college students stay in school and graduate. It targets low-income students who need one or two developmental courses to build their math, reading, or writing skills and who are willing to attend school full time. The 2012 study targeted
students at three CUNY community colleges (Borough of Manhattan Community College, Kingsborough Community College, and LaGuardia Community College) who met the following eligibility criteria: (a) they had a family income below 200% of the federal poverty level and/or were eligible for a Pell grant, (b) they needed one or two developmental courses based on CUNY assessment tests, (c) they were new students or continuing students who had earned 12 or fewer credits, (d) they were NYS residents, (e) they were willing to attend college full-time, and (f) they were in an ASAP-eligible major (Scrivener et al., 2012). The students were randomly assigned at two points in time: one cohort of students was assigned just before the spring 2010 semester, and the other just before the fall 2010 semester. The total sample size was 896 students. The study looked at the impact of ASAP versus standard services and courses at the colleges on the students’ outcomes over a 3-year period. Early findings of the study showed that ASAP had a positive effect on retention. Compared with the control group students, those who participated in ASAP were around 10% more likely to enroll in any course during the second semester of the study, and they were 21% more likely to enroll full time (Scrivener et al., 2012).

To better understand why state-funded programs can be a factor in student retention, this section of the literature review focuses on unpublished data about state-funded programs, giving a greater understanding of the success of state-funded student support services programs. Specifically, two states that were examined for their student support services programs were New Jersey and New York, because they were in the same region of the country as the research site. On an annual basis, the state-funded programs of New Jersey and New York had to provide a yearly report with a narrative of
the major accomplishments of the program as well as student accomplishments over the prior year (Scrivener et al., 2012).

The successes of the New Jersey and NYS-funded programs have only been submitted to the state of New Jersey and New York; they have not been published in any research journals. The state program data for New Jersey and New York only provide a snapshot of the successes of the programs. The State of New Jersey only had student retention information up to 2007 on its website. The chart showed the retention rate over three semesters for state colleges and universities, independent colleges and universities, public research universities, and community colleges. In the fall 2006-2007 academic year, the retention at community colleges was above 55%, which was the lowest rate compared to the other types of institutions mentioned on the State of New Jersey website.

The State of New York fact sheet does not have any identifying information about the date of these data or the types of institutions that were included. It had a 59% graduation rate, but there is no indication of the retention rate (Scrivener et al., 2012). Since these data were not published, it is not clear if there was a comparison group or how these figures were determined. As such, it is difficult to determine whether participating in student support services programs led to a higher retention rate in these two states.

Due to the limited research on state-funded student services programs, the next research reviewed concerned a study on federally funded student support services programs, which are very similar to state-funded student support services programs. A study by Chaney, Muraskin, Cahalan, and Goodwin (1998) was an assessment report commissioned by the USDOE on the “Impact of Student Support Services (SSS).” It was
comparable to state-funded services programs because it provided tutoring, counseling, and remedial instruction to low-income, first-generation college students, and it was similar to the services offered and the population served within the state-funded programs.

The goal of the federal SSS program, like the state programs, was to enable students to begin their college careers successfully, persist in their studies, and ultimately earn degrees (The Pell Institute, 2009). The Chaney et al. (1997) study looked at both SSS participants and non-SSS participants who had similar characteristics. The SSS participants were more likely to remain in higher education, accrue more college credits, and earn higher grade point averages (GPAs) than the non-SSS participants.

The Chaney et al. (1997) study utilized a quasi-experimental design and regression analyses to assess the impact of the SSS program. A total of 5,800 ($N$) students at 47 institutions were tracked over the course of a 3-year period. A group of 2,900 ($n$) nonparticipant SSS students (who had similar demographic and educational profiles) was utilized to compare against 2,900 ($n$) first-year SSS participants who had enrolled during the 1991-92 academic year. That Chaney et al. (1997) study was reviewed in a report published by The Pell Institute, in 2009, given that there were no more recent national studies conducted on the federal SSS programs. Based on the limited published research on the effects of state-funded programs on student retention, it was reasonable to move forward with Pell Institute research based on the Chaney et al. research.

The Pell Institute's (2009) research shows that student retention continues to be a significant problem in higher education. This puzzle of student retention is one of the most frequently examined topics in America (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; McLendon,
A review of the literature revealed, however, that in previous student-retention studies, there was a lack of data and sophisticated data analysis on community colleges (Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, & Brown, 2015; Nippert, 2000) and there was a lack of studies related to the retention of low-income students (Tinto, 2013). These limitations are discussed in more detail below.

First, most of the research conducted on student retention has focused on 4-year institutions. When looking at all higher education research completed on student retention, 10% of research studies, at most, focused on community colleges (McLendon et al., 2010). Most research at the community college level was not published, not widely disseminated, and not peer-reviewed. In addition, many scholars were not conducting research at community colleges—either because they, themselves, were not students of community colleges, or they had not worked at community colleges. As such, this limited their ability to interpret or make sense of their findings (Seidman, 2005). Although the 4-year and 2-year colleges are both institutions of higher education, they have different student populations. Community college students differ in terms of educational goals and demographic backgrounds, such as age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and academic ability (Amankwaa, 2016). In addition, community colleges are known for their commitment to educating a diverse mix of students with widely varying needs (McLendon et al., 2010). Based on this lack of research, these students deserve to have research dedicated to their unique characteristics.

Secondly, the methodology that has been used in previous studies is limited. Most studies are methodologically suspect, and because of their weak methods, they could not provide a strong basis for making policy recommendations (Amankwaa, 2016). A flaw in
previous research shows that a majority of studies investigated a single variable instead of multiple ones (Naylor et al., 2015). Multivariable research is found to be more useful in the practical setting because, in reality, numerous variables interact with one another to create an overall effect, each with direct and indirect effects on student persistence (Naylor et al., 2015). When multiple variables are investigated simultaneously, it allows researchers to examine the interrelationships between those variables as they exist in real life (Wentzel, 1999). In addition, previous studies have poorly constructed comparison groups, or they lack comparison groups, have small sample sizes, low levels of statistical control, and focus on short-term outcomes (Naylor et al., 2015). Also, many studies that have been conducted at community colleges are generally descriptive in nature (Nippert, 2000). A thorough study of retention requires a complicated research design that can clarify not only the direct relationships of each of the variables on retention but also how the interactions between the variables affect retention (Nippert, 2000).

Finally, research is limited when it comes to the retention of low-income students and their underrepresentation in past and current research (Nippert, 2000). Moreover, they received little attention from researchers because researchers wanted to focus on mainstream students (Caldwell, 2015). The educational experiences of low-income students have long been neglected in the literature (Caldwell, 2015). Researchers believe that more needs to be known about these students’ experiences in both 2- and 4-year institutions (Wentzel, 1999). Tinto (2013) stated that there was some research available on these students, but there is not as much as there could be. Nippert (2000) posited that these students need to be included in the research because their background characteristics and life experiences influence their chances to persist in college.
The heart of my research is based on the deficiencies of the limited community college data, the need for more analytically sound methods of research, and for further studies of low-income students. As Tinto (2013), a pioneer in student-retention research, expressed, there is a need for more research on institutional and state actions that enhance low-income student success in higher education. This current study addresses this need by focusing on community college students that participated in a state-funded student support services program that targeted low-income students in an effort to improve student retention. This current research also provides efficient empirical data with sophisticated data analysis. Even though student retention has been widely studied, there is still much to be explored (Tinto, 2013). My hope is that this study addresses some of this missing information and provides the needed research to understand student retention better.

**Persistence of African American Males in Higher Education**

A study conducted by Anumba (2015) supports that persistence is a problem with African American males in higher education. The purpose of the Anumba study was to identify the factors that facilitated college persistence and retention among African American males who enrolled in an undergraduate program at two 4-year public universities in Southern California. Anumba felt that the problem of attrition facing African American students in college deserves the collective attention of educational institutions at all levels, Anumba’s (2015) research posits that it is society’s moral obligation to reverse the trend of educational inequity for African American males.

The Anumba (2015) considered the following research questions. (a) What are the experiences of African American males that lead to their college retention and
persistence? (b) What are the institutional practices or policies at the K-12 educational system, experienced by African American males that facilitated their college retention and persistence? and (c) What are the institutional practices or policies at the university level, experienced by African American males that facilitated their college retention and persistence? The researcher used eight participants who were African American males and who were first in their families to pursue a college education. The researcher used in-depth, semi-structured, three-part interviews, and observations, field notes, and the researcher’s introspective accounts to gather qualitative data (Anumba, 2015).

The findings of the Anumba (2015) study show that policies and practices at the tertiary institutions that facilitated the retention of African American students were financial support, supportive professors, and the students’ peers. The researcher showed that small class sizes that facilitated discussion and class participation, access to resources, and a positive and interactive institutional environment helped to retain African American students (Anumba, 2015). This researcher addressed the growing problem of college attrition among African American males and explored African American male experiences that have led to a lack of persistence. Anumba explored African American males in K-12 experiences to discover why Black males may not be persistent. Lastly, the researcher addressed institutional practices and policies that may affect Black males. Due to these factors, Anumba (2015) posited that Black males might lack true grit in higher education.

Dancy (2010) conducted a study on how manhood and masculinity factors into Black males going to college. The purpose of the Dancy study was to illustrate how the construction of manhood and masculinity African American college men potentially
influence collegiate efforts to serve academically, socially, and developmentally. The following themes of manhood construction emerged: (a) self-expectations, (b) relationships and responsibilities to family, and (c) worldviews and life philosophies (Dancy, 2010). The research questions asked (a) What is it like for you as a Black man getting used to life as a student at (institution)? and (b) Are Black men valued here? If no, who is valued? In what ways? If yes, in what ways? Other questions, inspired by an interview instrument developed by Kraft (1997), were

Imagine that you are attending a social event at this university where you are one of many Black men. If all of the Black men behaved differently from you, in what ways (if at all) would you change your behavior to fit in? Why or why not? Where does that come from? (p. 145)

The sample population for the Dancy (2010) study were 24 African American men enrolled in 12 colleges and universities across the 19 southern and border states of America. A qualitative research approach advanced the study. Specifically, a combination of grounded theory, phenomenological, and case-study methodologies were used to examine the nexus between African American manhood and collegiate experiences (Dancy, 2010).

Dancy (2010) posited that four major themes emerged from the data. With respect to how engaged African American men in college construct manhood: (a) self-expectations comprised statements of self-determinism and answerability (i.e., being resilient, being responsible/accountable, being real or authentic to self-constructed manhood); (b) relationships and responsibilities to a family comprised statements of positioning African American college men as patriarchs, sons, and brothers (i.e.,
respecting family wishes to complete college, respecting opportunities as first-generation college students, preparing to protect women and children); and (c) worldviews and life philosophies. The limitation of the study was the scope of the inquiry, which focused on the manhood constructions and collegiate experiences of engaged college men, generally, and, specifically, those who also shared membership in a fraternity (Dancy, 2010).

In synthesizing these studies, Anumba (2015) and Dancy (2010) believed that student support is a major factor in achieving academic success. Dancy stated that African American males have to show persistence to overcome all of the obstacles in which they go through. Dancy (2010) suggested that it is important for African American males to be determined and understand themselves to help themselves persist in college. Anumba (2015) suggested that the role of support in college can help African American males persist in college.

**Persistence of Latino Males in Higher Education**

The lack of Hispanic males participating and succeeding within higher education has, in effect, been neglected. (Garcia-Reid, 2007) brought this to light by stating, “Latino males are effectively vanishing from the American higher education pipeline” (p. 54). The researchers elaborated on the seriousness regarding the lack of Hispanic males within higher education as well as the neglect regarding the subject by summarizing the research and findings of several scholars.

Prominent academic retention theorists, Astin (1985) and Tinto (1993), agreed that it is necessary to consider the contribution and interaction of academic and non-academic factors when contemplating academic success. This is particularly the case for Latinos/as students because the research suggests that the lack of educational attainment
can be attributed to two primary factors that go beyond academic preparedness: (a) the location where Latinos/as attend college, and (b) their overall college experience (Garcia-Reid, 2007). Latinos/as who attend community colleges and less-selective institutions are less likely to obtain a bachelor’s degree. In addition, Latinos/as, who are enrolled in more supportive academic and social institutions, are more likely to persist in their degree attainment.

Research points to several additional nonacademic factors that affect the degree attainment of Latino college students. These include resilience, self-efficacy, ethnic identity, well-being, social support, comfort with the university environment, self-confidence, and social involvement for various minority status groups (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 2001; Travis & Ausbrooks, 2012). While the academic/cognitive component remains highly valuable, it is important to recognize that as students attend college, if they are not able to form a connection to the campus and are not able to become integrated into the social fabric of the campus, they are likely to be at higher risk of dropping out (Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004). A framework for understanding the Latinos/as college students’ experience in higher education is known as the psychological, social, and cultural (PSC) framework (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007). The PSC framework presents a multidimensional approach that addresses noncognitive factors. Tying together self-perceptions, attitudes, social support agents, and familial values (among many others), the PSC framework claims that Latino retention can be improved by improving the students’ well-being (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Gloria & Ho, 2003; Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 2001).
One element of the PSC framework, the social aspect, highlights the need for social interaction that is appropriate for Latino students. Research supports that peer support and student organization involvement provide an independent contribution to the academic retention of Latinos (Rosales, 2006). Louis Olivas, President of the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, after addressing the minimal and slow change that Latinos/as having incurred in an attempt to acquire a bachelor’s degree, stated that a way to improve the enrollment and retention of Latinos/as in higher education is by “applying values central to the Latino/an experience within the academic environment and shifting it to one that respects familiar and essential values” (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007, p. 379).

The Role of Student Involvement

A study was conducted by Redman Mingo (2010) that addressed variables that support African American male students while in college. The research shows that there is a link between student engagement and academic success. The purpose of the Redman Mingo study was to determine the relationship among (a) student characteristics and academic performance, (b) student characteristics and student engagement, and (c) student engagement and academic performance of African American males in the 2-year college sector. The study addressed the problem of African American males needing student engagement in higher education in or to complete a college degree (Redman Mingo, 2010). The study consisted of a quantitative analysis of student-level data from a sample of African American males in South Carolina. The secondary data were obtained from the 2007 administration of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement
Some student characteristics were associated with academic performance, such as GPAs, as well as specific student engagement variables (Redman Mingo, 2010).

The Redman Mingo (2010) findings suggest that there are many factors that contribute to Black males graduating from college. The researcher posited that student engagement is a key contributor to African American males remaining in college. The researcher stated that student engagement correlates with academic performance. Redman Mingo (2010) stated that Black student engagement in as many extracurricular activities while in college leads to them to achieve academic success.

Similarly, another study conducted by Travis and Ausbrooks (2012) was to promote positive youth development among male African Americans, including a stronger investment in education, with clearer goals, objectives, and action. The researchers discussed how high school graduation, college retention, and college graduation for African Americans continue at rates significantly lower, and slower, than those for other groups. These rates pose challenges to short- and long-term positive youth development (Travis & Ausbrooks, 2012). The researchers conducted a survey for pre- and post-evaluation. The intervention was a full-day event, and it was facilitated by Travis and Ausbrooks. It included participation from secondary school males who identified as African American. There were 11 male African American participants, ages 13 to 18 years.

The Travis and Ausbrooks (2012) study findings helped monitor a pilot intervention, and a pre- and post-evaluation was conducted. The survey was modeled after the California Healthy Kids Survey (2010) resilience model to capture youths’ perspectives on their existing assets. Youths were asked about internal assets, assets
among their peers, and assets within their family, school, and community (Travis & Ausbrooks, 2012). Travis and Ausbrooks explored how positive youth development associates with academic persistence in African American males. The researchers’ reported that the innovative strategies created by two social work educators showed a link between higher education, public health, hip-hop culture, and other strategies to enhance the academic success of African American males. The intervention provided the young men to discover any barriers to their graduation. The young men participants were able to develop concrete goals, objectives, and actions to be taken to change their steps forward for them (Travis & Ausbrooks, 2012).

In synthesizing all of these studies, it is clear that support is necessary for African American males to successfully complete a college degree, which was shown in the Redman Mingo (2010) and Travis and Ausbrooks (2012) studies. In addition, these studies reflect Black males giving an account of the many reasons why they felt compelled to drop out of college. The Black males spoke specifically about the lack of help and resources that prevented them from completing college (Matthews-Whetstone & Scott, 2015).

The study by Mayo, Murguia, and Padilla (1995) found that peer-related support and involvement in student organizations predict the higher adjustment of Latinos/as to college. This was supported by a study by Martin, Swartz-Kulstad, and Madson (1999), who found that college adjustment has a stronger relationship to perceived support from peers and family than to one’s academic ability.

The more involved and invested the student is on campus, the more likely the student will perceive the college experience to be positive (Davis & Murrell, 1993). For
minorities (and non-Whites), there is a positive relationship between extracurricular involvement, grades, and college persistence (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005a; Schneider & Ward, 2003). One way to explain this phenomenon is that when Latinos/as have family and friends’ support are more likely to finish primary and secondary school (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007), and as Latinos/as move on to college, peers become their social support in college (Gloria et al., 2005; Tinto, 1993).

There are also differences in the types of organizations in which students become involved (Schneider & Ward, 2003). They can be student organizations that are social, academic, political, Greek, athletic, religious, and involve housing and residence, as well as sports and special interests. For example, many underrepresented students rely on the support of minority-based student organizations. Particularly in PWI campuses, minority-based student organizations have a positive impact on Latinos’ academic achievement (Conchas, 2001; Stikes, 1975; Willie, 2003).

Amid all of this supportive evidence, there is also some research that suggests that Latinos/as, in particular, do not always benefit from involvement in student organizations. In some circumstances, involvement is associated with academic decline, without researchers really knowing why Mayo et al. (1995). In other cases, involvement in certain groups, such as ethnically based student organizations, is associated with difficulties adjusting to their campus as a result of segregation and perception of lack of support and/or acceptance by the non-Latino/a peers, faculty, and the institution (Schneider & Ward, 2003).

Harper (2006) conducted a phenomenological study that sought to understand what it is like to be a high-achieving African American male college student at a large,
PWI, and it included questions regarding relationships with, and support derived from, others. The purpose of the Harper study was to explore the role of peers in the postsecondary educational experiences of African American male high achievers at PWI. The study addressed Black males who were perceived as lacking in intellectual skills.

The sample population for the Harper (2006) study was 32 African American undergraduate men, enrolled at six universities, who were identified and selected for participation in the study. The sample included four sophomores, 12 juniors, and 16 seniors, representing a wide variety of academic majors. The mean GPA for the sample was 3.32. The method used for the study was in-depth interviews. The findings resulted in a few low-income and working-class African American males aspiring to careers in leadership or who wanted to pursue the educational credentials requisite for assuming such positions for those individuals who rarely receive support and validation from their same race peers (Harper, 2006). There were some limitations to the study. The most glaring limitation was the reliance on self-reported data on peer perceptions. The interviews were conducted with the 32 high-achieving African American undergraduate men, and the interviews were not with the participants’ peers.

In synthesizing the study, Harper (2006) explored the role of peers in the postsecondary educational experiences of African American male high achievers at PWI. The emphasis placed on peers in this study is important, as Astin (1993) contended, peers are the most influential group in the experiences of undergraduate students. The researcher focused on the fact that a lack of peer support with African-American males can lead to a decreased enrollment rate (Harper, 2006).
Research indicates an alarming trend of African-American male and Latino students failing to graduate once enrolled in colleges and universities (Harper, 2006). Brooks, Jones, and Burt (2013) conducted a study that sought to highlight the impact of retention programs on African-American and Latino male students who are successfully completed their first year of college.

Brooks et al. (2013) sample size consisted of researchers form research questions, gather data, run statistical data analysis, and report results. The study addressed the three research questions, and the authors used a mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative data. According to Brooks et al. (2013), mixed-methods designs draw upon the synergy of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The results from the Brooks et al. (2013) study design suggest that retention programs have a positive impact on African-American male academics, with specificity to increased GPA.

In synthesizing these studies, Brooks et al. (2013) believed that student support is a major factor in achieving academic success. African American males have to show persistence to overcome all of the obstacles in which they go through. Brooks et al. posited that support would help push these males through whatever they face in life and achieve academic success.

One of the possible ways to address student involvement and the needs of Latino and African American male students in higher education is through active involvement in student organizations (Lotkowski et al., 2004). This appears to be the result of factors that lead student involvement and that facilitate academic persistence including encouragement, positive social self-concepts (Pascarella & Terenzini 2005), a support network (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), and a sense of belonging (Pascarella &
Terenzini, 2005). It is significant to note that much of the literature around student organizations overlap with the literature on peer support. While, on some occasions, these terms may be used interchangeably, it is necessary to know that student organizations are only one type of peer support. With this in mind, it is also important to understand that peer support research, in part, informs student organization literature.

**The Role of Peer Support**

Within higher education, peer mentoring relationships are built upon an equality in terms of power (Cropper, 2000). At its broadest, peer mentoring provides a wide range of support and raising of consciousness. By using reflection, mentors are able to challenge mentees’ perspectives and help them to deal with difficulties and challenges as they arise. “Thus, through consciousness-raising, student mentors enable mentees to develop the structural context of academia” (Cropper, 2000, p. 603).

In addition, peer support, as a factor contributing to academic success, has found support in both theory and practice. A student with a strong peer support network is more likely to experience a greater sense of belonging and is likely to become involved in activities that promote academic persistence and achievement (Kuh, Kinzie, Cruce, Shoup, & Gonyea, 2006b). One way in which the literature suggests that Latinos can benefit from peer support is through more on-campus-available exchanges of information as well as through emotional support (Kuk & Manning, 2010). This appears to be particularly the case for first-generation college students who would depend more on their peers than their family members for support and orientation throughout their college careers (Kuk & Manning, 2010).
In discussing the value of peer mentoring in higher education, Jacobi (1991) adopted a functional approach, arguing that relationships within mentoring serve three main functions: “(a) emotional and psychological support, (b) direct assistance with career and professional development, and (c) role modeling” (p. 510).

In the UK, it is the first and the third of these three categories that are particularly relevant to peer mentoring in the transition period into college life and the first academic year of higher-level study.

An alternative perspective comes from Anderson and Boud (1996) who, in discussing the reciprocal value of peer learning as opposed to peer support, argued that

It is this type of mutual, complementary, or reciprocal learning which, if properly managed, holds much potential for extending the range of learning activities. It offers a means of dealing with educational issues difficult to handle in other ways and of restoring and enhancing some of the social dimensions of learning frequently lost in universities of today (p. 15).

Anderson and Boud (1996) argued that the main advantage of peer learning is the opportunity for students to learn from each other in a manner that is qualitatively different from formal university lecturing.

The above perspectives provide some insight into the value of peer mentoring and peer tutoring in higher education. What is evident is that the two are not the same, neither are they mutually exclusive. In order to gain a fuller picture of the benefits of each, it is necessary to consider why university students ask for a mentor. The literature provides a detailed analysis of students’ reasons for requesting a mentor, which can be summarized as the opportunity to make friends before starting university; to receive assistance with
acclimating to university life; getting help for coming to terms with the new identity of being a university student; to receive help dealing with personal problems; being given the opportunity to discuss difficulties or concerns over academic work; getting assistance with understanding vocational or professional demands; and to receive help with non-study-related matters, including personal problems and difficulties with a different culture or language. It has been argued that peer mentoring is useful because it provides social support for new students.

Peer tutoring provides an equally valuable function by providing academic support to new college students. The role of peer tutoring in promoting academic success within higher education has long been recognized in the literature (Astin, 1977, 1984; Topping, 1996). Work by Topping (1996) draws attention to the pedagogic value of peer tutoring, noting that it is particularly useful for students who gain from being given the opportunity to participate in active learning within an interactive environment. Peer tutoring provides the means by which students are able to receive immediate feedback in a manner that lowers anxiety and promotes independent learning. Moreover, many students believe that peer tutors are better than staff tutors at understanding students’ problems because they are easier to relate to and are more interested in the students’ personal lives (Topping, 1996).

Conversely, one of the main challenges associated with both peer mentoring, and peer tutoring in academia, is unsuitable pairings. This is particularly the case in peer tutoring, in cases where weak students are paired with other weak students, which can result in little or negative pedagogical impact (Topping, 1996). Another difficulty associated with the nature of the mentoring and tutoring relationship is the academic
strength of the mentoring partners, which was highlighted by Fox and Stephenson (2006) who drew attention to issues around trust and confidence, pointing out that “difficulties arise when students lack confidence in the quality of their partners’ work within a peer-tutoring setting” (Fox & Stephenson, 2006, p. 3).

Across all higher education mentoring programs, one of the main challenges reflects the academic, social, and personal boundaries between the mentor and mentee. In discussing this, Anderson and Shore (2008) argued that despite the fact that the boundaries may be indistinguishable at times, it is the mentors’ responsibility to maintain clear academic and personal boundaries between themselves and their mentees (Bowman, Hatley, & Bowman, 1995; Plaut, 1993).

**Chapter Summary**

The review of the literature demonstrated the relevance of the topic. Reviewing the body of literature concerning the research topic supported the need for answering the research questions. This study contributes to the body of knowledge in addressing the issues of African American and Latino males persisting in college as well as contributing to the body of knowledge regarding the limited number of HEOP studies.

The student involvement and peer support studies have elements that may impact African American and Latino male persistence in college. African American and Latino HEOP students have many of the same concerns as all other college students. Yet, there are cultural and ecological needs that need to be addressed in preparing African American and Latino young men for academic success. They are products of their environments and should not be expected to lose their identity while pursuing a degree.
Students participating in HEOP are encouraged to become involved in the activities of their respective campus.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology used to guide this qualitative phenomenological research study. The topics outlined include the research context, the research design, and the rationale for the design. In addition, the participant information, data collection, and analysis methods are set forth.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Given the limited number of outdated and published HEOP studies, the overreliance of quantitative HEOP outcomes and the lack of focus on students beyond the first year, more research is needed to describe and explore the role of HEOP persistence factors from the perspective of actively enrolled HEOP students of color, especially males, beyond the first year. Chapter 3 outlines the design and methodology used in this present study. This chapter is organized with the following sections: general perspective, the research context, the research participants, the data collection instrument, and the procedure used to answer the research questions.

General Perspective

The retention of college students remains an important goal for all postsecondary institutions (Flowers, 2004a, 2004b). However, many institutions struggle to retain a significant proportion of these students. According to Harper and Quaye (2009), more than one-half of all students, who enter higher education, depart prematurely from their institution. The reasons for these departures are unknown, and they are not easily credited to a narrow set of explanatory factors. Of particular concern to many in higher education institutions is the persisting problem of early departure among African American and Latino males (Simmons, 2013).

Astin (1999) offered a theoretical frame for examining involvement as a factor in men of color persisting to college graduation on PWI campuses. Astin (1999) posited that a coordinated institutional and faculty response is necessary to ensure success for men of
color. The number of African American and Latino males obtaining college degrees is a concern for many disciplines and areas of study (Harris & Wood 2013). The diverse workplace and cultural experiences in academia will be diminished without the minority male voice.

It has been demonstrated that the factors preventing men of color from enrolling into colleges and universities are varied and complex (Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2005). Therefore, the variables promoting success must be multifaceted. Black males have been defined by society and the media, within and outside their culture. The obstacles they have faced have been insurmountable at times. Colleges and universities with HEOPs may provide a link for Black and Latino males attaining undergraduate degrees by clarifying how these students identify themselves and the successes they have accomplished in pursuing their college degree.

Men of color who are HEOP students have many of the same concerns as all college students (Anumba, 2015). Yet, there are cultural needs that should be addressed in preparing young men for academic success (Dancy, 2010). They are products of their environments, and they should not be expected to lose their identity while pursuing a degree. Students participating in HEOPs are encouraged to become involved in the activities of their respective campuses.

There is a need for research documenting effective strategies and services to assist Black and Latino males in their pursuit of a college degree. Over the last several decades, the published empirical literature on disadvantaged populations in HEOPs has been limited (Streeter, 2011). For example, using mail surveys and telephone interviews, Wolf (1976) quantitatively investigated the post-college experiences of HEOP graduates and
dropouts at three institutions in Western New York. The college graduates reported that the support from HEOP helped them graduate. A majority of the HEOP-college graduates were employed in white-collar jobs, and they had relatively high positions, with 40% of the HEOP-college graduates pursuing graduate degrees. Wolf (1976) also reported that as a result of financial issues, many of the HEOP dropouts left their institutions before the end of their second year of college. While this current study focused on college graduates, there continues to be empirical neglect on the persistence factors of existing HEOP students who persist beyond their first year.

The researcher chose African American and Latino males who were sophomores, juniors, and seniors because of the national concerns of the African American and Latino males persisting through college. Despite the previous studies published by Wolf (1976), Glazer (1985), and Streeter (2011), there have been no published HEOP studies since 2011, and none of the previous studies utilized qualitative approaches. Therefore, this present study attempted to qualitatively explore HEOP outcomes from the recommendation provided by Streeter (2011). The researcher conducted a qualitative phenomenological focus group to help explore and discover how African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors succeed in higher education with the help of HEOP services and peer support. The researcher chose this design due to a lack of qualitative studies on HEOP.

The researcher chose to explore the in-depth stories of student men of color in HEOPs during their sophomore year to senior year, who are a particularly at-risk population at many PWIs in the United States. The previous HEOP literature is missing
the in-depth perceptions of how African American and Latino males view their ability to persist while enrolled in the HEOPs at PWIs.

A phenomenological design attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives, and understandings of a situation or phenomenon. According to Creswell (2013), phenomenological designs explore “the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants” (p. 14). The studies focus on the experience people have regarding a phenomenon and how they interpret those experiences. While many phenomenological approaches use individual interviews, the present researcher decided to use the focus group format to collect student narratives. Focus groups are more efficient data collection strategies as they relate to individual interviews. According to Creswell (2011), focus groups allow participants to receive social support from other participants in a comfortable environment. Similarly, Bettinger, Boatman, and Long (2013) suggested the creation of learning communities that keep students together for mutual support or for providing extra financial resources to help students meet living costs who have had only modest success. Therefore, the learning community concept is reinforced by allowing HEOP students to share their stories within the focus group context. A focus group design was used to discover the perceptions of actively enrolled African American and Latino HEOP male sophomore, junior, and senior students at one PWI. Based on the literature, the researcher chose to conduct a phenomenological qualitative study.

The following research questions to be answered in this present study:
1. How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors perceive the role that HEOP supportive services play in achieving success in college?

2. How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors perceive the role that peer support in the HEOP community plays in achieving success in college?

**Research Context**

The study was conducted at a small private college in New York State. The college, founded in 1950, is a 4-year private, nonsectarian, coed institution serving approximately 6,000 undergraduate students, of which about 4,100 attend full time (Table 3.1). The main campus is in a small-town community in NYS. Table 3.1 presents the demographics for the student population for the state college.

Table 3.1

*Summary of the Racial Breakdown of Students Enrolled at a PWI*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Student Population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American Indian or Alaskan</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Unknown</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This public demographic data from Spring 2018 was pulled from the school’s website on May 22, 2019 by the researcher from
In 1969, the NYS Governor and the State Legislature passed legislation that established HEOP, which was a targeted program designed to increase the access and completion rates for educationally and economically disadvantaged students enrolled at NYS colleges and universities.

HEOP is located in the college’s Opportunities Programs office. It is in the division of student services. The HEOP staff comprises a couple of counselors and a director and assistant director. HEOP offers a mandatory pre-freshmen summer program. HEOP offers services such as (a) developmental, supportive, and remedial coursework; (b) academic advisement and counseling; (c) workshops on academic, career, and personal topics; (d) cultural activities and events; and (e) additional financial support. This can all be found on the school’s website under the About HEOP section.

Research Participants

The researcher contacted the HEOP director regarding the population of the HEOP males. The director informed the researcher that there were 60 HEOP males registered for the fall 2019 school year (Table 3.2). Of those 60 males, 47 were African American and Latino ($n = 78.33\%$), and there were 13 male students of other races ($n = 21.66\%$).

The researcher received approval from St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (Appendix A) and acquired the participants from a suburban PWI in the NYS Westchester area. A sophomore, junior, and two senior student participants were used in order to obtain a fair representation of the student classification.
Table 3.2

Summary of the Racial Breakdown of HEOP Male Students Enrolled at a PWI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>HEOP Male Student Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This public demographic data from Fall Semester 2019 was pulled from the school’s website by the researcher. (N = 60).

Electronic files included the assigned identity codes and pseudonyms of the participants. The files did not include the actual names of the participants nor any information that could personally identify or connect the participants to this study. The researcher has all documents saved in an encrypted file on a USB drive, and it is in a locked drawer at the researcher’s office where no one has access to said office. Also, recordings and transcriptions are being maintained using a private, locked, and password-protected file on a password-protected computer. Furthermore, all materials related to the study will be kept for 5 years from the publication of this work, after which time the material will be deleted and shredded by the researcher. Only the researcher has access to the anonymized data. The researcher will not enhance the public data set with any identifiable or potentially identifiable information.

Last, the participants were not be compensated, and minimal risks were anticipated. As a precaution, the researcher provided local crisis contact information to
the participants to address any unexpected social and emotional support that any of the participants might have needed. Although the researcher took every precaution to maintain the confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researcher from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers reminded the participants to respect the privacy of fellow participants and not reveal focus group conversations outside the group to outsiders. As an additional assurance of protecting the institutional data for the study, the researcher obtained the Certificate of Completion for the CITI Program Human Subject Research Training Module.

The researcher contacted the HEOP director to request an email list of the population of the HEOP males who were only African American and Latino. The researcher requested a master list including the names and student emails of all eligible HEOP male students who fit the two criterion: (a) must be an African American or Latino male college student enrolled as a current HEOP participant and (b) must be enrolled full-time as either a sophomore, junior, or senior. The HEOP director ran a prescreening query and generated an e-mail list of 47 students who met the study criteria. The HEOP director shared the student e-mail list with the researcher.

The researcher sent an electronic version of the St. John Fisher College informed consent form (Appendix B). The electronic form was created by the researcher using Qualtrics. The researcher sent the recruitment flyer (Appendix C) to the HEOP office so the staff could post the flyer in the office for recruitment purposes.

The HEOP sophomore, junior, and senior African American and Latino males who were interested in the study had the chance to click on the eform link to say whether
or not they would participate. The students had 2 weeks to respond that they were or were not interested in participating in the study.

The researcher wanted to use a stratified random sampling for the HEOP students who responded and met the criteria. The sampling was based on race and school classification for each focus group. The researcher’s goal was to select 15 participants from the master list of 47 eligible participants. Creswell (2014) recommended sample sizes of eight to 10 participants to get rich descriptions of the phenomena. However, Patton (2002) stated that, at a minimum, the sample size should be based on the expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon, given the purpose of the study. Further, Onwuegbuzie and Leach (2007) suggested that the sample size should be large enough to generate a rich descriptive.

On May 14, 2019, one Latino HEOP male responded on the same day to the first e-mail invitation. A week later, one eligible HEOP student replied through e-mail stating he could not make it to the study. Therefore, the original focus group scheduled May 31, 2019, 3 weeks after the first e-mail invitation was canceled. The researcher emailed the HEOP director June 3, 2019, to ask for additional participants enrolled in any HEOP summer classes. The HEOP director referred the researcher to visit one literature class that was running in the summer term at the main campus. The director sent the researcher a list of five students’ names and personal emails who met the study criteria—all participants were sophomore, junior, or senior HEOP African American or Latino males. The new focus group date was set for June 12, 2019. The researcher emailed each student the research invitation to participate with a new focus group, which was directly after the conclusion of the literature class. None of the eligible five HEOP male students
responded to the email invitation. Therefore, the researcher spoke with the HEOP director and asked for permission to recruit the students in the literature class.

The literature class was a mix of 15 students with sophomore, junior, and senior classifications making up the class. This was a required course, and it was the only course offered over the summer that was made up of several HEOP male students who were second-, third-, and fourth-year students. The HEOP director emailed the information to the students regarding the focus group. The researcher contacted the HEOP director via email regarding the recruitment of the participants. The HEOP director informed the researcher to go to the classroom and try to recruit the students by introducing himself. The researcher went to the students’ classroom and informed them that the study would take place after the class. The director stated that it would be fine to ask the students before the class ends to stay around for the focus group.

The researcher went to the students’ classroom for recruitment, and there were 15 students in the classroom. The director informed the students that he wanted to meet with the HEOP African American and Latino male students after class for a focus group. The researcher explained that this was important in order to help the national crisis of men of color who were not persisting in college. For that reason, the researcher informed the women and other students of other races that they were not eligible for the focus group. The researcher informed the students that they must be either a sophomore, junior, or senior to participate in the focus group. The researcher explained that he had pizza and juice for all participants.

After class, four eligible participants (two African American and two Latino males) remained in class with the intention of participating in the focus group and eating
pizza. The researcher asked the participants who were interested in participating in the study to go to their email inbox to review and sign the electronic informed consent form. The consent form allowed the researcher to keep track of the participants who wanted to participate in the study, and it allowed for an easy storage of the consent forms.

**Instruments Used in Data Collection**

The following section reviews the three instruments used to collect data for this present study. At the beginning of the focus group, the participants were given a demographic checklist (Appendix G). A focus group interview questionnaire (Appendix H) was used to collect narratives about the HEOP male students’ experiences and perspectives. An auditory recording device was used to record the statements made during the focus group.

**Demographic checklist.** The demographic checklist (Appendix D) was a four-item, self-reporting paper-and-pencil worksheet. The demographic checklist comprised of four items in this order: gender, age, ethnicity, and classification. For gender, respondents were asked to check one of two boxes – male or female. For age, respondents were asked to write in their age on the line provided. For ethnicity, the respondents were asked to check one of two boxes – African American or Latino. For classification, the respondents were asked to check one of three boxes: sophomore, junior, or senior. Their answers were used to confirm the criteria for the focus group.

**Auditory recording devices.** The focus group narratives were recorded using three devices. One recording device was a Galaxy Samsung S9 smartphone. The researcher downloaded the Rev.com app (as suggested by Rev.com). As a back-up recording device, the researcher used another Galaxy Samsung S7 smartphone also with
Rev. com app, and also a small digital SONY black audio recorder was used that was equipped with a small cassette tape that would record up to 5 hours of information.

The HEOP focus group interview questionnaire. The HEOP focus group questionnaire (Appendix E) comprised instructions and eight focus group questions that linked the two research questions. The instructions informed the participants to (a) be honest, (b) be detailed, and (c) speak clearly.

The first five interview questions (IQs) were aligned with Research Question 1: *How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors perceive the role that HEOP supportive services play in achieving success in college?* The four focus group participants were asked the following IQs:

IQ1. What do you know about the services provided by HEOP?

IQ2. How has HEOP academic advisement helped you to be successful in college so far?

IQ3. How has the HEOP counseling helped you to be successful in college so far?

IQ4. How have the HEOP academic workshops helped in your classes so far?

IQ5. What is the one thing you wished HEOP would provide to you that you don’t have now?

The next three focus-group IQs were aligned with Research Question 2: *How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors perceive the role that peer support in the HEOP community plays in achieving success in college?*

IQ6. In what ways have your college peers (both HEOP and non-HEOP) helped you succeed in college so far?
IQ7. Describe any challenges you may have had in reaching out to peers for support.

IQ8. What have you learned from reaching out to peers for support?

**Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis**

The researcher conducted one-hour-long focus group with four participants. A sophomore, junior, and two senior student participants were used in order to obtain a fair representation of the student classifications. This study group included two African males and two Latino males. There were an additional 15 minutes allowed for the focus group, in case the focus group ran over the 60-minute time. However, there was no extra time needed. There were an additional 30 minutes for the participants to have pizza and refreshments. The focus group answered eight open-ended questions to explore their perceptions for the researcher to understand their experiences about HEOP.

To ensure the reliability of the data collection instruments, this research followed Creswell’s (2013) consistency protocol. First, electronic invitations were sent to the students, and those invitations were identical for each potential participant in the focus group. Second, the same standard focus group questions were asked of each participant in the focus group. Third, the researcher used an auditory recording device and a checklist to capture the observed nuances of the collected data. Finally, the researcher conducted the focus group along with a research assistant. By implementing these generally accepted steps in qualitative studies, the researcher “will validate the accuracy of the information that will be collected from the focus group” (Creswell, 2013, p. 191). There was no researcher or participant bias in the study in order to validate the accuracy of the data.
The research assistant took notes on the relevant points and the verbal (e.g., terms that came up frequently and nonverbal cues, e.g., attitudes that were displayed by the participants in the focus group). The researcher’s assistant was not allowed to say anything and was only responsible for taking notes. To maintain confidentiality, access to information about the participants is restricted to the researcher. Notetaking, documenting, and recording the focus group allowed the researcher with the ability to transcribe the information in the research assistant’s notes, code the information, develop and extract themes, and to contextualize the findings during analysis. The researcher was able to ask each participant the same questions in order to help him observe the focus group.

Once the focus group data was prepared in a text format, as Creswell (2013) recommended, the data was coded in search of themes concerning participants’ core values, attitudes, and beliefs about persisting in college. The researcher used open-ended questions to assist the participants in reconstructing their experiences with the topic of study. Open-ended questions aided in targeting specific points of the participants’ experiences, and they resulted in the identification of common themes or patterns (Merriam, 1998; Seidman, 2005). The focus group audio recording and the verbatim transcription was downloaded to an electronic folder as a digital file. The recorded focus group was electronically converted into completed transcripts with the digital website Rev.com. Rev.com had a 1-day turnaround time for the researcher to receive the completed transcripts. The transcript pages consist of interviewer and four participant’s dialogue from the focus group.
The researcher received the transcripts of the focus group data back from the transcription service and used them for coding purposes. The word code is simply “a short word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). Coding, along with themes and topics, helped highlight priorities and provide focus to the process of analyzing the qualitative data. These codes spoke to the participants’ lived experiences and perceptions of college. The researcher used a priori coding to speak to the participants’ lived experiences and perceptions of HEOP. A priori codes were also employed in the first cycle of coding to categorize and analyze the qualitative, narrative data (Saldaña, 2016). A priori coding is the generation of a list of codes that is prepared beforehand that harmonize a researcher’s conceptual framework of the study, and the list provides analysis that correlates directly to a researcher’s research questions (Saldaña, 2016).

The coding process involved identifying and recording initial codes and then categorizing or developing the codes into clusters of meaning or themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These codes and themes were developed into a codebook and are maintained in an electronic spreadsheet. Through an examination of the codes, the researcher was able to determine if new codes continued to emerge as the interviews and coding progressed. The codebook was developed into a chart to report the major emergent themes from the study. Tables and direct quotations are also presented in this writing to illustrate and articulate the participants’ meaning. It is important to gather the data from focus group interviews and present the data with enough detail and sufficient depth so that the researcher can have a broad idea of the experiences of the participants.
Chapter Summary

This chapter illustrated how the researcher conducted the methodology in the study. This study investigated how African American and Latino males persisted through to college graduation. The researcher used a phenomenological approach to gather and analyze the data. Conducting a focus group allowed the researcher to examine if there were peer and social support for African American and Latino males graduating from a 4-year college. This qualitative study allowed the researcher to construct deeper meaning through the development of themes in the approach. This researcher believed that this methodology would provide the best approach for this study. This chapter also provided an overview of the methodology chosen for this study, and it covered the research context, design, and the rationale for using the design, the participant information, the data collection, and the analysis methods.
Chapter 4: Results

College completion rates for African American males are a national concern. African Americans face a number of barriers in the college environment (Strayhorn, 2010). In addition, Hispanic males are unevenly represented in higher education and face serious challenges (Ramirez, 2011). HEOPs can offer students supportive services that can help these students to be successful in college. The researcher used a focus group to give voice to current students who are enrolled in HEOP as second- third- and fourth-year students.

Arthur O. Eve HEOP is a NYS program that serves academically and economically disadvantaged students who enroll in NYS colleges (NYSED, 2017). HEOPs are designed to provide a broad range of services to NYS residents who, because of academic and economic circumstances, would otherwise be unable to attend college. The format of many HEOPs is that students must attend a pre-freshman summer program, counseling, tutoring, and remedial/developmental coursework. Based on the literature, the HEOP supportive services are needed to help meet the needs of disadvantaged students.

This chapter provides the empirical findings of the qualitative research study involving a focus group of four African American and Latino male students in a higher education opportunity program. This chapter includes the following sections: (a) research questions, (b) data analysis and findings, and (c) summary of the results.
Research Questions

The following research questions helped to guide this study:

1. How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors perceive the role that HEOP supportive services play in achieving success in college?

2. How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors perceive the role that peer support in the HEOP community plays in achieving success in college?

This qualitative focus group study attempted to discover the perceptions of Black and Latino male HEOP sophomores, juniors, and seniors regarding the influence of the HEOP supportive services (e.g., academic counseling) and peer support (e.g., one-on-one peer tutoring). The male HEOP students in this present study were on track to graduate from one 4-year PWI in Eastern New York.

Data Analysis and Findings

Before the analysis of the findings is presented, it is important to briefly discuss and analyze the participants in the study in order to gain more knowledge and background on their overall experiences that helped them to be on track to graduate in spite of the odds. In the descriptive analysis that follows, the demographics of the participants and a biographical sketch are set forth to provide context to the experiences of the participants. This will be followed by a cross-analysis of the data.

Preliminary descriptive analysis. The first descriptive analysis run was to determine the demographic profile of the four male HEOP focus group participants. Table 4.1 provides the demographic profile results. Four participants completed the focus
group. Two identified as African-American males (50%), and two identified as Latino males (50%). The student ages in this focus group ranged from 18 to 21. One Latino male reported he was 19 years old (25%). Both African American males reported they were 20 years old (50%). One Latino male reported he was 21 years old (25%). Half of the sample identified with the junior classification; the two African American males represented the junior classification. One Latino male represented the sophomore classification, and one Latino male represented the senior classification. Thus, although the sample was small, all of the criteria were reached.

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Profile of the Focus Group Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Sample (N = 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The four HEOP students participated in a 1-hour focus group in June 2019.

**Focus Group Participants**

This section summarizes the profiles of each focus group participant.
**Participant 1.** Participant 1 was a 20-year-old African American junior. According to Participant 1, “my first semester kind of felt like high school, and I ended up on academic probation.” While being in HEOP, Participant 1 self-reported that he worked hard to get off academic probation. He disclosed that he learned the importance of following up with the services of the program (e.g., academic counseling and workshops) to help him become a better student. He self-reported that he believed, “my sense of motivation to go to college was derived from my understanding of the importance of being a person of color and graduating.” While in college, he continued to work in order to help provide for himself. He also stated that he was “actively following up with my HEOP counselor to work towards finishing up my degree.”

**Participant 2.** Participant 2 was a 21-year-old Latino senior. He stated, “I have worked hard to get to my senior year.” He self-reported that he believed that the HEOP services had been a vital part of his academic journey. He felt that “the HEOP counselors had reached out to him, and they continued to follow up with him.” Also, he felt that he was motivated to finish school, and he understood what that meant to his culture. He felt that the HEOP counselors had helped him immensely and put him on track to graduating a year early. He felt that the HEOP counselors were great influences, and they monitored him through his academic journey. He felt that he enjoyed the workshops and continued to have study groups with his peers to help everyone persist through school. He was actively involved in a few student clubs, which he believed assisted him academically. He also believed he was his own motivation to go to college and succeed. He became active on campus and then worked in HEOP as a student coordinator the following year.
**Participant 3.** Participant 3 was a 20-year-old African American junior who self-reported that he appreciated the HEOP services. He felt that “the HEOP services are highly effective in my academic journey.” He felt that “the workshops have been positive and have led to meeting new peers.” He felt that he capitalized greatly on all of the services that the HEOP had to offer. He attended all of the workshops and went on all of the field trips. He felt that it opened his eyes and had him participating in events that he would have never attended on his own. He felt that his HEOP counselor helped him with his career path and helped him to navigate through the courses that helped to aid him to graduate.

**Participant 4.** Participant 4 was a 19-year-old Latino sophomore who stated that “I have worked hard to achieve academic success.” He felt that the HEOP services helped him with knowing who he was as a student. He felt that “the HEOP counselors have been instrumental in my life.” He referred to his counselor as a *parent* due to the counselor’s active role in his academic life. He felt that “peer support has helped me get through my studies and have allowed me to meet new people.” He felt that “obtaining a college degree will mean so much to my family as well as my culture.” He felt that his “peers hold me accountable to be positive and complete my studies.”

It was important to determine whether the participants were actively involved on or off-campus in order to determine how their involvement further enhanced their academic experiences. The participants of the focus group interview shared their level of involvement (Table 4.2). Participant 2 stated, “I was involved both on and off-campus,” while the other three participants were involved only in off-campus activities. The
following biographical sketches provide more information regarding the types of programs and activities in which the participants were involved.

Focus Group Analyses

In order to answer both research questions, a 4-hour focus group, consisting of four male student participants, was recorded and facilitated by the researcher in a classroom at an Eastern NYS PWI. Table 4.2 provides the results of the male students’ responses to the five focus group questions that addressed Research Question 1.

Research Question 1. How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors perceive the role that peer support in the HEOP community plays in achieving success in college? The researcher asked the four participants questions in alignment with Research Question 1 (Table 4.2) to help answer this question. Themes were developed from the coding of the transcript recordings of the focus group.

Table 4.2

Research Questions Aligned with Focus Group Sub Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Focus Group Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors</td>
<td>• What do you know about the services provided by HEOP?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perceive the role that HEOP supportive services play in achieving success in</td>
<td>• How has HEOP academic advisement helped you to be successful in college so far?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college?</td>
<td>• How has the HEOP counseling helped you to be successful in college so far?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How have the HEOP academic workshops helped in your classes so far?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What is the one thing you wished the HEOP would provide to you that you don’t have now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors</td>
<td>• In what ways have your college peers (both HEOP and non-HEOP) helped you succeed in college so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perceive the role that peer support in the HEOP community plays in achieving</td>
<td>far?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>success in college?</td>
<td>• Describe any challenges you may have had in reaching out to peers for support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What have you learned from reaching out to peers for support?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The four participants from the focus group shared their lived experiences with the phenomenon that African American and Latino males are succeeding in college. The researcher analyzed the transcript of the student responses in the 4-hour focus group. The researcher used a priori coding to speak to the participants’ lived experiences and perceptions of the HEOP. This resulted in the development of 12 themes, which were:

1. mindset of students
2. perspective of students
3. HEOP staff accountability
4. student accountability
5. motivation to seek help
6. lack of motivation to ask for help
7. HEOP being supportive to students
8. financial aid
9. HEOP lack of resources
10. HEOP workshops are serviceable
11. the effects of HEOP
12. consequences for HEOP students

Before the analysis of the findings is presented, it is important to briefly discuss and analyze the participants in the study in order to gain more knowledge and background on their overall experiences that helped them to be on track to graduate in spite of the odds. In the descriptive analysis that follows, the demographics of the participants and a biographical sketch are set forth to provide context to the experiences of the participants. This will be followed by a cross-analysis of the data.
Descriptive analysis of focus group participants. To gain a better understanding of the participants, it is important to provide general background information about those who participated in the focus group. This description is followed by a brief biographical sketch, which provides a glimpse into the academic and social experiences in HEOP and the overall experiences at the PWI in Eastern NYS.

The researcher developed his research questions to be aligned with the IQs (Table 4.3). The researcher conducted a focus group based on the two research questions. These questions each had sub-focus-group questions that were aligned with each research question. Research Question 1 had five questions aligned with it. Research Question 2 had three questions aligned with it. The next series of questions in the focus group aligned with Research Question 1. Focus group IQ1 (Table 4.3) asked the participants to

African American and Latino Male HEOP Students’ Responses to Focus Group IQ1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participants’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“What I know is the program itself is not a loan taken out. It’s something that, they kind of make you earn it because even though they help and by sitting on top of you, that means if you, let’s say, if you slip up or messed up in school, they’ll be consequences, like you getting kicked out the program. It has both effects, positive effects, and negative effects.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“So, like the services that HEOP provides is very effective and very important because coming from a high school that we didn’t know, &quot;Oh, I’m going to college&quot; or graduate in a month or so, these services help us motivate us. We know we can go to somebody and talk to. We know somebody has our back.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“I wanna say the services are well built and invaluable and good. When I was in an education opportunity program (EOP), they had little events that took us places, like school college trips, or things like they had going on.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“The services of HEOP, I would say, it gives you a chance to prove yourself as a handout, but because we’re not financially stable to afford a college but also to not be taken for granted.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Statements were recorded during a 1-hour focus group in June 2019.
discuss what they knew about the services provided by HEOP. The participants shared that the HEOP services were geared toward helping students in their areas of need. Collectively, the four participants discussed how the HEOP services at their college helped to motivate them, and how HEOP afforded them the opportunity to attend college without them having to worry too much about the financial aspect of college.

Focus group IQ2 (Table 4.4) discussed how the HEOP academic advisement helped the participants to be successful in college. The participants shared how instrumental academic advisement had been in their academic journey. The participants discussed how their academic advisors were on top of them when it came to them passing their classes. The participants shared how much they appreciated the HEOP advisors for the consistent support that they had been receiving while they had been in the program.

Table 4.4

African American and Latino Male HEOP Students’ Responses to Focus Group IQ2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participants’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It has helped me in a positive way because my first semester I thought it was kind of the same . . . I thought I was in high school again, right? So, I was under, what’s this thing called probation, because I took it as the same on type, high school right, so it made me see I have to work 10 times harder than what I used to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feel like the academics helped me out a lot because as before the semester started, I’m graduating a whole year early, so I see that as motivation like, if I can do it, other kids can do it before me that come like Latinos and Blacks. If I can do it, other kids can do it way before me, and I feel like it does help us out a lot because we can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I feel like the academics, and the support structure that HEOP required you to go to on a daily basis is perfect; it doesn’t just keep [you] on track and motivated on what we’re supposed to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>They give mandatory tutoring sections; I think it happens the freshman year. I feel like doing that helped me out a lot because I’m more motivated to go into the home and get somebody to teach me and things like that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Statements were recorded during a 1-hour focus group in June 2019.
Focus group IQ3 (Table 4.5) discussed how HEOP counseling helped the participants with their career development, personal issues, and academics. The participants discussed how important it was to have counseling to help them navigate to become successful in college.

Table 4.5

*Table 4.5*  
*African American and Latino Male HEOP Students’ Responses to Focus Group IQ3*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participants’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Counseling has helped me because at first I didn’t really know what I wanted to do on my career and then my counselor helped me, she showed me different scenarios of what I can be, she asked me what I like doing and stuff, and she showed me different routes I can take for the future for my career path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>My counselor is a great person, she directed me to the most positive way, positive, like she’s the one that tells me what to do and not to do, I feel like having people like her in this program can change other kids lives that comes way before us, I mean after us, so I feel my counselor did a great job with me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>My counselor, she’s a great lady, she advises me on what I need to do, helps me out, wants me to grab on and keep a hold onto, show me what I have and need to do, all the credits and everything, and that’s about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Counseling is amazing; they act as like a school parent if you want to say it that way, conversations and me talking to her once a week the whole semester, she had me realize I was chasing a profession that I didn’t admire as much as the one that I have now, so she actually made me on the path that I admire now.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Statements were recorded during a 1-hour focus group in June 2019.

Focus group IQ4 (Table 4.6) discussed how the academic workshops helped the participants with their classes. These workshops included academic workshops (e.g., English, mathematics, and the sciences). In addition, HEOP offers college skill workshops (e.g., critical thinking, critical reading, financial literacy, and time management). The participants shared that the academic workshops were “great” for helping them with their classes. The workshops discussed the improvement of HEOP with some of the participants in order to benefit the students in the program. One
participant stated that the workshops gave them valuable skills that helped them with their classes. All of the participants felt that the workshops had been positive experiences in supporting them with their classes.

Table 4.6

*African American and Latino Male HEOP Students’ Responses to Focus Group IQ4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participants’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It was great because we always talk about how we can improve the program, or what things are we missing, and they tell us what your concerns are by what you will feel, that we should do better, and stuff like that, so they really want our vote, see what we can change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have attended several workshops, and in some of these workshops, I know, I like, help me as a role like do my resume, I know there was a resume workshop, I actually improved and change my look, my resume and things like that, and so some of these workshops are very helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>With every workshop that HEOP has done, I have attended at least one of. Mainly there are note-taking a workshop, and there are procrastination workshops, I made one, which teaches us about a skill that we would not get in a regular type of classroom, shown us some valuable skills that we need to learn to be successful in college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>You meet people that you may see on a day-to-day basis at school, and from that, I’ve actually started a study group with three other people, and it’s awesome because it’s like you see people there and then you just automatically feel friends with them because what I’ve seen them do is positive, and I created relationships and friendships, which has last throughout high . . . college, sorry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Statements were recorded during a 1-hour focus group in June 2019. Participant 1 was the only participant who discussed improving HEOP.

Focus group IQ5 (Table 4.7) asked the participants to provide one thing they wished the HEOP would provide that they did not have at the time of the focus group. The participants suggested that HEOP should provide a variety of things to help aid their students. They mentioned a laptop that they could rent from semester to semester, paying all of the HEOP students’ tuitions, and two of the participants mentioned food stipends. The two participants discussed how food stipends would help students because the food was so expensive. Participant 1 was the only participant who discussed improving HEOP.
instead of discussing the workshops. Participant 1 shared how HEOP counselors asked for his thoughts on improving the program.

Table 4.7

African American and Latino Male HEOP Students’ Responses to Focus Group IQ5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participants’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I would say, even though they pay for some of the prices of tuition, I’ll say what would be great if we didn’t have to take any loans out. I know it’s a lot I’m asking for, but if they will pay them, the whole thing that would be awesome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Something that you can provide, I don’t need it, but I see more kids that do need it, and I see kids complain about it, I say more for like laptops and things like that, ask kids if they do need it because some of them work or they’re busy at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What they can provide is a food stipend they already provide tuition, a Summer program tuition, and exciting transportation; that’s just the one monetary thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Totally agree with the food stipend, totally agree. I spend maybe a week a year during semester roughly 40 to 50 dollars, 10 dollars a meal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Statements were recorded during a 1-hour focus group in June 2019.

**Research Question 2.** *How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors perceive the role that peer support in the HEOP community plays in achieving success in college?* The next series of questions in the focus group aligned with Research Question 2 (Table 4.2). Focus group IQ6 (Table 4.8) asked the participants in what ways had their college peers (both HEOP and non-HEOP) helped them to succeed in college? The participants discussed their peers, providing emotional support and keeping them motivated. Another participant shared being held to a standard by his peers that made him work harder. The participants shared that their peers helped push them to complete homework as well as classwork.
### Table 4.8

_African American and Latino Male HEOP Students’ Responses to Focus Group IQ6_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participants’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When you don’t feel like doing the homework, and you have that glass feeling, you know there have been times when you ask your peers for homework are they are, like, if I did it, you can do it, man, even if you don’t want to do it sometimes they tell you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>So, it’s like the same standards that we have to go by, for them to just work hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>They helped me succeed by being my emotional support; keeps me going, keeps me motivated on what I’m having to do for my studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>College peers and I, we actually have a mindset where this is just beginning a path, life is going to be 10 times harder, absolutely, so just do what you can now, and it will pay off, half-ass it now, and it’s going to be such a tough ride for the rest of your life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Statements were recorded during a 1-hour focus group in June 2019.

Focus group IQ7 (Table 4.9) asked the participants to describe any challenges they had in reaching out to peers for support. The participants discussed being apprehensive at times to ask for help because their peers had attitudes. The participants shared that there can be a lack of motivation to seek help from peers if they feel that their peers are overwhelmed with work. One participant discussed that it was easier to ask for support when one already knows a student.
Table 4.9

*African American and Latino Male HEOP Students’ Responses to Focus Group IQ7*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participants’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When you don’t have somebody that you know them fast, and you don’t understand something in the test, or it’s like then why... in my case, it’s hard, sometimes, to come up to a person that I don’t know just to ask a quick question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some of my peers are not that funny, so for me to go to them for help with a course is very hard because I don’t know if they are going to deny it or something, so I just be, I would rather not ask them depending on if I see them talk before, and I know their attitude, so I would just rather not ask them, I would rather go my way and try to ask someone else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sometimes with my peers, I wouldn’t probably even ask them, I would probably go to the main teachers and ask how is this done and this done because sometimes my peers won’t even know what the answer is, so I don’t feel the point in sometimes asking, unless I know that person in an exact way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sometimes it’s just knowing that they have a lot on their plate, and you know that you don’t want just to ask them for help, ask them for something, and then just adding onto that kind of stress.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Statements were recorded during a 1-hour focus group in June 2019.

The final focus group IQ8 (Table 4.10) asked the participants what they had learned from reaching out to peers. The participants were direct and short in their responses. They discussed how every peer is different. A participant shared that not every peer has the same mindset regarding the willingness to help others. The other participants shared that no one studies the same. The participants discussed the importance of knowing whom to ask for help. One participant discussed his displeasure for his peers.
Table 4.10

*African American and Latino Male HEOP Students’ Responses to Focus Group IQ8*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Participants’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not everybody has the same mindset, for example, others are willing to help you, others don’t, so don’t be afraid to ask, it’s that I . . . I had to learn that the hard way because I had an assignment one time, and I was going to ask a certain person, but I didn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feel like I don’t agree with this, concerning people; you never know if your peers will help you as in how he said, so it’s just good to ask, good to interact with someone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What I’m learning is my peer is lazy, procrastinated, and won’t do nothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>No one studies the same type of interpreting, so try to find your own way and try to take other people’s methods and make them your own.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Statements were recorded during a 1-hour focus group in June 2019.

**Cross analysis of the focus group.** The data captured from the participants of the focus group provided insight regarding their overall experiences. The participants discussed how beneficial the HEOP supportive services were in their academic journey. The participants discussed how the supportive services, such as the financial and HEOP staff, had been a leading contributor to their persistence in college.

The analysis and coding of a recorded transcript yielded the development of 12 themes. The themes were analyzed for similarities and then grouped into various categories. Two categories mapped to the theme of the mindset of the students; two categories linked to the theme of the perspectives of the students. Two categories linked to the theme of HEOP staff accountability and one category linked to the theme of student accountability. One category linked to the theme of motivation to seek help, one category linked to the theme of lack of motivation to ask for help, one category linked to
the theme of HEOP being supportive to students, one category linked to the theme of financial aid, one category linked to the theme of resources, two categories linked to the theme of HEOP workshops are serviceable, two categories linked to the theme of the effects of HEOP, and one category linked to the theme of consequences for HEOP students.

At the conclusion of the focus group, the data was integrated and resulted in 12 themes and 17 categories. This data represented the lived experiences of the participants of the study. A detailed description in Table 4.11 shows of all themes and categories that emerged from the data, along with sample quotes that substantiate them. The following themes emerged and provided context to the overall experiences of the study participants.
Table 4.11

**Codes, Categories, Themes – Qualifying Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opened my eyes, changed my ways from the past. Not everybody has the</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Mindset of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>same mindset. See what we can change.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I first started, I probably had a whole bunch of friends, won’t</td>
<td>Path</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change, change my look.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those friends leave your path, college peers and I, we actually have</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>Perspective of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a mindset, where this is just beginning a path, life is going to be</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 times harder, so just do what you can now, and it will pay off,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actually made me on the path, my career path.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I see it” in a positive way. In my point of view, support from others</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play a significant role.</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause I feel, I feel, before us, I mean after us, so I feel, I feel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the same way I feel, the same way as the other two. My counselor is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reliable, she’s a great lady, she advises me, mentors me on what I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>need to do. Staff is reliable. Mentors my career.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They help by sitting on top of you. They always reach out, on top of</td>
<td>Prioritize</td>
<td>HEOp Staff Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students, always on top of their thing and graduation, HEOp services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provided academic group that keep you on top of your stuff. She</td>
<td>Advisement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>showed me different scenarios, she showed me different routes. My</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>counselor, she’s a great lady, she advises me on what I need to do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They advise us, we know we can go to somebody and talk, my counselor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>did a great job with me. My counselor, she’s a great lady, she advises</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me on what I need to do. Counseling is amazing, they act as like a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school parent, she had me realize.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind of make you learn, I have to work 10 times harder, just work</td>
<td>Prove</td>
<td>Student Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard, methods of studying, make them your own, so it’s like the same</td>
<td>Themselves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>standards. Chance to prove yourself. Done at least one workshop.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It motivates you. If I did it, you can do it, your peers motivate you,</td>
<td>Encouraging</td>
<td>Motivation to Seek Help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>services help us motivate us, I see that as motivation, like if I can</td>
<td>Peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do it, other kids can do it. I’m more motivated. It motivates me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers keep us on track, motivated on what we’re supposed to do, my</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peers got each other’s back, they will just constantly pat you on the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back, stomping each other’s chest, you can do it, just keep on, tough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it out, peers help me succeed, they are my emotional support. Keep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me going, keep me motivated. My college peers acknowledge me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s hard, sometimes to come up to a person, I don’t know the person,</td>
<td>Lack of</td>
<td>Lack of Motivation to Ask for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would rather not ask them, depends on if I’ve seen them before, I</td>
<td>Approachability</td>
<td>Help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know their attitude, for me to go to them is very hard, I don’t know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if they are going to deny me, I wouldn’t probably ask them, sometimes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my peers won’t even know what the answer is. So, I don’t feel the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>point in asking, unless I know that person. They have a lot on their</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plate, you don’t want to ask them for help.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It has helped me. HEOP has helped pay for it. They tell us what are the concerns. Others are willing to help you, we forming in groups, she actually helped me, so I would say it helped me, your peers will help you, the academics helped me, helping me change, helping me develop my career, HEOP has helped pay for it, helped me as a role, workshops are very helpful, helped me with friends, counseling has helped me, they try to help me out. My counselor helped me, HEOP is going to back me.

Receiving Help  HEOP Being Supportive to Students

It’s not a loan taken out. They pay the price of tuition, didn’t have to take any loans out, I couldn’t afford, price is too high. HEOP has helped pay for it. It’s not a loan taken out, some kids work or they’re busy at home and things like that, so they don’t have a chance to do that homework. If I can’t afford a $400 book, I know that HEOP can help me out. We’re not financially stable to afford a college.

Lack of Affordability  Financial Aid

Look for other resources, which I can purchase that book, I don’t need it but I see more kids that do, I see kids complain about it, I say more for technology, like laptops, they help you get to school, they can provide food stipend, started a study group, agree with the food stipend.

Lack of Resources  Resources

I feel like workshops are real-life things, we won’t learn in a classroom, we actually will learn in real life, we can take that and plan it, move into the real world, would not get in a classroom.

Workshops show how we can improve, I know there was a resume workshop, services are well built and invaluable, workshops showed us some valuable skills, learn to be successful in college. I got actually improved.

Real-Life Material  HEOP Workshops are Serviceable

Workshops Help to Improve Students

It has both effects, positive effects. Negative effects. In a positive way, in a positive way, directed me to the most positive way, you finish some of college and then you know what you’ll get there, I’ve seen them do positive, created relationships and friendships. Negative effects, peers are lazy, Peers do nothing for me.

Positive Effects of HEOP  Effects of HEOP

Negative Effects of HEOP

If you slip up, messed up in school, they’ll be consequences. Once you have that second chance, you don’t want to lose that chance, so I was on a thing called probation, it would’ve been over for me, take it for granted, don’t get to your full potential, you’ll lose it all, wonder where it all went. It gets hard and you just dropped out. Half ass it now, tough ride for the rest of your life. Not be taken for granted.

Taking HEOP for Granted  Consequences for HEOP Students

Note. Data from transcripts of four HEOP participants.
Table 4.12 illustrates 17 categories that emerged during the interviews of all the participants.

Table 4.12

*Characteristics and Frequency of Four HEOP Participant Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritize</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisement</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prove themselves</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging peers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of approachability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving help</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of affordability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real-life material</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops help to improve students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive effects of HEOP</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative effects of HEOP</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking HEOP for granted</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mindset of students.* The participants had an opportunity to explain where their mindsets were as a student, based on their experience in HEOP. Most of the participants felt that their mindset would determine how far they would go in college. The participants felt that the HEOP services gave them an opportunity to succeed in college.
They also felt focused on continuing to strive toward academic success because of the understanding that HEOP would be right by their sides. The participants believed that with that way of thinking, they could influence their behavior and attitude toward other students. As illustrated in Table 4.13, change and path were seen by the participants as essential characteristics of their mindsets as students.

Table 4.13

*Categories and Identified Participants for Mindset of Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Path</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The categories and themes emerged from the data transcripts of the HEOP students. A participant could respond to both categories, change, and path. Participant 3 did not discuss both categories, change or path. Participant 3 only responded to change.

*Change.* Of the four participants, three highlighted the term *change.* The majority of the participants felt that a successful student had to change his ways in order to persist through college. Two of the participants discussed how they had lost friends throughout their academic journey. Two of the participants felt that HEOP had helped them change the way they see themselves, even when they failed at things. One of the participants discussed his change of mindset while he was in HEOP. Participant 1 stated, “once you have that second chance, you don’t want to lose that chance of you going. So, I was under this thing called probation. I changed my mindset. It would’ve been over for me in the program.”
The participants made changes, such as changing the people that they hung around with, in order to excel and succeed. They changed how they felt about certain classes that they attended. The participants felt that they were on a new path toward success.

*Path.* Two participants emphasized a path. The participants felt that the HEOP services placed them on a path that would help lead them toward graduation. The participants felt that the HEOP services allowed them to become a successful student because of the academic workshops and mentoring. Participant 1 did not discuss a path. Most of the participants discussed how the HEOP counselors directed them when it was time for academic advisement as well as in their career searches. Participant 4 discussed his view of his path: “My college peers and I actually have a mindset where this is just beginning a path. Life is going to be 10 times harder, absolutely, so just do what you can now, and it will pay off.”

The participants understood that their paths would be fully supported by the HEOP services, and those services would allow them to be the student to succeed. Each participant felt that HEOP believed in them, and they appreciated it as a result of not having a lot of people who supported them in their lives. Participant 2 discussed his path. “When I first started, I probably had a whole bunch of friends, Latinos, and Blacks, and then those friends leave your path.”

The participants believed that their mindset had everything to do with their success as students. Participant 3 was the only participant not to discuss change or path. The participants felt that the HEOP services were in place to help them on their journey through college. They discussed how a change of their mindset helped them become
more open to adversity and even more open to the classes that they may have been struggling in. The participants felt that the HEOP counselors were instrumental in their success because of helping the participants with their careers and keeping them on the right path to reaching those careers. Unfortunately, there were not many people who believed in these participants; however, the participants were excited to know that the HEOP counselors and staff continued to support them.

**Perspective of students.** The participants had an opportunity to explain their perspectives of the HEOP services. Most of the participants felt that their HEOP-assigned counselors were great people. The participants felt that the HEOP services that were offered were structured to give the HEOP student the best chance to become graduates one day. Two of the HEOP students felt that HEOP gave them a second chance in college. The participants discussed how the advisement of the HEOP counselors helped navigate their academic journey. The participants felt that they would not change anything about the HEOP services, and they informed other students to get the most out of the program’s services. As illustrated in Table 4.14, the participants discussed the perspectives of the students of HEOP from a student’s point of view.

Table 4.14

*Categories and Identified Participants for the Perspectives of Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Perspectives of Students</th>
<th>Reliable</th>
<th>Mentor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The category and theme emerged from the data transcripts of the HEOP students. A participant could respond to both categories, reliable and mentor. Participant 1 and Participant 3 did not discuss the category of mentor.
**Reliable.** All of the participants felt that it was important to have staff who were reliable. The participants viewed themselves as lucky to be in the program, and they did not want to waste the opportunity. The participants felt that the HEOP staff pushed them toward greatness, and the staff continued to be reliable. Participant 1 stated, “I see it in a positive way. In my point of view, reliability from the staff plays a significant role.” The majority of the participants felt that a successful student had to change his ways in order to persist through college. The participants felt the HEOP services gave them the confidence to do whatever they desired. They also discussed how the program taught them time management and how to pass their classes effectively.

**Mentor.** The participants discussed the importance of the HEOP counselors being mentors to them. Participant 1 and Participant 3 did not discuss the category of mentor. Participant 2 discussed his perspective of the HEOP services:

’Cause I feel that the people that work there are a great influence. My counselor is a great person. I feel like having people like her in this program can change other kid’s lives that comes way . . . after us. So, I feel my counselor did a great job with me. I know I’m winning; they all are winning as well, so I feel proud of that, as a Latino, I see my Black brother and my Latino brother, they both being congratulated due to succeeding.

The participants’ viewed the HEOP staff as a vital part of HEOP. Two of the students felt the need to discuss how the services that were offered helped strengthen them as students. The students viewed that support from others played a significant role in their success.

The participants felt that their perspectives on the HEOP services were positive. They felt that a great deal of the program had to do with the students’ needs. Each
participant felt that his needs were being met by the program. The participants discussed how reliable HEOP continued to be for them. They discussed how the HEOP staff were mentors to them and gave them the urgency of staying focused within the program. The participants felt the need to highlight the HEOP staff and how they were effective at their jobs.

**HEOP staff accountability.** The participants were asked how the HEOP academic advisement had helped them in college. They responded that they felt that the best part of the program was having HEOP counselors who cared about them. The participants felt that the HEOP staff had helped them to adopt the proper everyday habits that they needed to be successful in college. All of the participants felt that the HEOP staff was excellent at advising them with their classes. Two of the participants felt that the staff gave them the tools they needed to become the students that they had become at the time of the focus group. Two of the participants discussed how they felt as though they had a great support system emotionally and academically. As illustrated in Table 4.15, the participants discussed the importance of HEOP being able to help them prioritize their studies as well as how vital HEOP’s advisement was to them.

Table 4.15

*Categories and Identified Participants for HEOP Staff Accountability*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Prioritize</th>
<th>Advisement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The categories and themes emerged from the data transcripts of the HEOP students. A participant could respond to both prioritize and advisement. Participant 1 did not discuss the category of advisement.*
Prioritize. All of the participants felt they were always a priority to the HEOP staff. The participants felt that the HEOP staff helped push them through college. Two of the participants compared the HEOP staff to their parents, which was due to the staff making sure that the participants were all right and going to classes. A couple of the participants felt that the HEOP staff was always there and cared about them as students. Participant 4 discussed his take on HEOP staff accountability.

HEOP services provided academic group that keep you on top of your stuff and just try to graduate. Counseling is amazing; they act as like a school parent, if you want to say it that way. She continues to prioritize me and helped me realize I was chasing a profession that I didn’t admire as much as the one that I have now, so she actually made . . . the path that I admire now.

Participant 3 agreed with Participant 4 regarding the staff. Participant 3 stated:

She showed me different scenarios of what I can be. She showed me different routes I can take for the future for my career path. My counselor, she’s a great lady, she advises me on what I need to do.

The participants felt the need to discuss how the HEOP staff continued to believe in them and allowed them to feel their support. A few of the participants felt that barriers were less challenging to overcome as a result of having the HEOP staff there with them.

Advisement. Of the four participants, three felt that the HEOP staff members continued to give them the best advice when it came to their classes. The participants felt that the HEOP staff was always there for them whenever they needed them, and even when they were going through difficulties. Participant 1 did not discuss advisement. The participants felt that the HEOP staff helped them to stay focused on their goals and
helped them to prioritize their tasks. Participant 3 discussed his take on the HEOP staff advisement, stating:

I feel the same way as one of the individuals that work[s] in HEOP. They always reach out to students for advisement, and they’re always on top of students. That’s one of the main reasons why sophomores, juniors, [and] seniors are always on top of their thing and graduation and things like that. We know we can go to somebody and talk.

The participants felt that the academic advisement continued to keep them on track with their studies. Two of the participants felt that the HEOP staff was the reason why they continued to achieve academic success.

The participants felt that the HEOP staff continued to hold themselves accountable and to continue to live up to the expectations of the students. The participants felt that the HEOP staff made the students their priority. The participants felt that the advisement given by the HEOP staff helped the students navigate through their courses. Two of the students felt that the HEOP staff gave them the support they needed to continue to persist through college. The participants explained that the HEOP staff developed a sense of community for the students to achieve success.

**Student accountability.** The participants had an opportunity to explain their perspective on student accountability. They felt that the HEOP services had helped them to want to take accountability for their actions. The participants felt that the services that were offered in HEOP allowed them to be the best students that they could be. Two of the students felt that they could not take for granted the opportunities given by HEOP. The participants felt that HEOP made them want to do better as students. They discussed how
the HEOP workshops helped them to work on their skillset. They also felt that they held their peers accountable to be successful. As illustrated in Table 4.16, the participants discussed the importance of HEOP allowing them to prove themselves.

**Table 4.16**

*Category and Identified Participants for Student Accountability*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Prove Themselves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The category and theme emerged from the data transcripts of the HEOP students. Participant 3 did not discuss the category of proving themselves.

*Prove themselves.* Of the four participants, three felt that HEOP allowed them to prove themselves as students. Of the four participants, three of them also felt that they held themselves to a standard. The participants felt the HEOP academic support assisted the students and made it easier for them to work on trying to be better students.

Participant 4 discussed his perspective on proving himself.

> The services of HEOP, I would say, it gives you a chance to prove yourself. Also, to not be taken for granted because you wouldn’t find this anywhere else you go until like miles away. With every workshop that HEOP has done, I have attended at least one. Try to take other people’s methods of studying and make them your own.

Participant 1 agreed with Participant 4 and stated, “It’s something that they kind of make you earn. So, it made me see I have to work 10 times harder. HEOP allows
everyone to prove themselves.” The participants felt that the HEOP services gave them self-confidence and allowed them to believe they could do anything in this world. The participants felt that it was important to prove themselves while they were in college.

The participants also felt that it was important for them to be accountable for their actions while they were in HEOP. They felt that they held one another accountable. Participant 3 did not discuss the category regarding proving themselves. The participants felt that it was important for them to try to improve themselves and work toward graduation. The participants discussed the importance of the workshops that were offered by HEOP and how they got the most out of them.

**Motivation to seek help.** The participants had an opportunity to explain their motivation while being in HEOP. They discussed how motivated they were to engage in peer support in the HEOP community. The participants felt that they started school with friends; however, as time went by, they ended up with peers in HEOP. A couple of the students felt that their motivation came from the services offered by HEOP. The participants felt that it was good to know that whatever they needed in the program, the HEOP counselors took care of the issues, and that was motivating to them. As illustrated in Table 4.17, the participants discussed the importance of motivating others and encouraging their peers.
Table 4.1

*Category and Identified Participants for Motivation to Seek Help*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Encouraging Peers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The category and theme emerged from the data transcripts of the HEOP students.

*Encouraging peers.* All of the participants discussed the importance of encouraging their peers. They felt that their peers continued to motivate them and encouraged them to keep pushing through college. The participants felt that they could count on their peers to support them. Two of the participants felt that the culture was set by the HEOP staff, who made it feel like a community. Participant 3 discussed his take on encouraging peers:

> It just keeps [us] on track and motivated on what were supposed to do. My peers always got each other’s backs, whether this even concern[s] us. They will just constantly pat you on the back, stomping each other’s chest, “you can do it, just keep on, tough it out.” Encouraging peers helps me to succeed by being my emotional support. They keep me going. They keep me motivated on what [I am] having to do for my studies.

Participant 2 agreed with Participant 3 and discussed how his peers had played a role in motivating him through college. Participant 3 stated,
These services help motivate us. I see that as motivation, like, if I can do it, other kids can do it before me. Encouraging peers keeps me more motivated. My peers, I’ve been friends with them since freshman year, and it motivates me.

Two participants discussed the importance of being motivated by their peers. The participants discussed being in a race with others and finishing together. Three of the participants discussed how having encouragement from peers can influence someone to feel a sense of satisfaction and belonging.

The participants felt that motivation goes a long way when it comes to building self-efficacy. They felt that the encouragement from their peers continued to motivate them to graduate. A few of the participants felt that seeing other students in HEOP cheer for them let them know that someone cared for them. The participants all felt that motivating others could help to create a culture of positivity and achievement.

**Lack of motivation to ask for help.** The participants felt that when there was a lack of motivation, they would feel alone. The participants felt that the lack of motivation from peers could lead to students not feeling confident about themselves. The students felt that a lack of motivation could lead to students not wanting to speak up and seek help from their peers. Two participants felt that if they did not receive the motivation from peers, then it would have been hard to ask them for help. A couple of participants felt that the lack of motivation could impact the culture of HEOP. As illustrated in Table 4.18, the participants discussed how there is a lack of approachability, at times, when it comes to reaching out to peers.
Table 4.18

*Category and Identified Participants for Lack of Motivation to Ask for Help*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Lack of Approachability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The category and theme emerged from the data transcripts of the HEOP students.

*Lack of approachability.* All of the participants discussed the lack of motivation to ask for help at times. The participants felt that it was difficult to approach other students if they were not motivated by their peers. A few of the participants felt that they did not want to be a distraction to others when it seemed like others may not have been approachable. Participant 3 discussed how the lack of approachability from peers could lead him to not being open to asking others for help.

> For me to go to them is very hard, because I don’t know if they are going to deny it or something. Sometimes with my peers, I wouldn’t probably even ask them. Sometimes I do not want to approach my peers [because they] won’t even know what the answer is, so I don’t feel the point in asking sometimes—unless I know that person.

Participant 4 emphasized how the lack of approachability from peers could lead to him not being open to asking them for help, stating, “sometimes it’s just knowing that they have a lot on their plate, and, you know, that you don’t want to just approach them for help, ask them for something, and then just adding onto that kind of stress.”
The participants recognized that having a lack of motivation can lead them to not doing well in college. They discussed how there could be a lack of approachability with peers, and it could deter them from asking for help. The participants felt that a lack of motivation could spiral out of control and have a strong effect on the culture of the students. The participants felt that in order for there to be peer support, students must be positive and open to helping one another.

**HEOP being supportive to students.** The participants felt that HEOP gave them a ton of support while they had been in the program. The participants felt that the staff was the most supportive because the staff was reaching out to the students consistently. A few participants loved the workshops that were given by HEOP. The participants felt that career counseling was amazing given the aid they received from a HEOP counselor who could help them navigate a path that would lead them to their careers. The participants felt that the support went a long way to the students in HEOP, and they would continue to lead them to academic success. As illustrated in Table 4.19, the participants discussed that receiving help was necessary for their journey.

Table 4.19

*Category and Identified Participants for HEOP Being Supportive to Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Receiving Help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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*Note.* The category and theme emerged from the data transcripts of the HEOP students. Participant 4 did not discuss the category of receiving help.
Receiving help. Of the four participants, three felt that receiving help in HEOP was crucial to their academic journey. The participants felt that they had a need, and those needs had to be met. A few participants felt the importance of receiving help from HEOP built a level of trust in the program. Participant 3 emphasized his perspective regarding receiving help from HEOP.

They reached out [and] helped me with friends, school trips, college trips, and it opened my eyes to a lot of things that are mature. Counseling has helped me. When I see my college mate peers, they acknowledge, and they try to help me out. [At] first, I didn’t really know what I wanted to do on my career, and then my counselor helped me.

Participant 2 discussed his perspective regarding receiving help from HEOP and how it had impacted him.

It has helped me. Because of HEOP, it has helped pay for it. They tell us what the concerns are. I don’t know how to come up to somebody else and tell them, “can you reframe that?” Others are willing to help you. I was going to ask a certain person, but I didn’t, and I didn’t do the assignment, and later on, we [were] forming in groups, and then she actually helped me. So, I would say it helped me.

Concerning people, you never know if your peers will help you.

Participant 4 did not discuss the category of receiving help. Receiving help led to many people getting the most out of the program. The participants were excited to know that they would be able to persist through college. The lack of receiving help can lead to others not understanding college.
HEOP being supportive to the students, was vital for their growth and development. The participants discussed that the support from HEOP, as well as from their peers, can lead to someone finishing their courses. The participants felt that without the support from HEOP services, it might have been a long shot for them to finish college. The participants felt that the services inspired them to be whom they want to be.

Financial aid. The participants had an opportunity to explain how HEOP services helped them with financial aid. A few of the participants felt that their tuition had a major impact on them. Most of the participants had struggled with trying to pay their tuition. The participants felt that they had to work in order to help out with the tuition. A few of the participants discussed their reality, saying that they would not have been able to attend school if financial aid had not helped out with the cost of their tuition. The participants felt that it would be awesome if HEOP could pay their entire tuition because of the lack of affordability of tuition. As illustrated in Table 4.20, the participants discussed the lack of affordability while they had been in college.

Table 4.20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category and Identified Participants for Financial Aid</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
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Note. The category and theme emerged from the data transcripts of the HEOP students. Participant 3 did not discuss the category of lack of affordability.
Lack of affordability. Of the four participants, three felt that they could hardly afford their tuition at most times. The participants stated that HEOP services helped them with their tuition, books, and transportation to get to school. Participant 2 discussed how HEOP services helped him.

Ask kids if they do need it because some of the work, or they’re busy at home and things like that, so they don’t have a chance to do their homework. If I can’t afford a $400 book, I know that HEOP can help me out.

Participant 1 emphasized how HEOP services helped him during his time in college, stating, “I couldn’t afford a school [like] [study site] because the price is too high. Because of HEOP, it has helped pay for it. It’s not a loan taken out.” Participant 3 did not discuss the category of lack of affordability.

The participants felt that the HEOP services allowed them to not worry about whether they could cover all of their expenses. The participants felt that as long as they were in HEOP, they knew they would be all right.

The participants felt that financial aid was a key part as a collegiate student, and they continued to be impacted by the tuition. The participants felt that HEOP services helped them with their tuition and resources that they may have needed for classes. They felt a sense of pride, knowing that they would receive help from HEOP. The participants felt that having a lack of affordability could lead to them to face challenges with classes; however, knowing that HEOP services were there for them made their academic journey easier.

Resources. The participants felt that the resources that they received from HEOP helped them tremendously. They stated that HEOP helped them get to classes by giving
them transportation. The participants felt that HEOP services understood the needs of the students, along with the barriers they encountered. They felt that HEOP did a great job of assisting them in the areas that they lacked. The participants discussed being part of the workshops and trips, which were some of the resources that had opened the door for peer support. Two participants discussed being grateful for the HEOP services and in helping them with resources that they may have needed. As illustrated in Table 4.21, the participants discussed if there was a lack of resources in HEOP.

Table 4.21

*Category and Identified Participants for Resources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Lack of Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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*Note.* The category and theme emerged from the data transcripts of the HEOP students. Participant 1 did not discuss the category of lack of resources.

*Lack of resources.* Of the four participants, three discussed if there were any resources that they would like for HEOP to provide. They felt that they would like HEOP to provide 100% of their tuition. The participants felt that they were appreciative of all the help that HEOP offered, but if HEOP could find a way to pay for the student’s entire tuition, they said it would be amazing. Two participants felt that there should be food stipends for the students because the students had to pay so much for food. Participant 2 discussed how HEOP services could contribute to the students.
Look for other resources, which I can take, which I can purchase that book. I
don’t need it, but I see more kids that do need it, and I see kids complain about it.
I say more for technology, like laptops.

The participants felt that the HEOP services helped them immensely with meeting their needs by providing resources. They felt that they did not know where they would be if they did not receive the necessary resources from HEOP. Participant 1 did not discuss the category of lack of resources. All of the participants gave their suggestions on some resources that they lacked in which they would have liked to have given to them by HEOP. The participants understood how much HEOP services did for them with its resources. A couple of the participants felt that the workshops and trips helped open the door for peer support. Participant 3 stated, “they help you get to school on time. They can provide food stipend.”

**HEOP workshops are serviceable.** The participants had an opportunity to explain how the HEOP workshops had helped them. They felt that the workshops were serviceable. The participants felt that the workshops helped them develop their skills as students. One student felt that the HEOP services were meant to improve them as a student. The participants discussed the benefits of the workshops and how they applied to not only the classroom but to the “real world” as well. The participants felt that there were several workshops that helped assist them with certain classes for which they appreciated. As illustrated in Table 4.22, the participants discussed how they learned real-life material in these workshops, as well as how the workshops helped to improve them as students.
Table 4.22

*Categories and Identified Participants for HEOP Workshops Were Serviceable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Real-Life Material</th>
<th>Workshops Help to Improve Students</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</table>

*Note.* The categories and themes emerged from the data transcripts of the HEOP students. A participant could respond to how both real-life material and workshops helped to improve students. Participant 1 did not discuss the category of real-life material. Participant 4 did not discuss the categories of real-life material and workshops, helping to improve students.

*Real-life material.* Of the four participants, two felt that the material they learned in the HEOP workshops were not just material used for class, but that they could use it in real life. The participants felt that the real-life material could be utilized in different aspects of their lives. Participant 3 discussed how the HEOP workshop material affected him as a student.

I wanna say the services are well built and invaluable and good. I made one workshop, which teaches us about a real-life skill that we would not get in a regular type of classroom that showed us some valuable skills that we need to learn to be successful in college.

The participants understood that some of the workshops could be used in their everyday lives. They felt that these workshops were vital to the students achieving academic success.
Workshops help to improve students. Of the four participants, three felt that the HEOP workshops were geared to help students improve as students. The participants discussed how the improvement of themselves, as students, would help them not only as students but as successful people in real life. Participant 2 discussed how the HEOP workshop would help him improve.

So, like the services that HEOP provides, is very effective and very important. I know there was a resume workshop, I actually improved and changed, my look, my resume, and things. I feel like workshops like those idea paths is real-life things that we won’t learn in a classroom, we actually will learn in real life, and we can take that and plan it and move into the real world.

Two of the participants felt that the workshops were structured perfectly to target the needs of the HEOP students. They felt improvement is important when you are a student, “it’s the only way you’re going to succeed.”

The HEOP workshops were serviceable to the participants. The workshops allowed the participants to work on improving themselves and to receive real-life material to help them in their everyday lives. Participant 1 did not discuss the category of real-life material. Participant 4 did not discuss the categories of real-life material and workshops to help to improve students. The participants were appreciative of the workshops and obtaining knowledge that they needed to succeed as students. The participants continued to show that they were grateful for the workshops.

Effects of HEOP. The participants had an opportunity to explain the effects of HEOP. They felt that they had benefited from the HEOP services. The participants discussed the positive effects that HEOP had on them. Of the four participants, two
discussed how HEOP had led them to meeting new people and developing peer support. The participants discussed the workshops that were focused on improving them. Two of the participants discussed how the HEOP services led them to many other students whom they knew to graduate from college. The participants felt that the resources, along with the HEOP staff, led to them achieving success. As illustrated in Table 4.23, the participants discussed the positive effects of HEOP.

Table 4.23

*Categories and Identified Participants for Effects of HEOP*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Effects of HEOP</th>
<th>Positive Effects of HEOP</th>
<th>Negative Effects of HEOP</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>X</td>
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*Note.* The category and theme emerged from the data transcripts of the HEOP students. Participant 2 and Participant 3 did not discuss the category of the positive effects of HEOP.

*Positive effects of HEOP.* Of the four participants, two felt that HEOP had been a positive experience in their academic journey. The two discussed the positivity of the HEOP staff that kept them motivated to achieve academic success. Participant 4 emphasized the positive effects that HEOP had on him.

You finish some of college, and then you know what you’ll get there, it gets hard, and you just dropped out. What I’ve seen them do is positive, and I created relationships and friendships, which has last[ed] throughout . . . college.
Participant 2 and Participant 3 did not discuss the category of the positive effects of HEOP. Participant 1 and Participant 4 felt that there was a ton of positivity to being in HEOP. They discussed the importance of being positive while they were in school. The participants felt that HEOP continued to save a lot of people and be a positive support that they needed to succeed.

*Negative effects of HEOP.* Of the four participants, only participant one had something negative to say regarding the negative effects of HEOP. Participant 3 shared his dislike of HEOP, promoting peer support. Participant 3 stated, “What I’m learning is my peer is lazy, procrastinated, and won’t do nothing.” Participant 1, Participant 2, and Participant 4 did not discuss the negative effects of HEOP.

Participant 1 and Participant 4 felt that the effects of HEOP continued to be beneficial for them as students. They discussed how there was nothing but positivity in being involved in HEOP. They felt that the resources that were provided to the students were essential, and the resources were one of the many effects of being involved in HEOP. The participants raved about how HEOP understood the students’ needs, and this made for a positive experience.

*Consequences for HEOP students.* The participants had an opportunity to explain the consequences for students of HEOP. The participants felt that HEOP had great services and that the students should not take the services for granted. The participants discussed that they were fully aware of the consequences of not meeting the guidelines and requirements of the HEOP. The participants knew that they had to maintain a certain grade point average. Otherwise they would be in jeopardy of failing out of the program. They discussed the importance of being in HEOP and following the
guidelines. A couple of the participants felt that they would be losing too much assistance if they were out of HEOP. As illustrated in Table 4.24, the participants discussed the consequences for HEOP students.

Table 4.24

*Category and Identified Participants for Consequences for HEOP Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consequences for HEOP Student</th>
<th>Participant Taking HEOP for Granted</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Participant 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The category and theme emerged from the data transcripts of the HEOP students. Participant 2 and Participant 3 did not discuss the category of taking HEOP for granted.

*Taking HEOP for granted.* Of the four participants, two discussed how they did not want to take the program for granted. The two participants felt that they had to put in the necessary effort that is required to being in HEOP. Participant 4 discussed not taking HEOP for granted.

If you just take it for granted, going and leave, and don’t get to your full potential, you’ll lose it all, and then you’ll just wonder where it all went. Half ass it now, and it’s going to be such a tough ride for the rest of your life.

Participant 1 emphasized the importance of messing up in HEOP and receiving second chances.

If you slip up or messed up in school, there’ll be consequences. Once you have that second chance, you don’t want to lose that chance of you going. So, I was under this thing called probation. It would’ve been over for me in the program.
The two participants felt that they had to work hard not to mess up while being in the program. Participant 1 and Participant 4 felt that taking HEOP for granted may be the biggest mistake that anyone could make while being in the HEOP. Participant 2 and Participant 3 did not discuss the category of taking HEOP for granted. Participant 1 and Participant 4 felt that there is a need for requiring the effort to stay in HEOP. The participants understood that they did not want to lose the HEOP services. The participants felt that they continued to be fully aware of not losing the benefits of the HEOP services.

**Summary**

The African American and Latino male participants in this one focus group shared a variety of mostly positive perceptions about the HEOP support services, peer support, and staff support. The qualitative data generated from this one focus group was analyzed along 12 themes and 17 categories. The next chapter will discuss how this data collectively addressed the general questions and the implications of this type of study.
Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter, first, provides a discussion of the implications of the findings of the research. It then identifies limitations of the study and recommendations for further research, and, last, it summarizes the research, provides a conclusion, and gives recommendations.

Introduction

African American and Latino males are not graduating from college as often as their counterparts. These men of color face many obstacles that can deter them from completing their 4-year degree (Strayhorn, 2010). There is a lack of research documenting services to assist African American and Latino males in their journey towards a 4-year degree. Over the last several decades, the published literature on this unfortunate population in HEOP has been minimal (Streeter, 2011). Therefore, this dissertation focused on qualitatively discovering HEOP persistence factors beyond the first year from the perspective of men of color enrolled in one HEOP in New York State. Using a phenomenological approach, the researcher conducted a focus group comprised of both African American and Latino males to gain a better understanding of the persistence factors among African American and Latino male students who were enrolled in a NYS HEOP at a predominantly White Institution. This study was imperative due to scarce and outdated published empirical HEOP studies and the overreliance of quantitative analyses of HEOP outcomes. In addition, there is a lack of focus on students
beyond their first year as well as the overreliance of the perspectives of only the HEOP
directors (Glazer & SUNY, 1985; Wolf, 1976).

Therefore, the purpose of this phenomenological focus group study was to
discover how African American and Latino male HEOP sophomores, juniors, and seniors
perceived the role of HEOP support services and helping them persist beyond the first-
year.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions helped to guide this study:

1. How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors
   perceive the role that HEOP supportive services play in achieving success in
   college?

2. How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors
   perceive the role that peer support in the HEOP community plays in achieving
   success in college?

In response to research question 1: four African American and Latino male
participants believed that the HEOP supportive services (e.g., academic advisement,
workshops, and career counseling) were highly impactful and beneficial to helping them
persist beyond the first year. For the participants, the HEOP support services helped them
to change their academic mindsets. In other words, HEOP staffers helped them to become
more academically-focused and confident in college relative to their high school and
initial first-year mindset. The participants appreciated the consistency of the available
HEOP services and how committed the staff were at helping them succeed academically
and professionally. The participants said that the HEOP staff gave them advice and
provided resources, like workshops, to improve English writing skills and public speaking. As illustrated in Table 4.4, the participants discussed how the staff of HEOP had been able to prioritize them regarding their studies and their lives. The participants discussed how vital the HEOP staff’s advisement had been in their academic journey. The participants learned from other students, faculty, and staff who had diverse backgrounds, which allowed them to gain various perspectives on life and learning. The participants shared that the HEOP staff was excellent in integrating them into the community and giving them the tools that they needed to become the students they imagined they would be.

The participants shared that the HEOP staffers were assertive in supporting and monitoring them throughout their academic journey. The HEOP staffers helped the participants to stay focused on their goals, and to prioritize their tasks. The participants felt that HEOP provided every opportunity they possibly could for the students’ personal and professional growth. In addition, the students shared that they enjoyed receiving one-on-one counseling from the advisors who were qualified to help them discover their strengths, overcome roadblocks to success, and choose an academic program that met their interests and career goals. They could also help them juggle school, work, and family responsibilities. They discussed how speaking with the HEOP counselors helped them direct their career paths and to become better students.

Another service appreciated by these participants was having access to HEOP-related tuition scholarships and awards. This HEOP supportive service afforded the students the ability to attend this particular college. The participants also shared stories of how important the HEOP resources were, especially the book vouchers and Metrocards.
Another important HEOP supportive service was the availability and content of the HEOP workshops. These four participants discussed how HEOP workshops were useful to their academic and real-life success. The four focus group participants reported that they understood that it was up to them to utilize the HEOP supportive services in order to achieve success in college. In summary, the participants shared how instrumental and valuable the HEOP supportive services were and how valuable it was to seek out those services in order to persist in college.

In response to research question 2: the participants believed that the HEOP peer support (e.g., asking for help from peers, peer to peer tutoring, and some workshops) allowed them to take accountability for their academic journeys. The HEOP community culture encouraged and expected greater student accountability. The HEOP community gave them an opportunity to be responsible and ask for help from their peers as needed. The HEOP community fostered an atmosphere of peer support. Most of the participants mentioned that they would need motivation in order to seek help from their peers. The participants discussed that although there is a HEOP community that enables peer support, there is a lack of motivation to seek help from peers. The participants shared stories that reflected their understanding of the importance of peer support. However, there was one participant who had a negative (e.g., skeptical) viewpoint of peer support in the HEOP community.

In addition to seeking help within the culture, another benefit was the social support and networking. The participants shared that HEOP had enough resources, such as workshops and events, that could lead to peer support. They learned that they were not the only students who may have been facing barriers to specific classes and that they
could go to peers for some assistance. The participants shared that they formed study groups in order to connect with other students about classwork.

As illustrated in Table 4.8, the participants discussed the emotional support and motivation that they received from their peers. The participants shared that their peers helped push them to complete homework as well as classwork. The participants were apprehensive in asking for help from peers. There was one anomaly in the study in regard to peer support. As illustrated in Table 4.9 and 4.10, Participant 3 did not feel comfortable with asking his peers for assistance due to feeling that his peers were lazy and procrastinated with getting their assignments done.

The participants shared their experiences with the HEOP workshops. They felt that HEOP did a great job of encouraging peer support. Peer-to-peer tutoring was offered along with several workshops for students. They learned that they could be open with one another as students because other students faced similar challenges. The participants felt that it was always good to see students willing to help one another succeed.

Students want to see their peers achieve academic success. The participants shared how important it was to see their peers succeed in college. They would form study groups and attend workshops to help those students who were in need of assistance. As illustrated in Table 4.17, the participants discussed how vital motivating others and encouraging their peers while in HEOP. The participants felt that their journey was bigger than them, and it was for their cultures. They learned that it was not just enough for them to succeed; they needed all of the students in HEOP to persist through college. The participants felt that seeing other men of color succeed in college was motivating.
Collectively, the participants generally reported positive and consistent perceptions about the role of HEOP services and peer support in their ability to persist beyond the first year. The four participants shared that they had grown, both academically and individually, since starting in HEOP. The focus group respondents were pleased about the various opportunities to meet new people and take advantage of the HEOP resources (e.g., transportation and workshops). They discussed the resources, such as the tutoring and a HEOP staff member meeting with them a few times a week so they could better understand the material that was being taught. HEOP was always prepared to support the students through their academic difficulties and personal matters. They were like a huge family, and the HEOP staff cared about the students’ success. The students were always able to count on their HEOP family for help, guidance, and someone to support them in their endeavors.

**Implications of Findings**

The four findings are (a) overall, the four focus group student participants generally reported positive and consistent perceptions about the role of HEOP services in their academic journey; (b) the students found the HEOP staff to be instrumental in their academic journey; (c) the students found the role of peer support to be encouraged by HEOP to assist students in achieving success; and (d) the students wanted to see their peers achieve academic success.

**Major finding 1.** The HEOP male participants believed that the HEOP services gave them a chance to succeed in college. The participants shared how beneficial and effective the HEOP program had been for them in persisting in school.
Major Finding 2. The HEOP male participants gave the HEOP staff the highest praise and believed that the HEOP staff gave a real-world context to the workshops that helped the students with situations in life.

Major finding 3. The HEOP male participants believed that their HEOP peers helped to motivate them, hold them accountable, and provide emotional support.

Minor finding 1. There was one participant who gave a negative response regarding their peers. The participants discussed their displeasure with the rest of the HEOP peers. This percentage of students discussed the challenges with reaching out for help from peers. The participants suggested they had reservations with asking for help from peers and would rather ask the teachers for help.

The participants discussed how some peers might be afraid help others. A participant shared that not every peer had the same mindset regarding the willingness to help others. This must be examined to see if there are students with a lack of motivation to help other students. The participants discussed the importance of knowing who to ask for help, and they discussed how comfortability played into seeking help from other peers.

Limitations

The study was conducted in the summer, and although there were students attending summer sessions, the pool of students who were willing to participate was very small. In addition, the researcher did not anticipate there would be difficulty in assembling data lists of students. The process of assembling students would have proven easier if a larger pool of the applicants were available during the course of the traditional academic year starting in the fall semester and going through the spring semester. The
last limitation of the study was that, initially, the students barely responded to the email, especially during the summer, and the researcher had to recruit the students using pizza as an incentive.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on the implications of the study. These recommendations offer colleges and universities’ insight into what is needed in order to conduct a study with multiple focus groups.

Future researchers should look to use a semi-structured interview to gain more insight on African American and Latino males who are second-, third-, and fourth-year students in HEOP. In a previous study, Streeter (2011) recommended a follow-up qualitative study using focus groups of selected Black males enrolled in HEOP in New York State colleges and universities. To further add to the literature, a replication of this study could be conducted to gain an understanding of the experiences of the participants. This would be important for the research on HEOP studies.

In an effort to expand the literature on the topic, future research opportunities should include conducting research with women of color to gain an understanding of their experiences. To further add to the literature, a replication of this study could be conducted to compare differences and similarities; the study would then account for triangulation. The literature would also benefit from a study that is conducted by comparing the experiences of African American and Latino women in a HEOP.

In a past study, Streeter (2011) recommended the role of college administrators, faculty, and student affairs, and other campus personnel in promoting the retention and graduation of Black male students on predominantly White Institution campuses. This
researcher agrees with the Streeter (2011) study. In addition, further research is recommended to evaluate the HEOP African American and Latino male students who are not attending academic counseling services. The participants were adamant about the role of the HEOP staff members who would reach out to them regarding academic counseling. The participants referred to the HEOP staff as one of the most important services of HEOP.

Streeter (2011) recommended an examination of the HEOP Summer Institute and its impact on the retention and graduation of Black male students at predominately White institutions. The researcher has a similar notion that future researchers evaluate the HEOP services to see if students feel that they do not receive enough support in the program that may lead them to failing classes. The participants discussed the importance of having HEOP services to assist them in their persistence toward academic success. There is a need to evaluate HEOP students to see if there are some students who would need more support to help them. The evaluation must be done with the students who are failing in the program. HEOP must evaluate if more services are needed for these students, which may consist of bringing some students in to attend the services three times per week. Once the students have attended more services, HEOP must monitor the progress of the students.

In a previous study, Streeter (2011) recommended an examination of past and present institutional data relating to the retention and graduation of Black males at several higher education institutions to identify or isolate common factors that support their success. This researcher agrees with this recommendation. In addition, further research is recommended to explore evaluating the HEOP community to see if students feel isolated
and afraid to ask for help. The participants discussed the importance of being motivated to seek help from peers with homework. The participants discussed how valuable forming groups with peers were in their academic journey. HEOP must have a prescreening process to evaluate their students. In addition, HEOP can see if some students feel isolated and afraid to ask for help. HEOP must have their counselors take the initiative to reach out to these students two times per week to help the student feel more comfortable in the HEOP community.

**Summary**

There is an abundance of literature that speaks to the reasons why men of color do not succeed in college. But, for those who are successful, it is imperative to understand their experiences in order to help others who are not successful. Opportunity programs, such as HEOPs, continue to give support to help these students. This is a challenge for all to consider and act on so we can finally move the needle in a positive direction for our young African American and Latino males across the nation.
References


Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Cruce, T., Shoup, R., & Gonyea, R. M. (2006b). Connecting the dots: Multifaceted analyses of the relationships between student engagement results from the NSSE and the institutional policies and conditions that foster student success. Bloomington, IN: Center for Postsecondary Research, Indiana University Bloomington.


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Appendix A

St. John Fisher Institutional Review Board Approval

May 15, 2015

File No: 3925-022018-13

Jonathan Wonny
St. John Fisher College

Dear Mr. Wonny,

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Institutional Review Board.

I am pleased to inform you that the Board has approved your Expedited Review project, “An Exploration of Persistence Factors Among African-American and Latino Male Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors in Higher Education Opportunity Program: Involvement and Peer Support at a Private Westchester College.”

Following federal guidelines, research related records should be maintained in a secure area for three years following the completion of the project at which time they may be destroyed.

Should you have any questions about the process or your responsibilities, please contact me at elee@sjfc.edu.

Sincerely,

Eileen Lynd-Balta
Eileen Lynd-Balta, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Appendix B

St. John Fisher Printed and Online Informed Consent Forms

Informed Consent Form

Title of study: Examining Perceptions of Academic Support: An Exploratory Analysis of African American and Latino Male Students Enrolled in a New York Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) at a Predominately White Institution

Name(s) of researcher(s): Jonathan Woney

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Janice Kelly

Phone for further information: _________________

Purpose of study: This qualitative study will examine the extent to which student involvement promotes persistence towards the graduation of African American and Latino males in the Higher Education Opportunity Programs (HEOP).

Place of study: PWI

Length of participation: 60 minutes

Method(s) of data collection: Focus Group

Risks and benefits: The expected risks and benefits of participation in this study are explained below:

The benefit of participating in this study is to provide rich data about the African American and Latino males persisting in college. Also, examining the lived experiences of African American and Latino male students at a college institution, the dissertation research will add to the existing body of knowledge on the subject and provides a voice for men of color who are experiencing college differently. Lastly, there is no direct benefit to the participants and minimal risks are anticipated beyond those experienced during an average conversation. Please be advised that although the researcher will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researcher would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.
Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy of subjects: Your confidentiality will be maintained as no identifying information will be used to link you to the study. Exception to the above: Your information may be shared with appropriate governmental authorities ONLY if you or someone else is in danger, or if we are required to do so by law. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to respect the privacy of other focus group members by not disclosing any content discussed during the study.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy of data collected: The researcher will remove all identifying information and create pseudonyms as well as keep all documents in an encrypted file in a locked draw at the researcher’s office where no one will have access.

Your rights: As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

______________________________ _________________________________ ____________
Print name (Participant)   Signature     Date

______________________________ _________________________________ ____________
Print name (Investigator)   Signature    Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher(s) listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact your personal health care provider or an appropriate crisis service provider (*Provide the number of a local crisis service referral center here).

The Institutional Review Board of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study/or if you feel that your rights as a participant (or the rights of another participant) have been violated or caused you undue distress (physical or emotional distress), please contact Jill Rathbun by phone during normal business hours at (585) 385-8012 or irb@sjfc.edu. She will contact a supervisory IRB official to assist you.

All digital audio recordings and transcriptions of interviews will be maintained on an encrypted file on a USB and put in a locked draw at the researcher’s office where no one will have access. Also, recordings and transcriptions will be maintained using a private, locked, and password-protected file and password-protected computer stored securely in the private home of the principal researcher. Electronic files will include assigned identity codes and pseudonyms; they will not include actual names or any information that could personally identify or connect participants to this study. Other materials, including notes or paper files related to data collection and analysis, will be stored securely in unmarked boxes, locked inside a cabinet in the private home of the principal researcher. Only the researcher will have access to electronic or paper records. The digitally recorded audio data will be kept by this researcher for a period of five years following publication of the dissertation. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for five years after publication. All paper records will be cross-cut shredded and professionally delivered for incineration. Electronic records will be cleared, purged, and destroyed from the hard drive and all devices such that restoring data is not possible. This project was reviewed and pre-approved by the PWI IRB. The contact information of the chair of PWI IRB can be found below.

Dr.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for Research
PWI
Appendix C
Focus Group Flyer

The Journey towards Graduation
Your Voice Matters

60 Minute Focus Group

Come be a part of a study on persistence factors that lead to student success.

Participants needed: African American or Latino male

*Must be a sophomore, junior or senior

*Free Pizza and refreshments will be served to all participants after each focus group.

Students will have 2 weeks to decide on participation.

Date: June 12, 2019

If you are interested, feel free to contact me at JCM00160@sjfc.edu

*This study has been approved and reviewed by St. John Fisher College through the Institutional Review Board for Research.
Appendix D

Demographic Checklist

1. Gender
   □ Male
   □ Female

2. Age

3. Ethnicity
   □ African American
   □ Latino

4. Classification
   □ Sophomore
   □ Junior
   □ Senior
Appendix E

Focus Group Interview Questionnaire

Research Question 1

*How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors perceive the role that HEOP supportive services play in achieving success in college?*

- What do you know about the services provided by HEOP?
- How has HEOP academic advisement helped you to be successful in college?
- How has the HEOP counseling helped you to be successful in college?
- How have the HEOP academic workshops helped in your classes?
- What is the one thing you wished the HEOP would provide to you that you don’t have now?

Research Question 2

*How do African American and Latino male sophomores, juniors, and seniors perceive the role that peer support in the HEOP community plays in achieving success in college?*

- In what ways have your college peers (both HEOP and non-HEOP) helped you succeed in college?
- Describe any challenges you may have had in reaching out to peers for support.
- What have you learned from reaching out to peers for support?