

Student Success for Men of Color in Community Colleges: A Review of Published Literature and Research, 1998–2012

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A substantial body of scholarship on men of color in postsecondary education has emerged since the late 1990s. Yet, only recently have scholars begun to pursue empirical insights about the status of men of color who attend community colleges. In an effort to inform future research, this article reviews the published scholarship on student success for men of color in community colleges. The 5 domains of African American male student success in community colleges proposed by Wood and Harris (2012) served as a conceptual framework for reviewing and discussing the published scholarship. Following the review of scholarship, knowledge gaps and implications for future research on men of color in community colleges are offered.

Keywords: men of color, community colleges, student success

Since the late 1990s, student success researchers have considered the experiences and outcomes of men who have been historically underrepresented and underserved in education (e.g., Cuyjet, 1997, 2006; Davis, 2003; Davis & Polite, 1999; Ferguson, 2000; Harper, 2006; Harris, Bensimon, & Bishop, 2010; Hilton, Wood, & Lewis, 2012; Noguera, 2003; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). A finding consistently reported across these studies is that African American and Latino men rank at or near the bottom on most indicators of student success, including enrollment, persistence, achievement, engagement, and attainment. For example, Harper (2006) noted that in 2002, Black men represented 4.3% of all students enrolled in postsecondary education—the same as they did in 1976. Similarly, Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) declared that Latino men were “vanishing” from the nation’s educational pipeline and articulated sociocultural factors that fostered this trend. Finally, a 2011 College Board report titled “The Educational Experiences of Young Men of Color” examined six

pathways that students can take on their departure from high school: (1) enrollment in postsecondary education, (2) enlistment in the U.S. Armed Forces, (3) employment, (4) unemployment, (5) incarceration, and (6) death (Lee & Ransom, 2011). Data presented in the report show that men of color (MOC) are grossly overrepresented in the latter three of these pathways.

Although the aforementioned scholarship on MOC’s success in higher education has been illuminating in many respects, it has prioritized MOC at 4-year institutions, leaving many unanswered questions about those who attend community colleges, which is where most MOC who participate in postsecondary education are currently enrolled or begin their college careers (Beginning Postsecondary Students, 2009). Moreover, researchers have shown that the profile of community college men differs significantly from their 4-year counterparts, thus limiting the utility of research findings and models across institutional contexts (Bush & Bush, 2010; Wood, 2013).

Beyond the relatively little attention that has been paid by scholars to MOC in community colleges, trends in persistence, attainment, and transfer reveal significant disparities among these students, especially when compared with men from more advantaged backgrounds. For example, data from the Digest of Education Statistics (2010) indicated that 12% of Black,

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14.6% of Latino, and 18.7% of Native American men graduated from a community college in 3 years, compared to 22% for White, 24% for Asian, and 27% for international men. Similar racial/ethnic disparities among men are present with respect to basic skills/remedial course completion, transfer, and other important student success outcomes (Wood & Harris, 2013). These and other disparities suggest that more knowledge is needed to better understand the experiences of MOC in community colleges and factors that both hinder and facilitate their success.

The published scholarship on MOC in community colleges is reviewed and synthesized in this article. The impetus was the need to examine and present this scholarship in an effort to (a) leverage educational policies and practices directed toward facilitating student success for MOC in community colleges and (b) inform future research in this area by highlighting key findings and knowledge gaps. We begin the article with a brief discussion of the method used to identify this scholarship. Following this section is a review and synthesis of the scholarship. The article concludes with a discussion of notable knowledge gaps that warrant consideration in future inquiries on MOC in community colleges.

Method

The method employed by Lewis and Middleton (2003) in reviewing the published research on African Americans in community colleges from 1990 to 2000 informed our approach to this article. First, we conducted a detailed review of the published community college scholarship. We identified publications that focused specifically on the experiences and outcomes of MOC in community colleges. Commentaries, book reviews, news, and newsletter sources were excluded from our review.

Second, on identifying and carefully reviewing each publication, we used the Five Domains of African American Male Student Success in Community Colleges (referred to hereafter as the *five domains*), a conceptual framework proposed by Wood and Harris (2012) to identify the primary factors influencing the success of African American men in community colleges. Applying the five domains enabled us to synthesize and discuss the key arguments and re-

search findings emerging from the published literature systematically. Finally, we reviewed the theoretical frameworks that guided the design and execution of the published research studies, as well as the methodologies that were used for data collection and analysis. Although the theoretical frameworks, research methodologies, and limitations of the studies did not inform our clustering of the published scholarship, they allowed us to identify unanswered questions and knowledge gaps and propose implications for future research studies and published discourse on MOC in community colleges.

Before presenting the findings, several notable trends in the published scholarship that captured our attention are worth noting. Mason's (1998) article "A Persistence Model for African American Male Urban Community College Students" was the first publication that focused exclusively on MOC in community colleges. Mason proposed an empirical model of persistence using a sample of urban Black men from a Chicago community college. This piece serves as the foundation of research on MOC in community colleges and continues to inform empirical and scholarly discussions in this area. Hagedorn, Maxwell, and Hampton's (2001) article "Correlates of Retention for African American Males in the Community College" and Glenn's (2003) article "The Retention of Black Male Students in Texas Public Community Colleges" are two seminal pieces that built on Mason's study and have also heavily influenced the research and scholarly discourse on MOC in community colleges.

After Mason (1998), Hagedorn et al. (2001), and Glenn (2003), little attention has been paid to MOC in community colleges as only two pieces, Flowers (2006) and Pope (2006), were published between 2004 and 2006. There was a slight increase in scholarship on MOC in community colleges between 2007 and 2009 when five pieces were published (Bush, Bush, & Wilcoxson, 2009; Freeman & Huggans, 2009; Harper, 2009; Perrakis, 2008; and Ray, Carley, & Brown, 2009). However, it is important to note that none of these pieces was published in peer-reviewed journals. Each was a chapter in an edited volume.

Scholarly considerations on MOC in community colleges remained relatively scarce until 2010. More than half (14) of the 24 pieces we

reviewed were published between 2010 and 2012. Of the 14 publications, 12 were published in peer-reviewed journals. Interestingly, this research is heavily concentrated in specialized journals that focus exclusively on community colleges or students of color. Moreover, of the 16 total peer-reviewed articles we reviewed, none have been published in what are considered “mainstream” higher education journals (e.g., *Journal of College Student Development*, *Review of Higher Education*, *Journal of Higher Education*, and *Research in Higher Education*).

Findings

As noted previously, Wood and Harris’ (2012) five domains provide a conceptual framework for identifying and examining factors that influence student success for African American men in community colleges. Wood and Harris posited that student success outcomes are shaped by interactions between pre-college considerations occurring prior to MOC’s matriculation to community college and five dynamic and interrelated domains that manifest prominently during MOC’s enrollment in community college: the academic domain, the environmental domain, the noncognitive domain, the institutional domain, and the social domain. In the sections that follow, we describe each of these domains and discuss key arguments and research findings that emerged from our review of the published literature on student success for MOC in community colleges that resonate within each domain.

Precollege Considerations

Precollege considerations are factors and experiences occurring prior to MOC’s matriculation to community college that influence their success. Wood and Harris (2012) identified three primary precollege considerations, including students’ goals (academic, career, education, personal), background (age, high school grade point average, academic preparation), and societal norms that shape perceptions of MOC. For example, societal messages about African American and Latino men’s academic abilities or racist stereotypes that depict them as lazy or disinterested in education can influence both students’ and educators’ views about the likelihood that these students will be successful in

community college (Bush et al., 2009). Likewise, MOC’s academic preparation also influences their academic efficacy and outcomes, particularly in mathematics (Perrakis, 2008).

Mason (1998), Hagedorn et al. (2001), and Wood and Hilton (2012) considered precollege considerations and their influence on student success for MOC in community colleges. Mason examined factors that predicted retention and persistence among African American men who attended an urban community college. According to Mason, the certainty of students’ educational goals was a significant factor in their persistence in that high levels of certainty lead to lower absenteeism, more hours spent studying, greater commitment to a major, and higher grade point averages. These variables were positively related to student persistence and negatively related with students’ intent to leave college.

Hagedorn et al. (2001) also examined African American men’s persistence in urban community colleges. Based on an analysis of persistence data that were collected across three cohorts of 202 African American men enrolled over the course of three consecutive semesters, Hagedorn et al. identified six background factors that predicted retention for African American men in community colleges, including age, high school grade point average, certainty about one’s major, and, in line with Mason’s (1998) findings, placing a high degree of importance on completing college.

Spirituality is another precollege consideration that, according to Wood and Hilton (2012), can have a positive influence on student success for MOC in community colleges. Spirituality is a broad concept with multiple meanings, including believing in a higher power or being, participating in an organized religious community, or simply having meaning or purpose in one’s life. Wood and Hilton examined interview data that were collected from 28 African American men who attended an urban community college in the Southwest. Emerging from this examination were five ways in which spirituality was a salient influence in the students’ college experiences. First, spirituality helped to reduce feelings of alienation and isolation. Second, spirituality inspired students to pursue academic excellence. Third, spirituality provided meaning and purpose in life. Some participants attributed career choices and ma-

jors to their spirituality, believing that it was their duty to pursue a vocation that was aligned with “God’s purpose” for their lives. Fourth, being resilient in overcoming challenges that threatened their persistence and success in college was another way in which spirituality influenced students’ community college experiences. Participants reported relying on prayer and other expressions of faith when they faced obstacles. Finally, some participants believed their spirituality allowed them to focus on school rather than being drawn to partying, drugs and alcohol, promiscuity, and other endeavors that can detract from success in college. As a result, these participants invested more time studying and focusing on academic pursuits.

Overall, studies that address precollege considerations shed important light on the educational experiences and academic background characteristics that MOC bring to college. These factors influence a host of outcomes for MOC, notably their engagement, resilience, and academic success.

The Academic Domain

The academic domain encompasses variables that are directly related to students’ academic experiences and, as a result, shape academic outcomes in community colleges (Wood & Harris, 2012). Examples of these variables include attending class regularly (Mason, 1998), academic integration (Flowers, 2006), attending school full time (Freeman & Huggans, 2009; Hagedorn et al., 2001), choosing a major course of study (Hagedorn et al., 2001), and using academic services (Glenn, 2003; Mason, 1998). The studies that fell within the academic domain generally conclude that MOC at 2-year institutions tend to be less academically integrated than their peers who attend 4-year institutions, particularly when experiences such as participating in study groups, interacting with faculty members outside of class, and meeting with academic advisors are considered. Bush and Bush (2010) and Wood and Turner (2010) noted that MOC tend to not seek informal interactions with faculty members because they often perceive faculty as unfriendly, uncaring, and not supportive. One notable exception is Pope’s (2006) study, which involved 74 African American men who attended 15 community

colleges. One of the key findings from this study was that students perceived faculty as generally supportive and believed they respected and appreciated campus diversity.

Some very interesting insights regarding the academic domain emerged from Wood’s (2012b) study. Wood sought to better understand the relationship between academic outcomes and 6-year persistence and attainment rates among African American men in community colleges. Wood found that students had significantly greater odds of persistence or attainment if they received an incomplete in a course, repeated a course for a higher grade, or met with a faculty member. The link between receiving an incomplete in a course and persistence is a curious finding. Wood posited that receiving an incomplete in a course requires students to engage faculty and be proactive enough to make the request, which could explain this pattern. Conversely, Wood found that withdrawing from a course after the add/drop deadline significantly decreased students’ likelihood of persistence or attainment.

Generally, scholars concluded that student success outcomes for MOC in community colleges are shaped heavily by the extent to which they become immersed in the academic experience. Scholars also noted that institutions bear some responsibility for fostering campus environments that will encourage students to pursue the type of academic experiences that often lead to student success.

The Environmental Domain

The environmental domain includes factors situated outside of the campus context that have a direct influence on MOC’s engagement and success in community colleges. These factors have a tendency to direct students’ time, attention, and resources away from their college endeavors (Wood & Harris, 2012). For example, working off-campus and having family responsibilities are reported as factors that negatively impact student engagement and success (Freeman & Huggans, 2009; Mason, 1998). Participants in Mason’s (1998) study experienced environmental challenges related to crime, poverty, and financial need. However, despite these challenges, students with “clearly articulated educational goals” (p. 757) had a more positive disposition toward the environment. As a result, these stu-

dents reported lower levels of stress and helplessness and higher levels of goal commitment, which resulted in a greater level of persistence than students whose educational goals were not well defined.

Another notable example of studies that address the environmental domain is Wood's (2012c) study of student departure among African American community college men. Some postsecondary educators may assume that MOC who leave college prior to completing their programs or goals do so because they cannot meet academic expectations. However, Wood's findings challenged this assumption. Using data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study in 2003–2004 and 2005–2006, Wood compared reasons for African American men's departure with those of their non-African American male counterparts. Wood found African American men were no more likely to cite academic problems as a reason for departure, and were less likely to leave for program dissatisfaction, financial reasons, being called to military duty, or problems with scheduling when compared with non-African American men. In contrast, African American men were more likely than other men to leave college because of personal and "other reasons" (reasons that were not among in the survey's response categories) including family responsibilities during their first year of enrollment. However, African American men were less likely to leave for family responsibilities during their third year.

Finally, Wood, Hilton, and Lewis (2011) offered important insights on the impact of employment on academic success for African American men in community colleges. Perhaps surprisingly, Wood et al. found that employment was conducive to student success, but only when the following two conditions were met: when students viewed their employment as being directly related to their academic coursework and when students worked for the purpose of gaining work experience rather than simply paying for school. Conversely, when employment limited the number of courses students could take, they had significantly lower odds (by 66.2%) of perceiving employment as having a positive effect on their academic success. These findings suggest that employment in and of itself is not counterproductive to retention and persistence in community college. Instead,

it can have productive effects when work is aligned with students' academic and career goals.

The environmental domain has been a widely considered area in the scholarship on student success for MOC in community colleges, but noticeably absent are considerations of the impact of family and family responsibilities on student success. Scholars generally assume that having responsibilities is an impediment to success, particularly for students of color. However, this assumption has not been fully examined for MOC in community colleges.

The Noncognitive Domain

The noncognitive domain captures students' affective and emotional responses to social contexts and person–environment interactions that take place within or intersect their college experiences (Wood & Harris, 2012). Variables in this domain tend to be psychosocial in nature and manifest in students' sense of belonging, self-efficacy, degree utility, and to whom or what they attribute the outcomes they experience (to name a few; Wood & Harris, 2012). Two variables that fall within the noncognitive domain, sense of belonging and identity, emerged as important factors in the published research on student success for MOC in community colleges.

Sense of belonging. Sense of belonging is defined as "students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group or others on campus" (Strayhorn, 2012a, p. 3). Hurtado and Carter (1997) and other scholars argued that sense of belonging is paramount to the retention, achievement, and success of students of color in postsecondary education. Simply stated, if students of color do not feel a sense of connectedness or belonging within the institution, they are not likely to maximize their potential or persist through goal completion.

Within the scholarship on MOC in community colleges, Perrakis (2008) found that sense of belonging was a key factor that influenced achievement for men. This finding suggests that, in addition to other factors that researchers have found to be important predictors of success in community college, having a meaningful connec-

tion to the campus is essential to achievement for male community college students.

Findings from Sutherland's (2011) qualitative study of Black immigrant men also highlighted the significance of sense of belonging for MOC in community colleges. Sutherland examined Black immigrant men's experiences transferring from a community college to a 4-year institution, focusing specifically on how they obtained access to people (e.g., well-informed peers, campus advisors, faculty, administrators) who provided the information and resources necessary to successfully navigate the transfer process.

Three major findings that underscore the role that sense of belonging played in the success of Black immigrant men emerged from Sutherland's (2011) research. First, family members, peers, and community members were important sources of influence for the men and played a key role in their academic achievement. These influences helped to instill the belief that the participants belonged in college and could be successful. Peers were important in helping the participants make decisions about where to transfer and understanding what they should expect to gain from the institution once they had done so.

The second finding from the study related to negotiating relationships with institutional agents. The participants' experiences with faculty and staff led them to be distrustful and uncomfortable interacting with institutional agents. They reported being treated rudely, being misinformed, being given conflicting information, and being ignored by faculty and administrators. Because institutional agents are important sources of transfer capital, the participants had to develop strategies to negotiate these relationships.

The last finding related to the participants' "social incongruence" at the 4-year institution. The men reported feeling like "outsiders" because they were not comfortable socially in the campus environment. Sutherland argued that this feeling of not belonging did not stem from the participants being disengaged. Sutherland's participants were actively involved through on-campus employment, sports, and student organizations. Sutherland declared the students were marginalized because of their identities as Black immigrant men.

Sutherland's (2011) findings regarding sense of belonging (or lack thereof) for Black male immigrant transfer students are aligned with those reported by Gardenhire-Crooks et al. (2010). Drawing from qualitative data that were collected from 87 African American, Hispanic, and Native American men at four community colleges, participants in the Gardenhire-Crooks et al. study reported regularly encountering racial prejudice and gender stereotypes from college faculty and personnel. Participants also felt unwelcomed because of their physical appearances (e.g., baggy clothing, tattoos, and braided hair) and believed faculty at their institutions made negative judgments about their academic abilities based on their appearance.

Identity. The ways in which identity, notably race/ethnicity and gender, influences student success for MOC in community colleges is an emerging area of focus in the published scholarship. Several of the studies we identified explored the relationship between this construct and student success factors for MOC in community colleges. For example, the Gardenhire-Crooks et al. (2010) findings regarding the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity, and men's role as students illuminate the complexities of identity for MOC. The participants reportedly believed it was important to earn money to take care of their families while they were enrolled in college. They recognized that doing so had negative consequences on their academic achievement. Yet, they still felt compelled to prioritize work above school because they saw work as core to their identities as men. In addition, participants reported reluctance to seeking academic, personal, or financial assistance while in college because they viewed seeking help as contradictory to how they were socialized to express masculinity, notably by exhibiting vigor, independence, and resilience.

The ways in which capitalistic values shaped racial/ethnic and gender identities for African American male community college students were the focus of Wood and Essien-Wood's (2012) qualitative study. Specifically, the authors sought to understand how capitalistic values fostered attitudes and behaviors among African American men that negatively affect their success in community college. Based on the concept of capital identity projection, which they described as "a harmful psychosocial disposition that occurs when an image

of economic success is projected to the point of one's own detriment" (p. 987), the authors identified four deleterious effects of capitalistic values on the participants' identities that negatively influenced their success in community college.

First, participants purchased clothing, jewelry, vehicles, and other goods for the purpose of elevating their status among their peers. Consequently, students were often burdened with financial pressures, were distracted academically, and devalued the utility of a college degree. Second, participants measured their self-worth and achievement by the extent to which they had access to material wealth and possessions, which negatively affected their identities and self-concepts. Third, because participants were concerned with projecting a capital image, it became "interiorized" as a core component of their identities, which fueled poor financial decision making and other behaviors that were not aligned with community college success. Finally, because capitalistic value systems construct images of African American masculinity that prioritize countercultural behaviors, participants were vicariously encouraged to embrace attitudes and behaviors that reified stereotypical notions of African American men. Simply stated, the participants were bombarded with imagery and messages that framed success for African American men as being thugs, hustlers, pimps, and gangsters as opposed to being good students or working professionals.

It seems that recognizing the nature and impact of noncognitive factors on students' success is an important and worthwhile endeavor for institutions that seek to improve outcomes for MOC. Whereas sense of belonging and identity have been considered to varying degrees, self-efficacy, motivation, and other factors that may play a key role have yet to be explored. Obtaining insights in these areas can help institutions determine how best to direct attention and invest resources toward the success of MOC.

The Institutional Domain

The institutional domain considers institutional structures and other characteristics that shape the ways in which MOC experience and succeed in community colleges (Wood & Harris, 2012). Bush et al. (2009), Harper (2009),

Freeman and Huggans (2009), and Ray et al. (2009) discussed the importance of institutional responsibility and accountability for the success of MOC by being proactive in designing and implementing effective programs, services, policies, and practices that meet students' needs and leverage students' assets. The efforts that institutions enact toward this end fall within the institutional domain and have received some consideration in the scholarship on MOC in community colleges.

From our review of the published scholarship, we observed that institution type, student services, and faculty support were prominently discussed as important institutional factors in the success of MOC in community colleges. With respect to institution type, Wood and Vasquez Urias (2012) found that African American, Hispanic, and Native American men who attended community colleges reported significantly higher levels of academic integration and greater levels of satisfaction with their major or course of study, quality of education, and the worth of their education when compared with MOC who attended proprietary institutions.

Glenn (2003) underscored the value of support services. In doing so, Glenn found that Texas community colleges that had the highest graduation rates for African American men had academic advising services that were designated for freshmen students, offered orientation courses that could be taken for academic credit, monitored attendance and required tutoring for students identified as at risk, and afforded students access to well-advertised counseling services.

Other studies, notably Pope (2006), Wood (2012a), Bush and Bush (2010), Wood and Turner (2010), Sutherland (2011), and Flowers (2006), emphasized the significance of faculty support in the success of MOC in community colleges. For instance, Wood and Turner's qualitative study of the experiences of 28 African American men enrolled at an urban community college in the Southwest region of the United States identified four key elements that facilitated student-faculty engagement: (1) exhibiting a friendly demeanor, (2) checking in on students' progress, (3) listening to students' concerns, and (4) encouraging student success by challenging them to meet high expectations.

To summarize, the institutional domain accounts for factors within the purview of institu-

tions that can have an affirming influence on the success of MOC in community colleges. Student support services and support from faculty are paramount in this regard.

The Social Domain

Variables relating to students' social integration in the campus context are situated in the social domain (Wood & Harris, 2012). Social integration is an indication of the extent to which a student is connected to or spends time at the institution outside of the normal classroom setting (Tinto, 1993). Tinto (1993) theorized that students' decisions to persist are influenced, in part, by the extent to which they are socially integrated within the institution, notably by way of friendships, informal discussions with peers, and extracurricular activities, such as student organizations, varsity sports, and intramural sports.

Despite its prominence in the college student success paradigm, the applicability of the social integration construct to students who do not reflect a traditional college student profile (e.g., adult learners, commuters, community college students) has been routinely questioned by scholars (Bush & Bush, 2010; Wood, 2012a). Findings from the studies we reviewed support the argument that social integration experiences, as a whole, do not have a positive influence on student success for MOC in community colleges. For example, one of the key findings from Wood's (2012a) study of academic and social integration among African American community college men was that social integration had a negative, albeit small, effect on persistence for these students. Similarly, Strayhorn's (2012b) study of the impact of social and academic integration on African American men's satisfaction in community colleges revealed that men who were more socially integrated at their institutions were less satisfied than those who were less socially integrated. Similarly, participants in Bush and Bush's (2010) study reportedly believed that their relationships with African American peers were counterproductive, rather than facilitative, to their success.

Given these findings regarding the social domain, educators should be cautious in advising MOC in community colleges to invest time in social activities. Although social integration

may facilitate student success for MOC enrolled at 4-year institutions, the same cannot be said about those who are enrolled in community colleges.

Knowledge Gaps and Future Directions

The current scholarship on MOC in community colleges has been illuminating in many respects. However, there are several knowledge gaps and possibilities for future research that are important to note.

The most glaring gap in the research on MOC in community colleges is the lack of attention that has been afforded to men who do not identify as African American. More empirical insight is needed to better understand and respond to the needs and challenges of a broader range of MOC in community colleges. Published discussions of Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other underrepresented male student populations in community colleges are woefully lacking. This gap is especially troubling with respect to Latinos, given that they are the fastest growing demographic group in the United States and are projected to constitute 30% of the country's population by 2040 (Vasquez Urias, 2012). Although there is some overlap in experiences and outcomes across these groups, especially among African Americans and Latinos, cultural and linguistic differences make the disaggregation of MOC's experiences and outcomes in community colleges necessary. Along the same lines, men from various Asian American backgrounds also warrant consideration in efforts to examine student success for MOC in community colleges as none of the studies we reviewed considered this population. Perhaps assumptions about Asian Americans that are informed by the model minority myth (Museus & Kaing, 2009) have erroneously compelled scholars to overlook these men. Moreover, only two of the studies we reviewed (Gardenhire-Crooks et al., 2010; Wood & Vasquez Urias, 2012) addressed Native American men. Scholars should also be intentional about considering the experiences of men who identify as multiracial in future studies.

The role of identity, specifically racial/ethnic identity, in shaping the experiences and success of MOC in community colleges was examined in two of the studies reviewed herein (e.g.,

Gardenhire-Crooks et al., 2010; Wood & Esien-Wood, 2012). Yet, questions remain about how other identities, notably gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, [dis]ability, and citizenship status influence experiences and outcomes for MOC. For example, examining experiences and outcomes for men whose status is undocumented is necessary, particularly in states such as California and Texas that have fairly progressive policies that make postsecondary education more accessible than in other states. Regarding gender, Harris and Harper (2008) noted, “Disparities in enrollment, attainment, and engagement constitute most of what is known about men at community colleges and therefore make the exploration of gendered questions necessary” (p. 26). Gender studies scholars have explored the link between masculinity and a host of student outcomes (see, e.g., Harper & Harris, 2010). Yet, this was not a robust area of focus in the scholarship reviewed herein. All in all, exploring the link between identity and student success can be potentially worthwhile as educators seek more innovative and effective strategies to help these students achieve successful outcomes.

Most of the published research on MOC in community colleges has been conducted from the quantitative research tradition. Although quantitative research offers the advantage of generalizable research findings, missing are important contextual insights and the voices of the men about and on whom this research has been conducted. Qualitative research can illuminate how MOC experience community colleges, why notable trends and outcome inequities persist, and what meanings these students derive from their experiences. For example, Flowers (2006) noted that empirical research on African American men in community colleges has concluded that social and academic integration experiences have a positive impact on retention, but little is known about what (if anything) students enjoy and find worthwhile about these experiences. Qualitative inquiry can be an effective tool in pursuing this and similar knowledge gaps.

Finally, most of the scholarship on MOC in community colleges is informed by Tinto’s (1975, 1993) theories and perspectives on student departure and integration. Tinto’s work has been at the center of the college student success research paradigm, but it has been widely crit-

icized for its assimilationist assumptions (Tierney, 1999) and for narrowly framing student success as an outcome of student effort, thereby overlooking the role that institutions and other contextual variables play in the success or failure of students (Bensimon, 2007). Thus, new frameworks and perspectives are needed to uncover the various factors that shape student success outcomes for MOC in community colleges. Ladson-Billings and Tate’s (1995) critical race theory of education, Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework, Rendón’s (1994) validation theory, and Harper’s (2007) antideficit achievement framework are perhaps better suited for studying and theorizing about MOC in community colleges and should be considered in future studies. Harper’s framework can be especially heuristic given its focus on pursuing insights from men who achieve successful outcomes. For example, studying the experiences of men who successfully transition from the remedial level to college and transfer-level coursework can help educators determine what institutional practices work to support students in this regard. Likewise, collecting data from MOC who successfully transfer from community colleges to a 4-year institution can result in a set of well-informed strategies and practices to help others do so. We offer these as examples of how using culturally relevant frameworks can advance research on MOC in community colleges in necessary and meaningful ways.

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