

THE EVALUATION OF A RETENTION PROGRAM:
AN ANALYSIS OF EFFORTS TO RETAIN UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS ON THE
CAMPUS OF A PUBLIC PREDOMINATELY WHITE MID-WESTERN UNIVERSITY
FROM 1995-2006

By

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ABSTRACT

THE EVALUATION OF A RETENTION PROGRAM: AN ANALYSIS OF EFFORTS TO RETAIN UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS ON THE CAMPUS OF A PUBLIC PREDOMINATELY WHITE MID-WESTERN UNIVERSITY FROM 1995-2006

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This dissertation analyzed and evaluated a bridge and retention program which occurred on the Michigan State University (MSU) campus from the years of 1988 to 2006. This program is Summer University Program- Excellence Required, also known as SUPER. This research specifically sought to find out in which ways this program was able to retain African American students. African American students are entering college at rates higher than previously but they are still not graduating at rates similar to their white counterparts. The graduation rate for African Americans is 42 percent while it is 62 percent for whites. SUPER accepted incoming freshmen who had lower academic credentials, who had some experience of economic hardship and who were first generation college students. The program was able to retain its students at a similar rate as the average MSU student. After interviewing twelve African American students it was found that what SUPER was instilling in the participants was social capital. This conclusion was found using a phenomenological approach with grounded theory coding techniques. Social capital, for the purposes of this research, is the actualized utilization of social networks that allow students to engage and understand the culture on campus, thereby increasing opportunities for success. SUPER was able to give the participants resources that increased their social capital which many of them lacked. Under the core theme of social capital, it was found that there were ten major themes ranging from “The Peer Experience” to “Gifts from SUPER” which aided in the accumulation of social capital over the summer prior to freshman year and during freshman

year. It was also found that SUPER created both academic and social integration for the participants, which literature states as essential in retaining students. Lastly, the concept of academic self-efficacy was recognized as another aspect to the framework of SUPER. Through confidence building participants were feeling more certain about their academic ability which promotes retention. With these findings the final chapter of this work recommends a bridge and retention program for underrepresented students. Retention programs are needed for African American students and this research shows why and it shows ways in which the program should work to provide academic success.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Condition of African American College Students

The discussion of college student retention has been around for over 40 years according to Vincent Tinto, yet the discussion is still necessary today despite any measures taken to improve retention over the years. Most of the literature about retention is about the majority population, while there are select articles and dissertations about specific races. The literature on African American student retention spans from the early 1960s. This literature will be discussed in this dissertation, as the retention of African American students on the predominately white campus of Michigan State University (MSU) is of primary focus. There will be the evaluation of a program created at MSU in order to promote the retention of select incoming freshmen. This program is Summer University Program – Excellence Required (SUPER). The major question to be answered is “did this program work in retaining African American students and if so how?” Before delving into SUPER specifically it is important to look at the history of African American student retention in American universities and colleges. It is important to understand the problem before analyzing the initiated solutions.

In 1960 Eldridge E. Scales’ article on retention at historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) was published. He looked at ninety-five institutions finding that there are higher attrition rates in private institutions; the smallest and largest private colleges lose a higher number of students after the first year in comparison to public institutions. Nevertheless, private institutions have a higher graduation rate than public institutions. As the size of the institution increased there was a higher graduation rate at private schools while graduation rates decreased

at public schools. Scales found that variables such as financial problems, poor scholarship, and transfer were the main reasons for students leaving school followed by illness, marriage and military service. Overall it was found that 31.9 percent of students at these 95 institutions did not return after their first year. Private schools had a slightly higher attrition rate than public schools. In total only 38.6 percent of the students graduated in four years. Private schools graduate more students in four years than public schools. This article took a good look at retention for African Americans before the great influx into predominately white institutions (PWI).

During the 1960s and 70s the literature on African American student retention could not be placed; as searches were rather thin until the 1980s. Nevertheless, statistics show that in 1960 3.5 percent of the African American population, age 25 and older, attained four or more years of college education (Pearson Education, 2007). In the year 1970 there was an increase in those with four years of college at 6.1 percent. In 1980 7.9 percent followed by 11.1 percent in 1985. The number continues to increase as the decades pass with 18.7 percent in 2007. Even though these numbers show promise they are low in comparison to whites. In 1960 8.1 percent of whites attained four or more years of college and in 2007 it had increased to 31.8 percent (Pearson Education, 2007). In 1980 nine percent of those people enrolled in post secondary education were African American. In 2000 the number rose to 11 percent (Hoffman, Llagas, & Snyder, 2003, p. 93). Those students receiving bachelor's degrees in 2000 was 8.7 percent of the degree conferred population (Hoffman, et al., 2003, p. 97). In 1972 Alexander W. Astin, in coordination with the American Council on Education, published a review of college dropout. In this report it was found that of those African Americans attending college, 62.3 percent returned for a second year and 29.4 percent received a degree (A. W. Astin, 1972, p. 15). It is apparent that African Americans have increased their presence on college campuses by about six times the rate in

1960, and whites have increased by about 4 times the rate in 1960. With this fact African Americans are increasing at a faster rate, but they have yet to have a proportionate representation on college campuses for four or more years. This statement reiterates the need for retention programs for African American students.

The nationwide college graduation rate for African American students is 42 percent while it is 62 percent for whites ("Black Student College Graduation Rates Remain Low, But Modest Progress Begins to Show," 2006). These twenty percentage points show a clear disparity between these college students. What can be done to bring the African American numbers even with that of their counterparts? This investigative study will determine what aspects of a retention program at a predominately white public university aid or deter in the process of retaining African American students. Additionally, the researcher will gain an understanding of how aspects of a program interact with its participants. This study will determine what professors, advisors and administrators of the SUPER program did in order to try to retain their participating students. This determination will be made by looking at the methods used by the aforementioned people at a specific PWI.

The Selected Program

In order to best understand the information being delivered in this work it is important to understand SUPER and the program these students come from. The program which the SUPER students are chosen from is the College Achievement Admission Program (CAAP). CAAP was begun to cater to those students that the Office of Admissions views as having the potential for academic success, and students that MSU would like to ensure success by giving academic support along the way. "Students who may not otherwise be granted admission to the university may be admissible through CAAP" (Michigan State University Relations). The variables that are

analyzed in order to choose eligible students for CAAP include the following: status as a first generation college student, socio-economic challenges encountered by the student's family and a recommendation from a high school counselor.

CAAP is administered by the Office of Supportive Services (OSS) at Michigan State University in conjunction with the Office of Admissions. When applying to this program students must submit the general application for admission to MSU along with a CAAP supplemental application. Admissions counselors along with the CAAP review committee go through the applications to decide who is eligible for admission through the program.

The benefits of CAAP include priority tutoring services, additional academic advising, and teaching fellows who assist students with academic and transitional needs. The teaching fellows are sophomore, junior and senior CAAP students who have excellent academic, leadership, and communication skills as peer mentors and tutors. "Their mission as mentors is to channel students toward academic and personal success. As tutors, their mission is to help students become independent learners" (Michigan State University Relations). The program also maintains certain requirements for the students in their first academic year at MSU. They must participate in certain OSS services. The first requirement is multiple academic planning sessions with a trained staff of full-time academic specialists. Students must participate in a one credit first year student seminar, which counts as credit towards their degree. The students must also participate in the free tutorial services for numerous courses on MSU's campus. This is what CAAP does, but SUPER does more for the select few who are chosen out of a pool of applicants to participate in the program.

In 1988 Dr. James B. Hamilton, Assistant Provost of Undergraduate Education at Michigan State University, founded SUPER using funds from the Minority Equity and the

Provost office. Prior to 1995 SUPER was an acronym for Summer University Program Encouraging Retention, after 95 it was renamed Summer University Program- Excellence Required. The main purpose of SUPER was to provide the opportunity for students to gain the academic, social, and interpersonal skills necessary to succeed in the university setting (Michigan State University Office of Supportive Services, 2006). The goal was to build resiliency in participants. The students chosen for this opportunity were those who were first generation, low-income, and those who showed resilience in meeting and overcoming societal difficulties (Noel-Levitz, 2003). These students were from many different backgrounds, including the ethnic backgrounds of African American, Chicano/a, Latino/a, Native American, Asian American, and European American. These students came from all over Michigan with a great many coming from the Detroit area. The overarching program these students were a part of was CAAP. As a reminder; CAAP is an alternative admissions procedure for students who, due to their economic, cultural, or educational backgrounds or environments, need special supportive services in order to realize their academic potential (Michigan State University Board of Trustees, 2010). SUPER was created to support this program. Over the years SUPER has experienced great feats which are to be discussed in the following timeline composition.

In its first year SUPER was co-coordinated by Florence Harris, the Office of Supportive Services Director, and by Dr. Phil Korth a professor of American Thought and Language, now known as Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures. In 1990 Linda Gross became coordinator of SUPER; she was an advisor in the office of Supportive Services. It was in 1991 that the program would receive its longest running and final coordinator; Betty Sanford an advisor and the student assistant coordinator in the Office of Supportive Services. The year 1992 marked the year of the first graduating class of SUPER students. In 1993 one student by the name of Corzell Sykes

maintained a 4.0 GPA during his summer with SUPER and he was accepted into the Honors College. This made him the first SUPER student and the first Office of Supportive Services (OSS) student to enter the college. Sykes' outstanding accomplishments began the awarding of the Most Outstanding Student Award of SUPER annually.

In 1995 SUPER went through an overhaul. It is stated that “up to this point, [SUPER] had been more successful with building self-confidence, creating leadership skills, acclimating students to campus, and exposing them to support resources” (Michigan State University Office of Supportive Services, 2004, p. 7). The concern was how to create a program that had more of an impact on the students' academic performance. The program was revamped to aid in retention of the students. It was also at this time the SUPER became a full grant program, supplying free room and board, tuition, books and supplies and a 20 dollars a week stipend for the students. SUPER originally took in 100 students each session, but it lowered its acceptance rate to around 30 students. There was also the implementation of freshman year as a part of the program—the students continued to live with each other in a chosen residence hall. Freshman year programs included required tutorial, block schedule classes, motivational/informational sessions, and a critical thinking class. In order to keep the students in contact with each other certain classes were blocked so the students would see familiar faces in the classroom during Fall and Spring semesters their freshman year. This was also the year the student athletes were accepted into the summer component of the program. The name of the program was changed this year to create a more positive image and to allow students of the program to feel more comfortable identifying with the program services. The mission statement “creating success by rising to the challenge” was employed.

In 1996 the program had its first summer intern, Laura Bachman, and it hired the programs first graduate assistant, Karen Patricia Williams. A newsletter, *SUPER News* was initiated this year. Student, School Counselor, and Parent information forms were used to screen SUPER recruits. Students were also provided laptop computers for usage in the classroom on a check out/check in basis. It would be in 2001 that SUPER students were granted ownership of laptop computers. In 1997 the SUPER Advisory Council became the OSS/SUPER Advisory Council in order to expand the benefits and resources of the council to the entire OSS program. This was also the year that a curfew was put in effect to engrain the discipline that is required in order to remain academically focused and physically and mentally alert. This was the first year that a peer assistant became a residential component to the staff. This year, 1997, marked the first informal dinner the students had with the president of MSU. The year 1998 marked the 10th anniversary of SUPER.

In 2002 Betty Sanford, the director, was invited to two venues to discuss the program. She was invited to the College Board Forum as a panelist in Chicago, Illinois. She also presented at the Opportunities in Education Conference in Washington, D.C. The program authored *College Life's Little Lesson Book* for distribution to lower division students to help with successful adjustment to college. This was also the year of the first fall and off campus retreat “to provide information for negotiating college, to increase student bonding, and to strengthen their bases for providing each other individual and group support” (Michigan State University Office of Supportive Services, 2004, p. 14). Yalana Bryant became the second full time professional staff member. And the student government created during the summer became a registered student organization. In 2003 SUPER won several awards, the All University Excellence in Diversity Award, and the Noel-Levitz Retention Excellence Award.

In its tenure SUPER received acknowledgement for its work with the MSU community. One such acknowledgement came from Noel-Levitz, which is a higher education consulting firm helping institutions meet their goals for enrollment and student success.

Each year, awards are given to recognize the most successful, state-of-the-art retention programs in use at many kinds of institutions, with many different target groups of students. Nominees for awards are judged on identifiable and measurable institutional outcomes, originality and creativity, use of resources, and adaptability for use at other institutions. Winners are selected by a national panel composed of leading campus-based retention practitioners. (Noel-Levitz, 2003, p. 12)

As of 2003 only 75 public universities and colleges had been presented with this award. These chosen programs serve as models for institutions looking to improve the retention of their students. Noel-Levitz's research into SUPER found that its first to second year persistence rate from 1995-2001 was 84.6 percent. It was 5.7 percentage points higher than the persistence rate for CAAP, and a little more than two percentage points lower than MSU's persistence rate. In 2002 the first year persistence rate for African Americans at MSU was a 20 year high of 86.2 percent (Michigan State University Board of Trustees, 2004). This number is not to be confused with graduation rates for this population. In 2008 African Americans were graduating at a rate of 24 percentage points lower than their white counterparts (Carey, 2008). Because of Noel-Levitz's investigation into the program it was now clear that SUPER created a regimen that improved the performance of its participants, particularly in comparison to its mother program, CAAP.

Even with its national recognition and corroboration that the program worked, SUPER ended in 2006. There are no specifics on why the program closed, but based on what has been

shared with me the program kind of fell through the cracks. This is all too familiar in higher education; perhaps if it were more clear and certain of the program's positive influences it would have continued. Despite the end to this program it is apparent that it did in fact do what it set out to do. This researcher wants to know what specifically allowed the program to prosper.

Significance of the Study

Considering that African American college students are graduating at a rate twenty percentage points lower than their white counterparts, there is a need for information on ways in which to improve this rate. This research specifically looks at low income, first generation and lower credentialed African American students, and with the lower graduation rates for these groups any insight into how to promote college completion for them would be an asset to colleges and universities across the nation. It does cost an institution more to recruit new students than it does to retain current ones (Fike & Fike, 2008). The most influential year for all students is the first year, and SUPER was a component of this year and it is geared towards promoting these students to their second year. Today there is an increase in the matriculation of students from these selected groups, which could suggest that the playing field is leveling out. The truth of the matter is that these students' persistence levels do not parallel to their counterparts. SUPER has been rewarded for its progress in retaining their participating students, so what is it about this program which increases the rate at which these students persist to their second year? The two aspects of the program that research has proven to be a positive in retention efforts are mentoring and the students working in a Learning Community atmosphere. Being mentored by other students has been shown to create a connection and boost learning for college students (Highsmith, Denes, & Pierre, 1998; Santovec, 1992; Willemsen, 1995). A learning community can be described numerous ways but several characteristics are the same as the approach of

SUPER. The creation of a common cohort, students in study groups together and socializing with each other (Stassen, 2003). The atmosphere of learning communities has been shown to promote retention of those participating (Cheseboro, Green, Mino, Snider, & Venable, 1999; Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Lindblad, 2000; Tinto, 2000; Tinto, Love, & Russo, 1994). It is of critical importance for educational institutions to know what they can do to promote persistence among, African American, low income, first generation and lowered credentialed students. It is more productive to help current students remain in their schools than to look for more to fill abandoned slots. The opportunity is there, but it is up to the academy to do whatever it can to turn that opportunity into success. This study will show ways in which success is plausible.

Focus of Study

The focus of this exploratory study will be to look at SUPER with a lens in which the components of the program are revealed and analyzed for what they contribute to the progress of the participants. This particular program was picked because of the population it served, its national acclaim and the institution it was a part of. It was also chosen because of the unfortunate closing of the program. This study is not simply to better understand how retention programs must work in order to retain students, but it is also an evaluation of the SUPER program in hopes to show its institution what is now missing in its endeavors to produce graduates. Michigan State University is a well known predominately white public research one university in the Mid West. The school's population is in the forty thousands and 8.6 percent of it is Black non-Hispanic. This is a percentage that is situated about two percentage points higher than the median percentage of Black freshmen at the country's highest ranked universities; Columbia University ranked first with 12.1 percent of their freshman class as Black ("The State of Black Student Freshman Enrollments at the Nation's Highest-Ranked Colleges and Universities," 2009).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine what staff of SUPER did to facilitate academic progression among the African American participants of the program. The primary research questions are: what aspects of this retention program made it increase retention for the selected population? What efforts from the staff of SUPER were most influential in the progression of selected first generation, low income, academically lower than average, African American college students? In regards to Vincent Tinto's theory of integration; did SUPER allow for both academic and social integration?

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

This dissertation looks at the relationship between a retention program on a predominately white campus and the retention of African American students in the program. This program existed for eighteen years and it was geared towards first generation college students who were admitted into the university through a special program for students with lower credentials. The fact that this program reached out to students on the lower rung of academic ability makes its processes most important to analyze. This program proved that students with lower credentials could be bred into achieving members of the university. Even though this program enrolls students of all races, literature has pointed out the lower rates of retention for African Americans in comparison to their white counterparts. SUPER was able to retain students at a promising rate. Overall looking at retention is not the only purpose of this study; this literature review sets out to evaluate specific variables, used in choosing the SUPER participants, and the relationship of the variables to retention. Literature has looked at how first generation status, gender, SAT/ACT scores, high school GPA, socio-economic status and academic self-efficacy all relate to retention. Do these variables relate to the retention of the specific population chosen for this study or is there no effect? This is what this review of the literature will assess. There will also be a look at components of retention programs to evaluate their productivity.

The retention of African American students on predominately white campuses can be looked at from different angles. In this review of the literature there will be discussion of how certain variables relate to the retention of African American students, not excluding the general discussion of retention and the African American college student. Before looking at individuals who participated in the program, it is helpful to understand the different variables which define

them and determines what's to be expected of them in the academic realm. This literature review will look at what has been found in other studies and research about these variables which define the selected students. The students in the selected retention program are supposed to be first generation college students, and this is one of the essential variables in this study—what, if any, are the effects of first generation status on college retention? There has been research done on whether SAT/ACT scores are predictors in regards to college retention, this will be explored. High School GPA has also been considered as a predictor of college outcomes. Because the students selected for this program have lower SAT/ACT scores and High School GPA it is important to know how these assessment tools may relate to their academic potential. There has also been discussion on whether men or women do better at retaining. There will be the discussion of learning communities and how they may aid in retention on college campuses. How socio-economic status relates to retention will be discussed. How academic self-efficacy relates to retention. There will be the discussion of a few programs geared towards the promotion of retention; research similar to what is being presented in this paper. Lastly, there will be the discussion of components of retention programs and each one's direct relation to retention. All of these variables aid in the definition of those African American students interviewed in this study. Yet this study goes further than simply looking at what the students begin with, it looks at how the students interacted with the retention program and how that program interacted with them.

This current research is looking at the ways in which certain aspects of a retention program relate to retention of its African American Students. Former participants of the retention program will be asked questions ranging from; what was the most influential aspect of the program on your academic progression to what was the least influential? Questions about the social adjustment of the student to college life will be asked, along with how the social related to

the academic. The data collected will show the relationships between the answers and how this retention program was run. In order for a retention program to work for African American students what should the program entail?

Retention

“Retention is often operationalized as the percentage of first-time, full-time students returning to the same institution for their second year of college” (Mattern & Patterson, 2009, p. 1). Persistence is defined as continuous enrollment from the entry semester through the end of the next academic year (Simmons, Musoba, & Chung, 2005). They both require the return to the second year but persistence takes more of a stand on finishing that second year. Retention is the word to be used in this study, as the program lasted the summer before freshman year and the first year of college—can this program ensure a return for a second academic year? Attrition is defined as students who leave their first institution and do not return to their first one or another institution (Ishitani, 2006). These three terms are used frequently in the study of retention at the college level. The majority of the literature agrees with the definitions stated above.

Attrition gets a great deal of attention, as only about half the students who begin college will receive a degree; this statistic is different when looking at the type of institution and the specific racial populations (Masursky, 1997). Approximately 26 percent of first year students do not return for a second year, and only about 49 percent of those who stay will graduate in five years (Noble, Flynn, Lee, & Hilton, 2007). African Americans and students from low-income families are somewhat less likely to persist relative to white students and those from middle-income families even after controlling for academic achievement (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008; Ishitani, 2006; Leppel, 2002; Masursky, 1997; Mattern & Patterson, 2009; Simmons, et al., 2005;

Titus, 2006; Waugh & Micceri, 1994). Considering that these students all reach the college level, what about them makes them less likely to persist?

Asians and females are more likely to graduate than males and underrepresented minority students (Mattern & Patterson, 2009; Noble, et al., 2007). High income (top 20 percent of all family incomes) students graduate within six years from a four year university at 56 percent, while low income students will only graduate at a 26 percent rate (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). High income students most likely come from a family where there has been experience in the college environment. With this experience comes knowledge of what is to be expected in college and how to navigate; this is social capital. Social capital will communicate “the norms, trust, authority, and social controls that an individual must understand and adopt in order to succeed” (Laura Walter Perna & Titus, 2005, p. 488). Low income students are less likely to have people with this social capital to help them in understanding college. Some low-income and African American students do not reach postsecondary education because of their fear of paying the tuition (Laura W. Perna, 2005). Some of these students are wondering if their future jobs will outweigh the potential loan debt. Perhaps this also applies to when these students decide to end their education. There could be other reasons besides economic ones which could make a student end their academic career.

To better understand retention one must first understand why students are leaving postsecondary education prematurely. The major reasons found for student departure are; academic difficulty, adjustment to both academic and social life, goals that are unclear or do not contain the attainment of a degree, uncertainty about why they entered college, lack of commitment, lack of integration and community membership, incongruence with the intellectual and social life of the institution, isolation from other members of the institution, cultural,

economic and social forces and the lack of social capital (Rice & Alford, 1989; Smart, 2009; Tinto, 1987, 2006).

Even though academic difficulty is cited as the first reason it is also important to recognize that academic difficulty is not the major reason for student withdrawal; Vincent Tinto sees lack of integration with the institution as a major cause for student attrition (Leppel, 2002; Masursky, 1997; Rice & Alford, 1989). The more integrated a student is into the college environment, the higher their efficacy will be and the higher the expected probability of persistence (Leppel, 2002). Only about a third of students leave because of academic performance (Masursky, 1997). College is not simply about going to class and getting good grades, it's a whole new lifestyle, and for many students it is something that is completely different than what they were experiencing in high school. Some students lack the social capital affiliated with college; many such students are minority and low-income, the group of importance in this study (Smart, 2009). Adjusting to college and attempts towards social integration are much more difficult due to the lack of this social capital. "Researchers argue that, in addition to economic circumstances, college decisions of minority and low-income students are limited due to a lack of cultural and social capital. That is, these students may not have the cultural knowledge or access to informal social networks needed to engage in seeking and acquiring the necessary college-related information that could provide easier access to college participation" (Smart, 2009, p. 321). Their white upper-middle-class counterparts have parents who can inform their college-bound children with their own personal experiences in higher education. These parents can also rely on social networks to improve their child's chance at success in college (Smart, 2009). It would be easier to socially integrate for this select group in comparison to those being studied in this work.

The lack of social capital could mean early departure. Social capital could aid in many aspects of college life. Not only do these students have to meet new people and sift through to find new and hopefully productive friends, but they have to get used to the fact that classes occur all over campus, and professors will not be lining the halls as classes change. There is more initiative on the students' part; they must decide to go to class, attendance is not mandatory in all classes, they must seek out their professors, as many professors do not contact students to see how things are going for them, they may not have support from home because family may not understand what college is like, for some money could become a new concern, from tuition to everyday expenses and for some finding where they fit in socially maybe more difficult than it was in secondary school. The difficulty with the above situations of college life, academics, the lack of social capital and integration are the general reasons for students leaving college prematurely. Considering that academic performance is not the main reason for student departure it is important to investigate the other reasons further.

When discussing Tinto's theory of integration it is not only academic but social. Academic integration is the attachment to the intellectual life of the college while social integration is the connections outside of the classroom. How can institutions of higher education work to improve the social integration of students; academic integration is more accessible with the classroom, tutoring and academic centers around campus. But one cannot hold the hand of each student in hopes to help them find the right group of friends and participate in programs, groups, and teams that will help them acclimate to college life. Perhaps this is where retention programs come in, they should not only be about academics but about the social experience as well. This is exactly what the retention program at the selected Michigan State University set out to do. During this program the students are to interact with others like them, which could help

create friendships that could last a lifetime. The theory of integration lies at the base of this research. Did SUPER initiate both academic and social integration?

Different types of postsecondary institutions have differences in their numbers for retention. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) had an attrition rate of 31.9 percent and 38.6 percent of the students graduated in four years (Scales, 1960). Low retention rates remain at HBCUs today with the numbers continually getting lower (" Summit Addressing Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Retention Rates Held in Ocean City," 2009). Within HBCUs the private institutions have a higher graduation rate. As the size of public HBCUs increased the graduation rate decreased. While as the size of the private institutions increase so too does the graduation rate. Private schools graduate more students in four years than public schools. Non HBCUs were also found to have higher degree attainment in private institutions versus public ones (Mattern & Patterson, 2009). When comparing persistence rates among colleges and then among universities there is less of a difference among the colleges. Perhaps this is the case because of the smaller size in comparison to universities. There is 56 percent degree attainment in private institutions and 45 percent in public institutions (Ishitani, 2006). Students attending private colleges are 34 percent less likely to drop out than students enrolled in public institutions (Ishitani, 2006). Eric Jamelske (2009) also showed that retention at four year private institutions was somewhat higher than at public institutions. It could be that private schools have a smaller teacher student ratio and more manageable campuses which make it more plausible that students will graduate.

In regards to African American students, in 1998 the predominately white University of Virginia (UVA) had one of the highest retention rates of 86 percent, while Spelman, a women's HBCU had a retention rate of 76 percent (Hurd, 2000, pp. 43-44). The University of Virginia's

general retention rate was 92 percent, so there is an obvious divide between the two rates. The fact that Spelman is a women's institution could have something to do with its high retention rate, as research has shown that women attain degrees at higher rates than men. One predominately white university had an African American retention rate of 9 percent, while a HBCU had a low rate of 8 percent (Hurd, 2000, pp. 43-44). It is not just the African American retention rate which is low for these two schools; their overall rates are no more than 19 percent. At the selected university for this study the retention rate for African Americans was 43 percent compared to an overall rate of 66 percent (Hurd, 2000, p. 43). Even though the University of Virginia is a public institution, the school being evaluated in this research is one too; perhaps it is the fact that UVA has about 25,000 students while the other has about 47,000. Maybe being in a smaller community can make college life more manageable. But on the other hand UVA only comprised of about five percent African American students while the selected university has eight percent. One would think that having more people around, whom look like you, could make college life easier; perhaps the African American communities are not as close as on UVA's campus. Or one major possibility is that the outreach to this community may not be as prevalent on the selected university's campus. Once again there is a gap between the two populations, what can be done to make the rates more even? This study will look at what it takes to retain African American students on predominately white campuses.

In general students of color and low income students are less likely to persist. There are numerous reasons for student departures, but only a third of students leaving, leave because of academic performance. Based on the theory of integration by Vincent Tinto, those who are integrated into the institution both academically and socially are more likely to persist. Private institutions graduate more students than public ones. Michigan State University has a 23

percentage gap between general population retention and African American retention. This is what retention looks like for all students and in particular African American students.

First Generation Students and Retention

A first generation student is one whose parents never attended college, or a student who is the first in their family to pursue education above high school (Ishitani, 2006; Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008). Because of the lack of college experience in the family “compared with their peers, first-generation college students receive less assistance in preparing for college; feel less supported for attending college; and lack a sense of belonging to the college they attend” (Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008, p. 407). It is clear that first generation students are at a disadvantage when they enter higher education. It is also important to recognize that the majority of first generation students begin their college careers at community college and the dropout rate there is high (Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008). Research states that “after three years of enrollment, only 16 percent of community college students have earned a credential”(Goldrick-Rab, 2010, p. 441). It is clear that community college may take longer for someone to attain a degree, but because of this time commitment first generation students may be discouraged and decide to give up prematurely. As of 1997 45 percent of all undergraduates were first generation students, as of 2008 the rate is 43 percent (Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008; Simmons, et al., 2005). Having first generation students as almost half of the freshman class every year shows the progress being made in access to education for Americans. Yet there cannot simply be an influx of these students, there needs to be some sort of follow through on behalf of the institution to ensure their survival. Even with the large amount of first generation students enrolling in higher education, this group has a lower rate of retention than their counterparts (Ishitani, 2006). “First generation students were about 1.3 times more likely to leave

their institutions than were students whose parents were college-educated. Also first generation students whose parents had some college education were 99 percent more likely to leave their initial institutions than their counterparts were” (Ishitani, 2006, pp. 871-872). Even with parents who had experienced college life for a small amount of time, the knowledge they accrued does not seem to influence their children positively. Perhaps the fact that their parents gave up reiterates within the new student the belief that college is just too hard to finish. Even though students whose parents have college degrees may still drop out of higher education, first generation students do so at much higher rates.

More first generation students are found in the group of students who depart from their first institutions and never attend any other institutions (Ishitani, 2006). Perhaps these students think that if they cannot make it on their first try that a second attempt may not be the best solution; so in turn they give up. Those students who have at least one parent with a college degree are more likely to return to college for their second year (Mattern & Patterson, 2009). It is not simply having two parents who attained a college degree, having one can also make a difference in the retention of students. Being of first generation status makes the likelihood of graduating seem farfetched and out of reach, so what can be done to help ensure the continuation of these students to a second year and beyond? The retention program to be discussed specifically worked with first generation students.

Vincent Tinto advised “institutions to concentrate their efforts on admissions, early educational assessment and mandated academic assistance, orientations, and on those programs which focus on the first year of student life on campus, especially but not just the first six weeks of the academic year” (Tinto, 1987, p. 13). He emphasizes the importance of the first year in college and there is a higher risk of departure among first generation students in their first year of

college (Ishitani, 2006). Nevertheless, according to Terry T. Ishitani (2006) first generation students face the highest risk period of departure during the second year of college. There is also a difference between public and private institutions in regards to leaving college during the second and third years. First generation students attending private colleges were 30 percent and 54 percent less likely to leave their institutions in the second and third years than were those who attended public four year institutions (Ishitani, 2006). First generation students enrolled in private institutions were twice as likely to graduate within four years as students who attended public institutions (Ishitani, 2006). Considering that the institution being discussed in this research is public, it is apparent that these students have the odds against them in regards to graduating.

The lack of assistance, support and belonging makes first generation students less likely to persist in higher education. Even though they are greatly represented on campuses they also represent a great amount of those who depart. Even students with one parent with a college degree have a better opportunity of graduating than first generation students. The highest risk of departure comes in the second year for first generation college students. Also of importance is the fact that first generation students who attend private institutions have a better chance of progressing towards a degree.

SAT Scores, High School GPA and Retention

Measures of intelligence have been shown to have a strong influence on college completion, and grade performance in high school is related to persistence in college (Masursky, 1997; Mattern & Shaw, 2010). The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is a measurement tool used to assess potential college students' abilities based on their verbal and mathematical skills (as of 2005 writing skills are assessed as well). College admissions use both the SAT and High School

grade point average (GPA) to assess student potential. There has been some research done on how the SAT corresponds to retention. It has been found that students who score less than 1000 on the pre-2005 SAT had a 78 percent probability of returning their second year as compared to 87 percent probability for students with SAT scores of 1200 or greater (Mattern & Patterson, 2009). In regards to the most recent SAT, students with scores of 600 to 890 on the SAT are retained at a rate of 63.8 percent while those scoring 2100 to 2400 have the highest retention rate of 95.5 percent (Mattern & Patterson, 2009). What this shows is that “the mean SAT score is consistently higher for students who return, versus the mean score for students who do not return...” (Mattern & Patterson) Mattern and Patterson (2009) also looked at how SAT predictive properties compare to the predictive properties of High School GPA (HSGPA). SAT scores are more predictive of retention. “For example, students who have an A HSGPA (A+, A, A-) but scored between 900 and 1190 on the SAT have a mean retention rate of 76.8 percent, where as students with the same HSGPA but scored 2100 or higher on the SAT have a mean retention rate of 96.0 percent” (Mattern & Patterson, p. 6). Some people state that the SAT is racially biased, favoring white middle and higher class students. Perhaps the same reasons that the test is biased are reasons similar to why those students that the test is not written for are not retained. With what has been presented in this literature review it is apparent that college is meant for a certain type of person, and all evidence points to the fact that the students to be discussed in this research are not the type of people college is specifically made for. To take the SAT one must have a certain type of social capital.

Another study by Gordon Waugh and Ted Micceri (1994) stated that SAT and ACT scores have almost no relationship to retention. However, HSGPA had a moderate correlation with graduation and retention/graduation (Waugh & Micceri, 1994). “Students with higher high

school GPAs have much higher retention/graduation rates. For example, students with a high school GPA of 2.4-2.9 have a retention/graduation rate of 47-48% at least 9% higher than students with a high school GPA of less than 2.4 (whose rate is 38%)” (Waugh & Micceri, 1994, p. 3). Schmitt, Keeney, and Oswald (2009) state that the most important predictor of graduation status is HSGPA, which coincides with Waugh and Micceri (1994). It seems as though one’s ability in high school could be a predictor of their performance in college. Laskey and Hetzel (2011) also reported that the ACT was not a predictor of college achievement or retention. The authors also reported that HSGPA was not a good predictor of college success for at-risk students, which is opposite of Waugh and Micceri’s view on HSGPA.

Bowen, Chingos and McPherson (2009) stated that after their research of six sets of public universities, “high school grades are a far better predictor of both four-year and six-year graduation rates than are SAT/ACT test scores...” (p. 113) These authors found that in all but one of the 50 public universities they researched high school GPA was a highly significant predictor of six year graduation rates. Bowen et al. also compared the predictive properties of SAT and ACT scores and found that the two tests are no different in predicting graduation rates. The authors do not discount the predictive properties of SAT/ACT scores, as they stated that both HSGPA and standardized tests are the best predictors of graduation rates for incoming college students (Clark & Cundiff, 2011).

It is not entirely clear or certain which cognitive measurement is most accurate in predicting college retention. What is clear is that people have studied the possibility of using HSGPA and the SAT/ACT as predictors but the inconsistent findings seem to suggest that these two measures should not be seen as sole predictors of persistence in college. Nevertheless, it is

clear through research that these two do have some correlation to retention and they should not be left out in the predicting analysis. They also deserve further research.

Gender and Retention

Research looks at whether being a woman versus being a man has an effect on student retention. Women are the majority of undergraduates, 58 percent, they earn better college grades than men do, and are more likely than men to complete college (Sax, 2007). Women have outnumbered men in enrollment rates since 1993 (Laura W. Perna, 2005). Leppel (2002) found that there was no statistical significance between the graduation rates of women versus men. Men persist at a rate of 92.78 percent and women persist at a rate of 93.28 percent (Leppel, 2002). Even though the rates are close, overall persistence is higher for women and men who are more integrated into the college experience—in line with Vincent Tinto’s theory. Leppel also shows that “persistence probability for Black women is higher than for White women by more than 3%” (Leppel, 2002, p. 443). Even though three percent is a small number difference, what could be the difference between white and Black women in regards to college persistence? When married and attending school men’s persistence increases while women’s decreases (Leppel, 2002). This statement clearly relates to the associated roles women play in a marriage; her education is not as important as her husbands, so if one person’s education must be put on the hold it would be hers.

The small amount of literature available regarding the difference between women and men in college persistence points to the fact that women will gain more degrees than men, and they are more present on campuses across the nation. There is room for these variables to be researched further. In relations to this study one should be on the lookout for Black first generation males attending college. What helps them in ensuring retention?

Socio-economic Status and Retention

There is research exploring whether socio-economic status plays a role in the retaining of students on college campuses. Some researchers say there is no correlation, but the research found for this study shows that there is some relationship between socio-economic status and whether students persist in college (Institute, 2008; Johnson & Collins, 2009; Masursky, 1997; Stinebrickner & Stinebrickner, 2003; Strayhorn, 2008; Titus, 2006). According to Titus (2006) compared to high socio-economic status students, low socio-economic status students are more likely to be a member of an underrepresented minority group, either African American or Hispanic. This fact reiterates how important it is to look at this variable for this study. Most researchers want to know if having a low economic status hinders one from prospering in school. Research concludes that the first to second year retention rate for low-income freshmen is less than 50 percent (Johnson & Collins, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008). Low-income students are among the least likely to be retained (Thayer, 2000). This statistic is lower than the national average; even with this information it is important to recognize that low-income students are almost 50 percent more likely to enroll in college than they were 33 years ago (Strayhorn, 2008). Essentially, they are represented more on campuses but they fail to persist. One study about African American men showed that in a six year span approximately 40 percent of these men had dropped out of college (Strayhorn, 2008). Previously there was discussion of HBCUs and their retention statistics; when it comes to African American men who are of low-income status, those who attend an HBCU are more likely to be retained than those who do not attend one (Strayhorn, 2008).

When looking at low-income students it would be helpful to know more about those students from high income households. “Using 1996 data, those in the top family income quartile

were found to complete a baccalaureate degree at a 74% rate, as compared to 5% for those in the bottom income quartile” (Thayer, 2000, p. 4). It is clear that one cannot expect all low-income students to perform at the same level as high income students. It is not simply what the student’s parents earn but also whether they attained a college degree. Low-income students with parents who did not attain a bachelor’s degree are more likely to drop out of college compared to students from families with high income and parents who attained a degree (Titus, 2006). What could be creating this large gap between these two groups of people?

A study done at a college with full tuition subsidy found that tuition was not the major hindrance of low-income students, but the familial environmental aspect is a culprit (Stinebrickner & Stinebrickner, 2003). Other aspects which make it more difficult for low-income students to prosper are: lack of financial resources, lack of knowledge of the campus environment, a school’s academic expectations and bureaucratic operations, lack of adequate academic preparation and lack of family support (Thayer, 2000). Also these students are not aware of supportive services on campus and may not understand how they can benefit from them (Institute, 2008). Because these students are less likely to have money coming from home they acquire jobs, and this deters them from being able to work with the services on campus (Institute, 2008). A major problem for these students is that they “face difficulties with seeking and asking for help because they fear stigmatizing themselves” (Institute, 2008, p. 3). They may know they need the help but still refuse to ask for it in fear of perhaps being perceived as less intelligent than their peers. African American low socio-economic status students tend to have less interaction with faculty members, they spend less time studying, have less involvement in campus activities and they work more hours than high socio-economic status students (Strayhorn, 2008). African American males who had little to no social integration on campus

were less likely to be retained—this definitely correlates to Vincent Tinto’s integration model (Strayhorn, 2008).

Low-income students, who attend institutions with a higher proportion of low-income students, graduate at a lower rate than low-income students who attend institutions with a lower proportion of low-income students (Titus, 2006). Also the odds of college completion is higher for a student in a private institution—not many low-income students can find a way to afford private institutions (Titus, 2006). All of the above information just reiterates the fact that low socio-economic status students are less likely to earn a degree from a four-year institution (Stinebrickner & Stinebrickner, 2003; Thayer, 2000; Titus, 2006).

First to second year retention rates for low-income students are less than 50 percent. Low-income students are matriculating at a higher rate. These students tend to prosper more at schools with a smaller percentage of low-income students—most likely private institutions. There are numerous reasons why these students are less likely to persist, some being lack of familial support, not asking for help when it is needed, and little to no integration with the social aspect of the college community. The higher the income of one’s family the more likely they are to persist in college; the opposite is true for low income students.

Academic Self-Efficacy and Retention

According Albert Bandura (1982) self-efficacy is a self evaluation of one’s competence to successfully execute a course of action necessary to reach desired outcomes. According to Zajacova, Lynch and Espenshade academic self-efficacy “refers to students’ confidence in their ability to carry out such academic tasks as preparing for exams and writing term papers” (2005, p. 679). Academic self-efficacy has been shown to predict both college grades and college persistence (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Mattern & Shaw, 2010; Zajacova, et al., 2005). The

SUPER program set out to increase student academic confidence which aligns with academic self-efficacy. Chemers, Hu and Garcia stated that “students who enter college with confidence in their ability to perform well academically do perform significantly better than do less confident students” (2001). These authors also attested that students who are confident see the university experience as a challenge rather than a threat.

According to Mattern and Shaw (2010) students like the ones entering SUPER are more likely to have lower levels of self-efficacy. The authors stated that a student’s past performance is the most reliable tool to gauge one’s self-efficacy; SUPER students enter college with lower grades and test scores. Another aspect that can lower one’s self-efficacy is being from a disadvantaged background; which a majority of these students are. They also reported that experiencing success will raise self-efficacy while failure would do the opposite. Self-efficacy can be “formed by watching the performance of people who one believes to be similar to oneself” (Mattern & Shaw, 2010). This is important because the students of SUPER interact with others similar to themselves within the program; a peer’s success is also their success. Also important to SUPER students is the feedback they receive from staff, which can also raise or lower self-efficacy (Mattern & Shaw, 2010). Academic self-efficacy is important in the persistence of college students, and it is particularly important to help students, like the ones in SUPER, increase their academic-self efficacy.

Components of Retention Programs

There were few articles written which evaluated specific retention programs and there were some articles which looked at how components of retention programs aid in retention efforts. The aspect of tutoring was assessed and found to have a positive effect on retention, persistence, graduation and even GPA (A. Astin, 1993; Laskey & Hetzel, 2011; Rheinheimer,

Grace-Odeleye, Francois, & Kusorgbor, 2010; Rheinheimer & Mann, 2000; Rouche & Snow, 1977). Laskey and Hetzel (2011) evaluated a program entitled Conditional Acceptance Program (CAP) and found that students who were a part of this program used tutoring services more than non CAP students and those who used the services were significantly more retained. Theorists have stated that tutoring enables one to master a subject and in turn have more academic self-efficacy which aids in their retention (A. Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Pascarella and Terenzini also found that academic counseling, mentoring and academic intervention programs had a positive effect on retention.

One article by, Valentine, Hirschy, Bremer, Novillo, Castellano and Banister (2011), which reviewed a large number of university interventions was disappointed in the lack of evaluations and records for these interventions. All of the interventions were set during the regular years of attendance and none occurred prior to freshman year none were similar to SUPER in this regard. The most common intervention was a freshman orientation or adjustment seminar. In the end the authors could only state that the comprehensive interventions might positively affect short-term grades and persistence. The authors also stated that they did not have enough evidence to ascertain which components of the programs were most effective.

A “methods of inquiry” course (MOI), used to promote critical thinking and to promote effective learning, was evaluated and the authors found that those students who took the course were better retained. Also students were even more retained if they took the course in their first year of school. “Those students who have completed MOI are approximately twice as likely to be retained or to have graduated than those students who have not taken MOI” (Ahuna, Tinnesz, & VanZile-Tamsen, 2011, pp. 254-255). Ahuna et al. also found that first generation students of

MOI were four times more likely to return for a second year than their first generation peers who did not take the course.

Similar to the MOI course, Clark and Cundiff (2011) evaluated a University 101 course geared towards improving student conscientiousness and efficiency of study habits and curriculum planning and help them develop academically-based friendships. This course was offered to first year, first semester students and academic counselors would encourage at-risk students to enroll. Despite the intent of the course the authors found that students who took the course did not have higher GPAs than those who did not take the course. The authors also found that the university 101 course did not have an impact on retention rates.

In regards to retention programs themselves, it is apparent that some specific components such as tutoring are positively connected to retaining the students who participated in it. The MOI course was successful in its endeavors, while the university 101 course showed no real progress; both worked to initiate effective learning but there were two different outcomes. Because of the difference in these programs it shows another need for these programs to be evaluated and kept better record of. It is clear that retention programs need to keep better records and do evaluations in order for universities and researchers to know what type of influence the programs have on the students. It would also allow for administration to decide if the program is a waste of students' time or if it is most productive.

Conclusion

The study of retention shows that lower income students and students of color are less likely to be retained in college. There are numerous reasons why students leave school but it is important to recognize that only a third of the students who leave, leave because of academic trouble. The lack of social capital and financial assistance are some of the other reasons. Being

integrated into the college community both academically and socially is necessary for students to persist. In regards to what schools have a higher rate of retention, private institutions are at the top. When it comes to first generation college students they are less likely to persist but if they had more assistance, support and a feeling of belonging they would do better. A great number of college students are first generation, yet they represent a large number of those who leave school. Most retention studies point out the importance of the first year for college students, but for first generation students it is the second year in which the most of them depart. HSGPA and SAT/ACT scores have been shown to have some correlation with college retention. There are contradicting findings but some findings nonetheless. When it comes to gender and retention literature points out that women are retained at higher rates than men, but the percentage difference is small. Being of low socio-economic status means a student is more likely to drop out of higher education than someone from a high status. Having a low level of academic self-efficacy could deter a student's persistence in college. These are the major variables concerning the African American participants in the retention program at the predominately white Michigan State University. When it comes to retention programs themselves ones with tutoring are promising. An incoming freshman with low HSGPA and SAT/ACT scores, coming from a family where no one has graduated from college, being a member of a minority people of color, being male, being from a low socio-economic status home, and also having a low level of academic self-efficacy hinders this student from prospering in higher education. Most of the students to be interviewed in this study fit into this category; except that females will also be involved, and it is clear that the odds are stacked against them as well. This makes one wonder how can these big odds be reduced? That is exactly what this research seeks to find out.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

African Americans are attending colleges and universities at rates higher than ever before, yet they are graduating at rates considerably lower than their white counterparts. The process of retaining students has become an issue worth discussing. There is much discussion of what makes students leave school, but what makes students stay and finish school? What aspects of college can aid or hinder in the persistence of students? There are numerous retention focused programs across the nation's schools which are confident in their efforts. Some have been honored nationally for them. The program selected for this research is one of them. The purpose of this research is to unravel what it was that made this program work in retaining specifically African American students.

This research is qualitative in hopes to gain insight into why SUPER was successful in retaining its students. Qualitative research is an open approach to the study of social phenomenon utilizing data in narrative form to make an analysis. Qualitative designs allow one to grasp an idea, a humanly conceptualized idea, of what occurred and how it influenced the people which a phenomenon interacted with. Qualitative data has numerous designs; the design used for this study is phenomenological design. Phenomenology seeks to understand the structure of the selected phenomena. It seeks to find the structure, meaning and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon by an individual or numerous individuals (Christensen & Brumfield, 2010). This research looks for such aspects of twelve individuals who were all a part of SUPER after the year 1994.

The selection of SUPER and the selection of twelve individual African American participants is in the realm of purposeful sampling (Heiselt & Sheperis, 2010). As stated in the

introduction, SUPER was selected because of the specific type of student it catered to, the institution's characteristics and demographics and due to its national acclaim as a productive program. Another aspect to this selection revolves around the closing of the program; was it a mistake to let it fall through the bureaucratic cracks and would it be beneficial to reinstate the program? It is my hope that this research can answer these two lingering policy questions for MSU's administration and for the leaders of the program. The twelve former participants of SUPER were selected by the former director of the program, Betty Sanford. I asked her to choose African American students who participated in the program after 1994 (the year that the program was reworked to include the freshman year as well as the summer). Because she did not have any files to guide her I did not stipulate any other requirements of the participants. I chose this specifically because it was the program after that year which received the Lee Noel-Randi Levitz Retention Excellence Award and after 1994 was the longest implementation of one rendition of the program. I asked Ms. Sanford to try and disperse the twelve over the appropriate years in order to better assess the program as a whole not simply by one select year.

The number of interviewees chosen was based upon a study published in 2006 by three scholars in which they utilized their own HIV research in West Africa to assess the number of participants needed in order to gain data saturation. Data saturation is the point at which the researcher is no longer collecting new information. The sample size of 12 allows for saturation and enables one to have a deep, case-oriented analysis of the data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Guest, Bonce and Johnson (2006) stated "Based on our analysis, we posit that data saturation had for the most part occurred by the time we had analyzed twelve interviews. After twelve interviews, we had created 92% (100) of the total number of codes developed for all thirty of the Ghanaian transcripts (109) and 88% (114) of the total number of codes developed

across two countries and sixty interviews” (Guest, et al., 2006, p. 74). After these first twelve interviews the data collected was simply a repeat of what was already collected. Based on their findings I am confident that this number of respondents allowed a proper data set. By the twelfth interview the participants were responding with similar if not the same answers.

I interviewed these twelve people with the same set of questions, without this Guest et al. stated that data saturation would not occur. I submitted these 20 questions to the Michigan State University Institutional Review Board and they were approved with no revisions (see appendix A). The primary purpose of these questions was to gain information about the program which was not present in the literature on SUPER.

Position of the Researcher

The position of the researcher should be discussed due to the potential influences the researcher could have on the research. These influences could be positive or negative biases due to the experiences of the researcher. Some researchers study and write about topics that are important to them due to their experience with the selected topic. This could create a bias when compiling data and writing up results. These such occurrences could be a limitation.

I am a first generation, lower class African American female who moved to the Mid West for school. I have characteristics that are common among the students in the SUPER program and when I was accepted into my undergraduate university I began ten weeks earlier than the majority of the freshman class as well. I was a part of a pre-freshman summer program geared towards helping mostly underrepresented students get acclimated to the institution. During the program students would enroll in about nine credits which could count towards their bachelor’s degree. These would be regular summer session courses and some enrichment courses in writing, chemistry and mathematics. The students lived in the same dorm for 7 weeks with

upperclassmen mentors. There were weekly meetings when the students would have time to make inquiries about just about anything and to gain the knowledge from seasoned students. I personally think that one of the most influential aspects to the program was meeting other students like yourself, people you bond with and keep in touch with throughout the rest of your time at the institution. Also if you ever needed any help there was a resource available.

Not only did I participate in a retention program in college but the route to college was facilitated by a program geared to helping underrepresented High School students get into college. It was filled with mock interviews, writing workshops, SAT preparation classes, time to search for universities, and a breakdown of what each school was looking for. Just like the pre-freshman summer program you were selected for this program as well. Programs geared towards helping underrepresented students realize their potential and programs that are an inspiration for them to work towards their goals are very important to me. So when it came to me choosing a topic of interest for my dissertation I came to the conclusion that I wanted to work on something regarding retention but I also knew I wanted to be different. In turn I looked for a program similar to the one I participated in at a public university in order to evaluate the program and see if these programs do indeed work. I could attest that they do work, but my interest was piqued when I found a program trying to better prepare students who were academically challenged. One concern I would say I have is if I could be positively biased towards SUPER simply because of my experience with a similar program. However, there is proof that SUPER did indeed retain its students; this means that my bias would only come in when evaluating what aspects of the program allowed for retention. I went to a private institution with a smaller population in the north east; thus my interpretation of what aids in retention may not be the same as for the participants of SUPER. Throughout my data collection and analysis I have discussed my data

with a colleague who has been somewhat of an auditor of my work. I especially communicated with her when I would come across something unexpected and we would process my thoughts on this finding. I believe I worked towards making sure my analysis was based on what data was present and I did not base it on inner thought.

Data Collection

When I set out to do this research I inquired about how Ms. Sanford would retrieve the names of participants, she said there were electronic copies of the rosters from over the years. Unfortunately, when it came time to randomly select a name from every year Ms. Sanford informed me that the files were empty. She searched for the rosters but unfortunately came up empty. At this time we both agreed that the names would have to come from her memory. This predicament indeed created limitations. Fortunately, Ms. Sanford was able to work with a prior SUPER assistant to come up with 17 African American males and females who participated after 1994. Ms. Sanford first contacted the students and informed them of my study and asked for permission to give their information to me, which all accepted. She first gave me 12 names and when some did not respond I requested five more which she gave me. The participants who I interviewed were from years ranging from 1996 to 2005. Having participants from several different years allowed me to better see which aspects of the program influenced the former participants' answers despite their different years of participation.

I contacted the participants by email with a letter introducing them to my research, requesting demographic information, and asking for the best time and phone number to reach them to do the interview. The email also had my interview consent form attached. A response from the participants, in which they were willing to do an interview, gave consent to record the interview and use it in my study. Over four months I interviewed the participants over the phone.

I did not use their name and told them to reframe from doing the same and not to mention the last names of anyone else. The interviews were recorded using a microphone earpiece which captured both sides of the conversation. I chose to use the phone for interviews in order to be the most accessible for both parties, and it enabled me to ask simple follow up questions as the interview occurred. I did one interview in person at the request of the participant. All the interviewees were happy to help me with my research which made the interviewing process that much easier. Interviews ranged from 21 to 55 minutes. The average length of the twelve interviews was 38 minutes. The total amount of interview time was 459 minutes and 45 seconds.

Data Analysis Procedures

When recording the interviews I vocally labeled them with a number ranging from one to 17 to coordinate with a list I created with the identity of the participant beside a designated number. Only 12 of the numbers were used as labels for the interviews. This list was the only evidence of which participant corresponded to which interview. This anonymity was essential for the next step of my research. I sent the interview recordings out to be transcribed by a third party. The transcriber labeled the transcriptions by the number that was said at the beginning of the interview. While interviewing the participants I also took written notes on paper with the assigned numbers labeling the notes as well.

Before using my selected software to help with coding my data I first went through the hand taken notes I took while interviewing the participants. When I was taking these notes I was writing down the responses that most corresponded with the question. The hand written notes were no longer than three pages per person while transcripts were up to 15 pages. I thought that looking at the hand written notes first could help point out the major parallels between the 12 interviews. One major parallel was that almost everyone said that they would want to change the

length of the program to make it longer. Another common occurrence was that most of the participants thought SUPER better prepared them for college than their high school did. Almost all of the participants thought that the 1994 changes were for the better. And the last commonality among the interviews that I was able to discern, just by looking at the written notes, was that every single one of the participants felt acclimated to campus. And the majority of the participants were from Detroit. Being able to see these specific correspondences between the 12 interviews before beginning the more logistical process of coding allowed me to know what some of my themes would be. These parallels were in relation to the questions, which I originally thought could be themes in themselves.

After an analysis of my written notes I moved onto the transcriptions of the interviews. Using the basis of grounded theory I went through the transcripts in Microsoft Word and highlighted the key passages. Grounded theory is a process which allows the theory to emerge from the data. To gain this insight one must first identify key passages, assign passages to categories, refine the categories and identify a core category from which theory will be derived. These key passages also corresponded with the question they were responding to. The responses gathered during written notes analysis were also present in this labeling of critical instances. I also recognized that the most influential aspect of SUPER for more than half of the participants was the advisors. During this time I became more aware at some of the inconsistencies my research was facing. The demographics of the students, which were gathered throughout each interview, were not all corresponding to what SUPER was defined as using for its participants. Other key passages that were highlighted were ones which had similar wording. I recognized words that were being used more often than others; acclimated, head start and family were

commonly used. In order to avoid doing the same work twice I began using the software I acquired in order to begin open coding of the data.

I used the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 9 to assist in the analysis of the data collected via interviews. I had already come up with some themes that would be present in the coding however I needed to begin by organizing the data in a manner that would make the process of finding themes and passages for those themes easier. The first step was to ensure that the questions I asked were transcribed in the same words for each individual question on each transcript. Placing the questions in the heading 1 style allowed for NVivo to code the data following each question into a node (theme) entitled by the question itself. When initially looking through my written notes I thought that my questions were themes in themselves which NVivo was creating. This procedure created 20 nodes. I then went through each node's responses and highlighted the main points the participants were making for each question and created a new node for each new theme. Some of the highlighted material was already highlighted prior when identifying key passages in the transcripts. This process of placing key passages or comments into new nodes is a way to accomplish open coding as grounded theory prescribes it. The new nodes were not simply the questions but were what I thought would be a good title of a theme and a theme I thought would have more responses to be incorporated into it. There was a good amount of overlap so main points that were the same or very similar were highlighted and categorized under the same node. NVivo made coding an easier task, as one only had to highlight the selected passage and move it into a node, or label it with a new node. When coding was complete there were a total of 126 nodes. One of those nodes was demographics of the participants and NVivo had a section for classifications in which you could create a table with the demographics—I created a table (see figure 1).

The next step of grounded theory coding is axial coding. This step refines the initial list of themes or categories. Some are deleted and some are amalgamated. When I went through this step I mostly amalgamated the themes into larger themes which I came up with by visualizing what the nodes had in common and what they helped define. For example, there was a lot of mention of the participants' peers in numerous ways so I created a major theme entitled "The Peer Experience." The nodes/themes under "The Peer Experience" became subthemes or subcategories. This was the occurrence for numerous nodes that were grouped together and labeled under a major theme. I had major themes, subthemes and another level of themes that I labeled determining descriptors. Each subtheme does not stand on its own but may need categories that help define the subtheme, which are the determining descriptors. After this process there were a total of ten major themes.

The last step of grounded theory is selective coding where a core category is created. What SUPER did in actuality was give the students social capital that prepared them for college life. The core category which the theme, subthemes and determining descriptors are under is "Gaining Social Capital." By acquiring this social capital the participants are better able to become integrated with MSU both academically and socially, which Vincent Tinto sees as a requirement for student retention. The preceding were the steps taken to acquire the following results and conclusions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The data analysis produced the core theme of “Gaining Social Capital,” and ten major themes containing many subthemes pertaining to each parent theme. Several subthemes also had themes, which are entitled determining descriptors. The themes are: “Participant Demographics,” “The Influences SUPER had on Participants,” “The Peer Experience,” “Gifts from SUPER,” “Characteristics of SUPER,” “College Preparation,” “Graduation with/without SUPER,” “I Would Change...,” “Impressions on 1994 Changes,” and “Application Process.” Due to this research being ethnographic in nature the findings should be considered trends and themes. There were numerous different aspects of SUPER which influenced the participants in their academic endeavors; these will be explored. The demographics of the participants were collected. While collecting the data it became very apparent that the peer experience was a major positive for the participants. SUPER set out to provide students with certain abilities and assets to help them with their academics. In the introduction SUPER was profiled, but some aspects of the program stood out more to the participants of this research. The major goal of SUPER was to prepare the students for college; the question of whether the participants felt it did or not produced three subthemes. The idea of taking a longer or shorter amount of time to complete college due to SUPER produced three subthemes as well. The participants were vocal about what they would change about SUPER from nothing at all to the length of the program. As was mentioned prior to this chapter, SUPER went through an overhaul in 1994 which produced two major changes; the data collected explored the impressions of the participants on these changes. Lastly, a basic look at the process of hearing about and applying to SUPER was taken. The twenty questions asked of the participants produced over one hundred major themes, subthemes

and determining descriptors combined. The most pertinent of these will be presented in this chapter. The names used in this section are pseudonyms.

Participant Demographics

The following chart contains the demographic makeup of the twelve SUPER students who participated in my research. The categories include: age range, first generation status, current occupation, residence before college, sex, socio-economic status, year in SUPER and years in school.

Table 1: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Person	Age Group	First Generation Status	Occupation	Residence Before College	Sex	Socio-economic Status	Year in SUPER	Years in School
Bianca	20-30	Yes	Social Welfare	Detroit	Female	Unknown	2003	Four Years
Christopher	20-30	Yes	Unemployed	Detroit	Male	Middle Class	2005	Five Years
Ebony	20-30	Yes	Social Welfare	Southfield-Suburb	Female	Middle Class	2002	Four Years
Imani	20-30	No	Social Welfare	Detroit	Female	Lower Class	2003	Five Years
Jamal	20-30	No	Social Welfare	Detroit	Male	Upper Middle Class	2003	Five Years
Jasmine	20-30	Yes	Substitute Teacher and Student	Canton-Suburb	Female	Middle Class	2003	Four Years
Nia	20-30	No	Nonprofit Organization	Detroit	Female	Middle Class	2005	Five Years
Shanice	20-30	No	Social Welfare	Detroit	Female	Lower Class	2005	Four Years
Tia	20-30	No	Research Technician	Detroit	Female	Middle Class	2000	Four and a Half Years
Tomika	20-30	No	Academic Advisor	West Bloomfield-Suburb	Female	Upper Middle Class	2001	Four Years
Tonya	20-30	Yes	Student	Detroit	Female	Lower Class	2005	Five Years

The majority of the participants are age 20 to 30, the majority was not first generation college students, and the majority of them work for a social welfare office. The majority are from Detroit, Michigan, while all are from Michigan. There are only two males in the study. Middle class is the most common socio-economic status. Socio-economic status is based on the participants' personal knowledge of their household income prior to beginning college. A good representation of the participants was either a part of SUPER in the year 2003 or 2005. The majority of the participants took five years to graduate from MSU, but they all did graduate.

The Influences SUPER had on Participants

The "Influences SUPER had on Participants" is of utmost importance to anyone wanting to understand what was essential in aiding these students during their time in SUPER. Of the seven subthemes in this major theme the "Advisors/Mentors as Influential" was reported seven different times by seven different participants, the most of the subthemes. Tomika spoke about how one particular advisor pushed her and ensured she had whatever she needed in order to do well in the program and in the remainder of her college experience.

There was an advisor that I worked with prior to coming to SUPER that was an advisor in the Office of Supportive Services. But she worked specifically with the SUPER program and she was just really inspiring and encouraging, provided a lot of external resources or co-curricular resources of things I might like to do while I was in school that would enhance the experience. So it was definitely an advisor for the program...It was another resource to take advantage of. Someone else to talk to about difficulty in classes or arranging tutoring that you have a personal relationship with. Versus another advisor, potentially in the, in that Office of Supportive Services where there are so many required

activities that, you know, it's nice to talk with somebody that you already feel like you knew prior to coming to Michigan State or prior to starting the fall semester.

It was clear in the data that the students viewed their advisors and or mentors as strong support systems. Jasmine also mentioned how helpful it was to have someone to ask questions and for advice.

Along with the mentors that were there to answer questions or, you know, to help if, you know, we needed any type of advice about schooling or anything like that. Like mentors, like they were also a great deal of support when... as far as my academic success today. Or what I had in my years at Michigan State University.

The subthemes of "Acclimation as Influential" and "Betty Sanford as Influential" were both mentioned by four different participants five different times. The idea of being acclimated to college was a major concern for SUPER. Simone best summed up what it meant to be a part of SUPER the summer before freshman year.

SUPER I think gave me an idea of what college life would be like. It was a nurturing environment that was a nice little soft introduction to grad, to undergraduate life and living in the dorms and, you know,... we started the day after graduation so it was a great way to actually understand how campus life worked and different things that I needed to get used to ahead of time. So I mean, without the program, I would've been star struck or just, you know, campus struck and not had any idea of what to do or how to, you know, acclimate as quickly so that was nice to be able to do that ahead of time.

All the individuals who mentioned acclimation as influential to their academic transition viewed it as an important aspect of the program. Imani specifically mentioned her transition:

But I felt like I was transitioned, you know, I wasn't just thrown into the water and trying to figure things out. So when fall came around, it was just like, okay, I got this. I know what to do. I know where my classes are.

From the data it was apparent that without SUPER these individuals would have been overwhelmed and lost their first few days of freshman year. But because of SUPER this was not the case.

The responses for the subtheme, "Betty Sanford as Influential," showed that without Ms. Sanford the program may not have been as influential. Ms. Sanford was remembered specifically for her resourcefulness and all of the one-on-one help she gave to the students. Tonya remembered Ms. Sanford as most influential:

I would have to say Betty Sanford was most influential in my academic progress because for one, she went, in my opinion, she went above and beyond to make sure we met the standards of SUPER. Even after SUPER, Betty still continued to be involved in my academic career. She would have me come in her office for meetings and even when I wanted to do a volunteer experience in New Orleans for a month, Betty was a part of that and made sure I got into the program. So overall, I would say Ms. Betty.

Ms. Sanford was even there for the SUPER students after the program had ended. The idea of being there for the students was also present in a response from Shanice.

She would make herself available to serve as a resource and if she was unable to give you the answers to whatever it was I needed, she was successful in pointing me in the direction of someone who could.

A very important characteristic of Ms. Sanford was that if she could not help one of her students she would find someone who could.

The remaining subthemes of “Influences SUPER had on Participants” had only two or one references by the participants. “Transitioning as Influential” was discussed by two individuals with both of them stating that having the ability to take classes for credit really helped them in their transition to college. The subtheme of “Staff and Teachers as Influential” also produced two responses which pointed out the investment they had and guidance they gave to the students. Simone pointed out how everyone worked to help the students figure out what they wanted to do in the future, which helped her focus. The last subtheme “Getting to Know Peers as Influential” had one reference, yet the idea of experiencing SUPER with peers is a major theme on its own. I thought that it was important to point out that one participant thought that her peers were most influential to her success. Ebony stated:

...we were all kinda together. When the summer beforehand, it gave me a group of people that I could always go to. Like we would do study groups together. So it kinda gave me a set of people that I probably wouldn't've otherwise met had I just went there without the program. So and even through the rest of the time, those were certain people I always knew that I could talk to or count on if I needed help or if they needed help.

Ebony found success with the help of her peers and they were there for her throughout her time at MSU. She clearly referenced a bond that she may not have experienced had it not been for SUPER. The “Influences SUPER had on Participants” focused on persons involved with the program more than a particular aspect. It is clear that advisors and the structure of SUPER were the most influential parts of the program.

The Peer Experience

The presence of peers as particularly important in SUPER showed that the participants remembered their peers because of what they learned from them, the way they were like family

and even having a selection of people who were a support network. There were three subthemes with two or more references, while the remaining subthemes were only referenced once. The subtheme of “Family from Peers” was mentioned twice by two different individuals. Peers did not only become friends in the program, but they were so close academically, physically and emotionally that they became family. Jasmine put the idea of peers as family in her own words:

And then you had your peers. You had your peers that turned into your friends. And then family. You know, first, like I mean, we kinda were a little family if you think about it. You know, all of us came into the program as strangers and then we developed, you know, friendships just because we were around these people for eight weeks and you know, after a while, you start communicating with these people and see that these people have the same type of, or wanta attain the type of success as you and so you develop a bond.

Tia felt similar to Jasmine, but she also spoke to the idea that it was nice to be living and learning with people who were in a similar academic and social standing as herself.

One other subtheme was composed of three responses from three different individuals—“Diversity from Peers.” This research specifically looks at African Americans and retention, but SUPER was not solely comprised of African Americans, but according to the students I interviewed it was rather diverse. Jamal spoke about the diversity in his interview:

Just learning about, you know, different ethnicities because one thing for me, my high school’s predominantly Black and I’m from, you know, Detroit ...and I was around predominantly African Americans, you know, high school, my personal friends, everything, and so coming into SUPER where it was completely diverse. I mean, for as many blacks, you had Hispanics. As many Hispanics you had Caucasians. Or as many

Caucasians you had Asian. And it was just completely diverse and people were from all over the place, from big cities, little cities, little towns. You know, suburban areas. Country, like farms. We had people from farms, so it was just... always interesting because at least I felt like I was constantly learning about different cultures, even African Americans who weren't from big cities. It was like learning about a different culture.

Jamal did not only recognize the racial differences but also the geographical differences between the students of SUPER during his program session. He gained from this part of his experience the ability to learn outside of the classroom. He also was able to become better prepared for life on a predominately white campus; Nia referenced how much SUPER helped her with this same concern.

I think that it's just, [SUPER] made me more comfortable and then I felt like it helped me because my high school was not very diverse but SUPER was so that helped me to be, you know, to be okay with being out of my comfort zone when school started because I think had I not been in SUPER, I would've been a little overwhelmed and maybe felt not as comfortable just because all of us, the majority of the students in my classes were Caucasian and, you know, I had not experienced that really prior to SUPER. But living with them, I enjoyed it. I had a lot of fun.

Jamal and Nia bring to light the importance of diversity. Without their experiences with their SUPER peers their entrance into the MSU community may have been more difficult. Bianca also referenced how diverse the program was even for a university program. For Nia it also seemed that she did not expect to have such a positive experience with such a diverse group. Both Jamal and Nia are from Detroit, Michigan.

“The Peer Experience” theme contains six more subthemes; “Bonding with Peers” being one of them. Imani spoke specifically to bonding with her peers stating “I think that we all did a good job of bonding with each other even if we came from different...backgrounds.” This bond expressed itself for some as “Long Lasting Friendships” which is another subtheme for peers. As the interviews were being done some, not many, of the participants would mention the fact that they still knew someone from SUPER. Shanice personally stated “I did get a chance to meet a couple of people. I met everyone and I do still speak with a few of them now to this day after I graduated—five years later.” Simone mentioned the subtheme of having a “Network of Peers.” She specifically saw this network as support, during SUPER and after. She stated that it was helpful for her.

Jasmine mentioned how she gained “Communication Skills from Peers.” For Jasmine it was being able to communicate effectively with her roommate during SUPER and because of this interaction going well she was better able to get along with her other roommates throughout college. Ebony summed most of this major theme up with the following statement, “It was, I mean, it was a great experience.” Ebony’s response created the subtheme “Great Experience with Peers.” The last subtheme of the major theme “The Peer Experience” was one which was not viewing the peers in a positive light. Tomika felt that there were two types of people in SUPER her session, those who had to be there and those who wanted to be there, like herself.

... the summer session was really interesting because some students were given the opportunity to come to SUPER as, like I said, more of a contingency plan. Like if you can do this, then you’ll be fine at State. Where there were a small, very small amount, including myself, who actually wanted to come to the program. And so that was interesting, to see people who are coming because they’re wanting to get prepared for

college, they wanta, you know, take classes before they start, get used to this huge campus, meet new people versus those who felt like they were being forced to do something. You know, even though it was for the betterment of themselves, they felt like it was something that was, they were being put upon to have to do this. And so later, it definitely paralleled the college experience because a lot of people are not ready for college or they don't really wanta go to college. And you, you'll interact with those people all the time.

Tomika's words show that she had a much different experience in SUPER than the rest of the participants in this study. Some accepted MSU students were required to attend SUPER, but even if they did not pass they were able to matriculate in the fall. When looking at Tomika's demographics it shows that she was not first generation, she came from an upper-middle class background and lived in the suburbs of West Bloomfield which is an affluent area in Michigan. These demographics could have influenced her interaction with her peers who did not have parents with experience in college, nor the experience of more affluent community public schools. It seems that there was a divide between her and her peers, but she reiterated that it did not make her view SUPER in a lesser light. Nevertheless, Tomika did not say anything positive about the participants in her SUPER session. Overall, the experience with the participants' peers was positive, except for one person's experience.

Gifts from SUPER

The major theme of "Gifts from SUPER" is filled with many sub themes. In these subthemes are two with numerous themes under each of them as well which will be labeled "determining descriptors." The subtheme "Type of Support" has eleven determining descriptors, and 35 individuals speaking to this subtheme. The subtheme "Academic and Social Confidence"

had six determining descriptors with 19 individual participants mentioning aspects to this subtheme. The subtheme “Acclimated to Campus” had 12 participants speaking on something in relation to it. “Head Start” was the last subtheme with a substantial amount of references. The remaining eight subthemes only had three or less references. SUPER gifted, or gave, these participants many things, including self discipline, family, maturity, the subthemes above and a few more.

Type of support

“Type of Support” has eleven determining descriptors with “Peers as Support” containing the most references. Tonya and Ebony both simply said “we have each other.” Tia established that it was essential to have one another in SUPER, “We supported each other first and foremost.” Under the major theme of “The Peer Experience” there was reference to Jasmine who spoke of how they all began as strangers but ended as family. Imani shared that having her peers assured her that she was not alone.

I don’t know. It made us all, I don’t know, it made us closer. It made us, you know, not necessarily dependent on each other but you know, we had each other to lean on. Yeah, so I mean, I liked having other people around me cuz I did feel like, I felt like I wasn’t doing it alone. I knew that everybody else was working. We all worked hard.

The idea of using one another for support was common throughout the interviews and seems to be a most important aspect to ensuring the progression of students.

“Advisors as Support” and “Mentors as Support” are two more determining descriptors. The participants simply labeled both groups as a sure source of support without any further elaboration. Also along the lines of people in the program as support, “Betty Sanford as Support” is another determining descriptor. Bianca stated “I think that Betty was phenomenal. She was

absolutely amazing.” And Tonya recalled the way in which Ms. Sanford supported the group, “Ms. Betty ... was always like the mama of the group.” The last group of persons seen as support was the faculty; which are the professors of the courses the students took. “Faculty as Support” produced several references with Tia’s standing out:

And then the faculty members, like I said, they had open office hours. They were always there if we needed anything. I think some of them even had night shifts so day and night, they were available. And then even throughout the school year.

The faculty of SUPER went beyond their general teaching duties and made themselves as available as possible. It is clear that the staff of SUPER was a part of the support system for the students.

Three activities during SUPER were referenced as support for some of the participants. “Seminar, Retreat and Study Hall as Support” created its own determining descriptor. When asked directly what the support system looked like for SUPER, Imani recalled the seminar; “we had like some like not conferences or, you know, people who would come in, like speakers, who actually would come speak to us.” The study halls were commonly mentioned by the participants and Tonya spoke honestly about how she and other students felt about the study halls.

Academic support...I mean, mainly the study hall thing but at first we hated it. At first, it was like, okay, we’re just here for an hour and, you know, this is a waste of time. But as time went on, we looked forward to it and then it was helpful. And we studied at the library, too. First, when we first studied at the library, they told us how to even like use the library.

Study hall was a mandatory part of SUPER which added to the structure of the program which some participants viewed as influential. Tonya’s statement brings to light the idea that sometimes

these types of programs can create discontent but consistency and positive product can alter the negative mindset about something as simple as study hall.

One of the last two determining descriptors for “Type of Support” is “OSS and CAAP as Support.” The two participants, who mentioned the College Academic Achievement Program (CAAP) when asked about the support made available to the SUPER students, were unclear or unsure of how supportive CAAP was. Ebony referenced how she did not know about CAAP supportive services until much later, but she believes that it could be a form of support. Ebony stated:

Which apparently CAAP had tutoring which I didn't know CAAP had tutoring and so I became a tutor for CAAP... once I found out that CAAP actually had tutors, I was like, oh, that's cool, I guess. You know, so I did that tutoring. So I think that's what [SUPER students] were supposed to do. It was to then start utilizing the support services through CAAP. I don't know. I know I didn't use them so I don't know how many other people actually did... But I mean, maybe [SUPER staff] did let the people know that needed it. I don't know. But I didn't know that those things were there. Nor did I actually seek them out either. But I think that that could've been something to do.

Considering that all SUPER students were also a part of CAAP, the resources CAAP had were there for the SUPER students as well. From Ebony's response it seems that some SUPER students were unaware of the support offered through CAAP. In regards to the Office of Supportive Services, both Bianca and Nia expressed how helpful and supportive the people in this office were to SUPER students. Nia also referenced how supportive OSS was even after SUPER was over. It came up numerous times during interviewing that participants needed a

form of support after SUPER was over, and it was found that some of the staff for SUPER and people in the OSS were a part of that desired support.

The last determining descriptor was “Family as Support.” Only Jamal mentioned his family as supportive. He considered his family a huge support system. It is unclear whether other participants viewed their family as support; the question asked of the participants specifically asked for support within SUPER, and not for outside support as well. Nevertheless, it was positive to hear that Jamal’s family was active in his academic endeavors.

Academic and Social Confidence

The subtheme, “Academic and Social Confidence,” has six determining descriptors including “Academic Confidence” which had the most responses. Jasmine expressed how SUPER helped her feel more confident academically:

Well, academically wise, I mean, you know, we were already, it was like we had a schedule. We went to class and then we had study time. So that was like something that was trained in me so it built my confidence for the semester whereas if I didn’t have study skills, how to go about studying for tests or, you know, doing assignments. And things of that nature. And along with, you know, being on campus. I would’ve been, you know, totally lost, you know, had I just not had the SUPER program.

The everyday aspects of SUPER instilled a confidence in the students’ ability to do well in school. Imani also spoke on the way in which SUPER helped her learn to study and in return increased her confidence in her academic abilities. Jamal expressed how his writing abilities were improved because of SUPER and in turn helped his confidence. Ebony simply reported that just being in SUPER for a summer helped her boost her confidence. She reported that she did

fairly well in SUPER and that gave her a better outlook on what lay before her. Tonya's academic confidence involved feeling more comfortable in challenging her professors:

I think, well, for me I would say it helped me academically as far as to be more, I wanta say like challenge the teacher sometimes... Which, which may come out bad but I'm not trying to make it come out that way because sometimes you can learn, I mean, you know, teachers are there to teach us but sometimes you may have to challenge their opinion and you can do it and it may even be more like standing on my ground about certain issues or certain things, you know.

Challenging the professor is not something every student feels comfortable doing, and for Tonya it is evident that because of SUPER she was able to evolve into a person who felt confident enough to stand up to a professor. Tonya also said that because of SUPER she felt "I can do this" in reference to college. This program was a major catalyst in academic confidence.

The determining descriptor, "Social Confidence," showed that having met people in SUPER made the students feel more confident when going into freshman year because they already knew people they could relate to and ask for assistance. Tia described it as the following:

And again, like having a core group of friends that have been through something that you've been through because SUPER was not all, you know, roses. It has its moments but just being able to have that core group of friends, that we had no choice but to be around each other 24/7 and build a friendship upon that helped out as well. Like I didn't come in as a lonely freshman with a roommate that I didn't know.

The idea of gaining friendships from the program was also in Tomika's response to the question of social confidence. Also along the lines of gaining friends was the ability to be comfortable

with networking, with friends and other people the participants met that summer and freshman year. Jamal described his confidence in networking:

But with Super, they kind of throw you off into the deep end. Like you're constantly meeting new faces, you're constantly networking. They have you go to, you know, various programs on campus and you constantly meet, you know, staff who, the director of this, the director of that. And you're meeting, you know, the person in [the] financial aid office and this person and that person. So it kinda forced you to strengthen your networking skills, you know, and learn how to talk to people who could potentially help you.

In SUPER networking was part of the program, and just like other parts of the program students were able to learn from it and become comfortable with it. Both Shanice and Imani mentioned the fact that SUPER taught them how to network.

The general determining descriptor of "Confidence" produced two responses to general confidence being gained from SUPER. Christopher put it this way; "Because of the SUPER program...my confidence level is very, is very high now, than it was when I first came into the program during June of 2005." Nia expressed that just being chosen for SUPER made her confidence level increase because she felt proud to be a part of the program. The remaining determining descriptors are "Resources Confidence," "Public Speaking Confidence" and "Body Confidence." Simone expressed the fact that after the program she felt more confident in her ability to seek out resources. Bianca reported that during SUPER she was asked to give a speech, and the fact that the staff thought she was a good public speaker made her feel even more confident in her abilities. Lastly, Tia spoke about how during her SUPER session the students took a kinesiology class and that encouraged her to take care of her body better than she had

prior. She reported that she was heavysset prior to college and SUPER helped her become more active in her lifestyle. “Academic and Social Confidence” produced a span of different confidences for these participants, which proved that what SUPER sought to do, it actually did. SUPER gave confidence.

Acclimated to Campus

The subtheme, “Acclimated to Campus,” was referenced by all participants. Everyone felt that SUPER did acclimate them to the MSU campus before freshman year began. Christopher felt so comfortable on campus that he never used a map, not once. He also stated “Everyone says, oh, it’s such a big campus. No, it’s not. It is not a big campus at all.” Michigan State University is made up of approximately 10,000 acres, yet Christopher felt that the campus was not big. Imani felt that she knew the campus especially the area in which the SUPER students resided. Jamal and Jasmine both spoke of feeling confident about their knowledge of the campus.

I, like I said... I really felt confident. I felt confident with being a freshman. You know, it was, I, I appreciated the SUPER program cuz they definitely showed us all of campus, you know what I mean? (Jamal)

I was very confident in knowing where, you know, my classes were or what buildings, you know, to go to or even, even off campus, if I needed to go grocery shopping and, you know, all those other type of things, like I knew, you know, what buses to take and, you know, just basically how to get around. So yeah, I was very comfortable with the campus after I completed the SUPER program. (Jasmine)

Getting students used to the campus they will be a part of for the next four or five years seems to be important and extremely helpful. The remaining responses were a simple “yes” or a more prominent “definitely.”

Good Habits Given, Discipline Given and Maturity Gained

The subtheme, “Good Habits Given,” had three references by three different individuals. Both Imani and Jamal spoke about how SUPER taught them good study habits. Jamal referenced the fact that he entered the program with poor study habits.

...and I know had I tried to, you know, take on the challenge of college with those poor study habits, I would’ve never made it. And so SUPER, like I said, it just, it allowed me to tap into a level of discipline that I...I don’t think you know, I would have been able to tap into without the structure that the program gave me.

Jasmine revealed a good habit that she gained from SUPER; “it taught me how to be independent.” Despite all the support Jasmine was receiving from the program staff, her peers, and professors she still felt the need to be independent. With independence comes the need to be disciplined, which Jasmine also explained in her interview:

I think SUPER, SUPER taught discipline basically. SUPER pretty much put discipline into place. Like, hey, this is, you know, how you need to be in order to be successful in your college years. Whereas through high school, they didn’t really teach discipline, you know, that well.

Jamal stated “discipline above all. I feel like SUPER instilled a level of discipline.” Discipline also goes along with how the program was structured, with certain times to study and even slots for free time.

As the interviews were being conducted a common experience the participants reported was how difficult yet structured the SUPER program was. Many seemed to laugh at the remembrance of the hard times they had with trying to complete the program; SUPER was a producer of war wounds for some of the selected participants. With this structure of the program came discipline. Jamal summed up many of the participants' feelings about the structure and their new found discipline with this statement:

... I think about how SUPER, everything was so regimented and, you know, it was, we had class from this time to this time, you know, we had free time, you know, for this block of time. I mean, it really instilled discipline in the students and I think about it now... Because it was so regimented, I feel like it really instilled good practices and good habits for the students that were involved. So I think that, that's the one thing I always take away from SUPER. And some of it was like I was able to go through SUPER and I did fairly well...I kinda feel like, you know, in hard times, times I'd need to buckle down, I kinda go back to those times and pull on some of the discipline that I learned then.

The structure of the program left a mark in the minds of the students, especially the designated study time. They would go to the library for a number of hours per week. As Jamal mentioned even free time was scheduled in. The idea of time management was also prevalent in the responses of the participants. Jamal, someone who mentioned the structure of the program four times in his interview also stated the following:

Even on the time management, you know. Before SUPER, I remember before college, I was not one to keep a planner. You know, at my high school, they would always, at the beginning of the year, they would give us a little planner and I guarantee you, by the

second or third week, it literally just became like a little hall pass thing because you have to get it signed to, you know, hall pass. And I mean, I never managed like a date book, a calendar, anything like that and SUPER, when I say like the discipline, again, it goes back to discipline, with time management, it really helped me out because now, you know, in college, I was addicted to my little agenda book and now that I've graduated, I have a Blackberry and nothing I do, you know, even now to this interview, that's been put into my calendar and so I feel like time management, just really shows you the value of it.

Christopher also mentioned the great assistance time management skills from SUPER gave him in his five years at MSU. Imani mentioned how SUPER produced a work ethic in her that she did not have before.

And just something that was influential about the whole entire SUPER experience was that it really gave you, you know, a really, a really good work ethic cuz it was really intense. So the intensity helped to kinda like know that you had to work hard to, you know, pass classes and all those things and go to class, pass classes and the intensity of it just helped you gain a good work ethic. (Imani)

Imani would mention the intensity of SUPER two more times, even stating that freshman year was not as intense as SUPER. The structure of the program instilled in the participants productive ways to manage their academic careers. This subtheme of "Discipline Given" was mentioned by six participants but was referenced 13 times throughout these six interviews.

Jamal grew a lot from being in SUPER, he even expressed his new found maturity; "and SUPER really opened my eyes, like it allowed, it really helped me mature into an adult." These three subthemes show how SUPER made an impression on the character of its students.

Head Start Given and College Credits Given

Occasionally during the interviews the participants would mention how they had the college experience prior to freshman year thanks to SUPER; this is the subtheme of “Head Start Given.” Shanice expressed how she was ready for college:

I would say SUPER gave me a head start because it started in the summer prior to the fall semester. So it kind of gave me a head start on college, not knowing what to expect, being the first generation student. It pretty much just gave me a leg up somewhat, on what to expect, what’s going on.

Tia also specifically called SUPER a head start, and she commented on the difference between herself and her friends who did not participate in SUPER.

I think a head start. I wouldn’t have had that. I just feel like I had an overall advantage. Like some of my friends from high school came up after me and just being able to tell them like about certain resources and things because I was already familiar with it. Like I didn’t come in as... well, I came in as, you know, a freshman but being able to have a head start once they got up there and be able to help them. Like that helped me out a lot. Gave me an extra foot in the door in a matter of speaking.

Tia even used what she learned from the program to help those around her. Jasmine spoke to the idea of what freshman year would have been like if she did not take part in SUPER.

Like I wouldn’t’ve known what to do. I would’ve basically been lost, like if I just would’ve been thrown in college. Without the SUPER program. Like it really helped me prepare and it really helped me to experience what college life was like and at the same time, you know, I was able to obtain college credit so not only was, you know, it was a confidence builder but it helped me to prepare for my semesters that I had ahead of me.

And it also, it just helped with adjusting to the college life. And I own that up to, you know, the mentors and my peers and the classes that I had taken.

Jasmine felt as though she truly experienced college before her freshman year. She felt that the program prepared her for what came next thanks to numerous aspects of the program.

Christopher also referenced feeling like SUPER allowed him to experience college beforehand.

Jamal, like Jasmine, also felt that the program prepared him for college. Along the lines of getting a head start on college is earning college credits through the program. Both Jasmine and Tomika viewed this as important in regards to what SUPER gave them.

Desire, Support and Self-Support

The remaining subthemes, under the major theme “Gifts from SUPER,” are; “Desire to Participate,” “Support Given” and “Self-Support.” Bianca mentioned her “Desire to Participate” in the residence hall student board; SUPER encouraged students to participate in extracurricular programs. Bianca saw this as something SUPER gave her that she would not have had without the program.

...had I not been in SUPER, I don't think that I would've felt like it was important to be a part of [the Shaw Hall student board] or, you know, be a part of anything for that matter.

I probably would've just been an average person in school. But they made sure I participated in some activities and what not.

No other student mentioned an extra desire to participate, but one did reference the support they received from SUPER as something the program gave her that she would not otherwise have had. Tonya spoke of support, especially the help she and other students received for their math class. The math TA would come to the dorm and help the students with their work.

Two students referenced “Self-Support,” as something SUPER gave them, a total of three times between the both of them. There was reference to gaining confidence to challenge a professor but these two young ladies spoke about simply talking to their professors. Shanice and Tomika described how they learned to talk to their professors when they needed some form of support.

...being able to be comfortable talking with instructors because we had such small class sizes, we were able to talk with instructors informally and so going to office hours and building rapport with instructors was less of a hurdle because I’d already done it... I think, I thought that was one of the best benefits of SUPER and what one of their focus was, was to get students to become more familiar with their instructors. A lot of students will never go to office hours. They don’t even know that that’s an option. So I thought that was, you know, great because I never hesitated after that and I, I don’t know that I would’ve done it as quickly. I think I would’ve figured it out later but I wouldn’t have thought, oh, this is a really good option to take advantage of. (Tomika)

Shanice specifically described difficulty with a TA, and how Ms. Sanford encouraged her to talk to the TA. Shanice did this but the TA was not receptive; Ms. Sanford further encouraged her to talk to the TA’s professor which in the end helped Shanice with her problem. These two ladies received from SUPER the knowledge of how to support oneself in the classroom.

Characteristics of SUPER

The major theme of “Characteristics of SUPER” has four subthemes and eleven determining descriptors. The subthemes are; “Class Experience,” “Faculty,” “SUPER as Difficult” and “SUPER as Family.” The determining descriptors cover how the students felt about the SUPER classes versus the regular MSU classes. The participants discussed the many

ways in which they viewed the faculty of the program. It is really important to understand the way in which the students characterized SUPER components in order to better assess the program and help with production of an improved program.

Class Experience

The first determining descriptor for the subtheme “Class Experience” is “Classes as the Same,” which seven different participants referenced as the case for their SUPER summer session. The question asked whether SUPER classes were similar to or different from regular term MSU classes. Tia mentioned how her classes were “Similar to all my other classes. I wouldn’t say they were that different.” Tomika said they were pretty much the exact same as the classes she took during her college career. Jasmine mentioned how the expectations in SUPER classes were the same as any other class at MSU.

Well, the classes were similar just because, I mean, the classes that we took in the summer time were college credit classes. Like they went towards our degree program so they expected, you know, the same, you know, criteria just like, you know, any other class that would be in semesters or whatever like that.

Nia also spoke to the similarity between the classes and she also mentioned a major difference.

...just overall, [classes] seemed to be the same. I didn’t feel like, I don’t know, like they were any different honestly except for maybe the size of the classes because, you know, they were, I guess, at most 40 of us but I didn’t get classes that small again until probably my junior year when I was actually in my college.

Nia’s response brings about another determining descriptor of “Classes as Different.” Seven responses were given about how SUPER was different. Bianca said “The size was probably the only difference,” also along the lines of what Nia, Simone, Shanice and Ebony mentioned. Tia,

despite her view that the classes were similar, she also found that the community the SUPER students had created was over when freshman year began.

I mean, the biggest difference was that we took like, we were our own community in SUPER and we took a lot of our classes together and then once the regular semester started, we kinda broke off into our own courses.

Imani expressed that the math course during SUPER was remedial, and that was different.

Shanice also mentioned that her writing class seemed easier, and professor availability was more prominent. For the majority of the students the classes of SUPER were academically similar to those during regular session at MSU. The major difference was the class size.

The determining descriptor of “Classes as Harder” fits with the classes being different but Jamal’s response shows how the classes being harder also better prepared him for college.

So like a lot of times, you’ll find... while the other students were just attending MSU... for the summer session, while they were doing ... a midterm paper or... just having the midterm, we would have [a] midterm paper and midterm like together. Or ... we would have full fledged research papers. And the reason I appreciated that, at first I was kinda frustrated but the reason I appreciate it looking back on it is because again, it really instilled a certain level of discipline that I know I wouldn’t’ve gotten, you know, had I just enrolled, you know, and just started like the regular fall semester. Or it was just things that I didn’t know. Like I can’t say that I properly knew how to do a research paper and so with SUPER, they really let the program stand for Summer University Program - Excellence Required and I feel like excellence required should’ve been in bold because they really set the bar high so that you’re striving to, you know, just make, like you’re striving to reach the bar... At least for me. A lot of times, I would underestimate

myself and as I continued to work to reach this bar, I would find myself, you know, meeting it and overachieving sometimes. I said all that to say it was setting the bar so high that in an effort to, you know, meet the bar, you would learn so much during the course. So while you were writing this research paper, you were learning the proper way to research for your paper.

Jamal surely expressed how the program lived up to its name and prepared him for college. He once again mentions the discipline instilled within him because of the program. No other students referenced SUPER as more difficult than their experience during the regular school year, but it seemed important to Jamal; he mentioned the difficulty twice in his interview.

One final mention about the classes of SUPER was surrounding taking a “Class for No Credit.” Both Christopher and Ebony were discontent about their math class not counting towards their degree. Christopher mentioned how he had a poor GPA going into freshman year because he did poorly in the SUPER writing class. He did well in the math course but it did not count. Ebony spoke about how math was a strength for her:

I really, I think it was a double O class and I particularly was kinda ticked off at it just because math is actually my strong point so for me to be in this math class that doesn't count for anything, I was a little... but that's whatever.

Tonya also mentioned that the math class was there to get them prepared for the real math class during freshman year. Tonya seemed neutral about the class not counting for credit. Only two participants complained about not receiving college credit for their SUPER math class, but it is something to consider when creating a program such as the one in this research.

Faculty

The subtheme “Faculty” has six determining descriptors, with “Faculty as Good” being

the most referenced. In general six students spoke about the faculty in a positive light and some simply said that the faculty was good. Shanice paralleled the faculty's presence with the title of the program:

My impression of the faculty working with SUPER, they were all super. No, I'm just kidding. But no, they were. They were all, I mean, they were just, I think they were just a dynamic group of individuals put together to make the program work.

Perhaps they made the program work because of what Tomika experienced with the faculty. Tomika referenced the staff in the following words, "The staff was really helpful. Very hands on. And really easily accessible." Being easily accessible required dedication to the program which is the next determining descriptor followed by "Faculty as Caring." "Faculty as Dedicated" revealed two responses from two different participants. Tomika expressed that both the staff and instructors were dedicated. Simone expressed the faculty's dedication as the faculty being "invested in the students." Simone saw the dedication, specifically of her professors in SUPER to be different from those outside of the summer session. She did reference the fact that the only professors she found to be just as dedicated were the language professors. Jamal described the faculty's dedication in the following way:

But they would always be on campus, you know, checking in on us, working with us, like I said. Ms. Sanford and Yulana, they were constantly, you know, checking in on us, seeing if there was something that we needed, making sure that we had... I mean, they, I feel were very dedicated, not to the program but to the students that were in the program. I feel like they were very dedicated and again, the program, I mean, it just far exceeded any expectation that I had going into the program.

In Jamal's eyes the faculty devoted to the students which showed that they cared for the students.

“Faculty as Caring” is another descriptor. Bianca explained that the faculty cared about minority students and students from poor and first generation backgrounds; especially those entering college. She also mentioned that the SUPER professors actually cared about their success, which she experienced as different from the professors after the program. Nia expressed the faculty’s caring by holding the students to a higher standard.

I know that they had like really high expectations of us. That they were passionate about the program and believed in it. And they just seemed to be, you know, they genuinely cared about all of us.

Tia spoke highly of the faculty in her response to what her impression of them was. The “Faculty as Family” descriptor came from Tia’s response.

On the one hand, I kinda looked at them as, you know, authoritative figures and then on another hand, kind of like just family, like people who had experience that you would go through. They were very open at all times if you ever needed anything. Their doors were always open. They actually had office hours, like within our dormitory that we stayed in during the summer. And they just made sure to keep contact with us that first year to see how things were going. So I think the overall relationship was pretty open. Like they were available. They made themselves available.

Once again someone mentioned how accessible the faculty was and the idea of SUPER being a family was presented. Considering that the participants described the faculty as dedicated and caring, viewing them as family is a logical next step.

The last determining descriptor for the subtheme of “Faculty” is “Faculty as Helpful.” “Faculty as Helpful” had eight references by six different individuals. Part of Jasmine’s response was, “So you know, they were just trying to make sure that, you know, we were prepared for

what was ahead of us. I think that they were very encouraging, very helpful.” Shanice reported, “...they were very open and, you know, ready to answer whatever questions I had for them or if I needed assistance, or just needed to talk to someone.” Christopher also spoke on the fact that he felt that he could ask the faculty any question, and he would get a response. Imani spoke about one advisor who helped her a lot. Simone thought it was good to have faculty who were Ph.D. students because it instilled aspirations in the SUPER students and it was helpful to have someone around who went through what the program students were going through. In being helpful faculty were also seen as being resourceful; Imani mentioned how the faculty introduced the SUPER students to different resource centers and learning centers in order to help the students when SUPER was over. Finally, Jasmine simply stated, “They were resourceful. Resourceful.”

SUPER as Difficult

The subtheme of “SUPER as Difficult” was created by four participants and seven references in their interviews. Bianca called SUPER a “rigorous summer” and later spoke to the fact that the program began at 8:00am and did not end until sometimes 9:00pm at which time they would do homework until midnight or later—this she described as intense. Jamal admitted that SUPER was able to rid him of some bad habits from his high school years:

With SUPER, the faculty loved most of the students but if you didn’t do the work, they let you fail. You know what I mean? Like not fail, but it’s like... if you didn’t do the work, you got exactly what you deserved. And so in high school, like I said ... I feel like to some degree, I was smart but I did a lot of skating by. But with SUPER, they kind of worked that out of you.

Jamal reported before that he found discipline in the program, which would disallow the idea of skating by. Tia, like Bianca, viewed SUPER as rigorous:

And then just as far as the rigor of the program...in SUPER, like every day I was in courses, back to back and then in between that, just studying. So they gave me the experience in case I needed to be able to manage my time more efficiently. And then just experience of teaching us how to utilize our resources...

Tia's statement expressed the importance of learning time management skills which another student referenced as something SUPER gave them.

SUPER as Family

The last subtheme within the major theme of "Characteristics of SUPER" is "SUPER as Family." There have been a few mentions of people of SUPER being like family. Here the students referenced the entire program and the people within it as a big family. Five students spoke to this occurrence; Tia simply said at one point "we were like a family." Bianca however expanded on the topic by saying the following:

It wasn't, it was more like we were a family, too. And it wasn't like we were just a number at Michigan State which that was why... that first semester that we went there, that we got into SUPER was so important because we felt close to somebody and we could identify with somebody and it was also a very diverse program so you didn't feel like, oh, it's only the black kids that really need help...it was the unity that we felt when we were there. It was, you know...I kept up with pretty much all the students that I hung out with there in SUPER... They knew our, they knew our names. They knew, they knew us. They, like I said, we had time, we met with our advisors every week. And so they

did, they made sure that we were a part of a family and made sure that we felt that we could go to anybody within the family, too...even after that summer ended.

Bianca found comfort within her SUPER family, and security in her surroundings during and after the program.

Imani elaborated on the topic of SUPER as family when she responded about what the program gave her.

One thing...they gave me something that's not necessarily academic related and that was the family experience of it. Like if I ever... my closest friends are people who were in SUPER with me and it kinda gave me the sorta extended family. So that was something that I'll forever be grateful for. Even if I saw people that, even if I haven't seen them since... the people that were there, since college or whatever, if I saw them on the street, I'll give them a hug and we would keep in contact, you know. All that kinda... so it kinda gave you this sort of extended family and you knew that you could count on people. And you kinda had this experience to go through with others. You didn't go at it alone. We all worked equally hard to, you know, pass our classes while we were in SUPER or just whatever. Like it kinda gave me like an extended family almost. So that's one thing that I could definitely say that SUPER gave me.

The program gave her an extended family that she has not lost touch with since 2003. From peers and staff SUPER became a familial support system for the students. Overall SUPER's characteristics were of strong quality, even with it sometimes being considered difficult the students found the different aspects to the program as positive.

College Preparation

The major theme of "College Preparation" is comprised of four subthemes exploring how

the participants felt about their preparation for college before and after SUPER. Five of the participants fell under the subtheme, “High School did Prepare.” Bianca reported about her high school which was specifically college preparatory and she believed it did prepare her for college. Tia also went to a college preparatory school. Ebony expressed the upper level classes she took which prepared her:

...everything in high school prepared me for college. I don't know if it was just the way that they started teaching everything but I knew how to, I mean, all of my classes were basically college prep classes. I took honors classes, AP classes and things like that in high school. Everything was, everything was geared towards that, I guess.

Tomika spoke about how her high school overly prepared her for college. She expressed that the school worked to have classes to mirror college classes; she did not specifically call them AP or Honors.

The second subtheme is “High School did not Prepare,” which six students had references to. Jamal mentioned how his high school background made SUPER more difficult. He replied, “High school. You know, the horrible truth is that high school didn't prepare me for college which to some degree, I felt like that was the biggest struggle starting out in SUPER...” Tonya expressed that she felt she was and was not prepared. “But high school, it didn't prepare me, it didn't prepare me at all. I mean, honestly to say but [my high school] is lacking a lot. You don't really, you think you're prepared until you get there. You're not.” Imani simply said that her high school did not do a very good job at preparing her. Nia, Shanice and Simone's responses were similar to Imani's.

The remaining subthemes for “College Preparation” are “SUPER did not Prepare” and “SUPER Better Prepared.” Ebony was the only participant to mention that SUPER did not better

prepare her for college. She expressed that the reason she went to SUPER was “because I got free credits, I got a stipend, I got a free laptop.” She did say that the program allowed her to get used to the campus, but there was nothing she could think of that prepared her better than her high school had already done. The rest of the participants all said that SUPER better prepared them for college. Bianca simply replied “SUPER totally prepared us for, for college.” Tia expressed how she felt better prepared than her peers who did not attend the program.

Regardless of my college preparatory background in high school, [SUPER] definitely gave me, like I said, an advantage when I feel like my peers that came in, they were kinda thrust into an experience.

Jasmine spoke to how the program required her to sit down and study in a structured manner and in turn it better prepared her for college. Two respondents reported the SUPER really helped them be prepared for the social aspects of college. Jamal mentioned his experience with the program “...SUPER definitely did prepare [me] for college and my high school experience was more social than academic.” Tomika’s response was in agreement with Jamal about social adjustment in college. The participants interviewed in this research were divided in how they rated their high school experience and whether it prepared them for college. Nevertheless, almost all of the participants felt that SUPER better prepared them for college.

Graduation with/without SUPER

The major theme of “Graduation with/without SUPER” produced three subthemes. The prompting question asked whether the participant would have taken longer to graduate if they had not participated in SUPER. “Longer to Graduate” is a subtheme which collected the most responses. Jasmine spoke to the potential difficulty she would have had with the transition to college.

It's really hard to say. I mean, it probably would've [taken longer] just because the transition, you know, I wouldn't've been used to and the transition would've been so fast paced which, you know, with SUPER, it was kinda like, okay, they work with you so it was like a gradual transition. They helped you to gradually change. Whereas if I had just been thrown into something, it probably would've been like a shock to me so I wouldn't've known what to do. And then, you know, with the study skills and not being disciplined in that area, yeah, it could've been maybe like a semester or two, you know, longer than you know, what I expected to graduate from college.

Because of SUPER Jasmine felt a gradual transition to college which she found helpful and influential in her amount of time spent in college. Simone explained how SUPER helped her be better prepared in her selection of courses and the route to college completion.

Probably. Probably. I would say so, most likely. Maybe I would've, oh, yeah, I definitely would've been lost. Like there were many undergraduates that were so lost and just taking courses. I mean, just in terms of the academic planning and now what class you had to take and not waste time, it was great for that. So yeah, definitely.

Bianca also stated that it would definitely have taken her longer, and Tia and Tonya's responses also supported this thought. Also a negative thought in response to not having SUPER Jamal said "Had I not gone through SUPER, I probably wouldn't have finished college." This statement is a strong compliment to the SUPER program; he thought that the program prepared him so well that without it he had no belief in success. Jamal's response is in the subtheme of "Never Graduate."

Four participants believed it would not have taken them longer to graduate if they did not take part in SUPER. “No Longer to Graduate” subtheme was best expressed by Ebony in the following way:

Would it have took me longer? I don't think so. No. I don't think so. No, cuz I still, either way, I still took a couple classes in the summer. I would've just upped the amount of classes I took during the school year but no. In the summer, I even had extra credits. I did an internship in DC for a semester.

Ebony would have taken extra steps to ensure graduation in four years. Tomika mentioned that she did not have a choice but to graduate in four years due to what her parents expected of her. Shanice and Christopher simply said “probably not.”

The last subtheme is “SUPER made Graduation Later.” These two participants felt that if they would not have been in SUPER they would have graduated earlier. Imani who took five years to graduate stated “...I think it would've been shorter if I hadn't participated.” Nia who also took five years to graduate elaborated on her reasoning that SUPER increased the amount of time she spent at MSU.

Well, I was just thinking about, with SUPER, I was really into education. I thought that's what I was gonna do. I wanted to become a teacher but I feel like... we weren't given the opportunity to kinda explore. I feel like they were trying to make you pick something right off the bat... To focus your energy... I think if I had just came in and been undecided, that I would've gotten more of my core classes done first instead of battling in education. So then my last two years, I would've just been taking core classes.

SUPER seemed to put pressure on Nia's selection of a major before she was certain. Perhaps guiding the students in core classes first and electives in their interest would be a better approach to ensuring they choose the right major and graduate in the time they wanted.

“I Would Change...”

The major theme of “I Would Change...” has six subthemes ranging from the participants thinking the courses in SUPER should be changed to the length of the program should be changed. One subtheme that had many references in comparison to the rest is “Change Length.” Christopher responded by stating “I would let it follow, I would want it to follow you the whole... way, until you actually walk across the stage, however long it takes you.” He and four other participants believed there would be a more positive outcome if the SUPER students had support throughout their time at MSU. Ebony thought it would be good for SUPER to continue but it would not have to be as intense as the summer session:

However, I think it should include, like I said before, be longer than just freshman year.

Or have it something that becomes not necessarily seeks that same kind of close knit for the whole four years but have it kinda taper off a little bit more.

Jamal expressed his own ideas for SUPER especially to help those students who ended up not graduating:

Anyway, I have a wish that it would've extended a little bit longer outside of my freshman year. Maybe even into like sophomore year because I feel like a lot of people who didn't value what the program was giving them, those were typically the people who didn't finish.

Shanice and Simone both spoke of the program keeping track of the students, helping them stay on track and keep them focused. A good amount of the sample agreed that it would be beneficial to have SUPER extend its reach while the students were in school.

The subtheme of “Math Credit” relates to the complaint numerous participants had about the fact that their summer session math class did not count for credit towards their MSU degree. Christopher stated that he would like to see that the math credits count towards a degree. “You know, I would want that to count, the math class to count for more as to what we were going into instead of it just being that one class that counted towards your grade point average.” Ebony simply stated that she would like to see the math credit situation changed. She also referenced the difficulty she had when it came time to graduate and the administration said she was a credit shy; that credit came from the SUPER math class. Along the lines of credits, Tia mentioned she would have liked to be able to pick her courses instead of having SUPER select them. This subtheme is “Change Courses.” Tia was the only participant to mention wanting to choose her own classes.

The subtheme “Change Intensity” was mentioned by Imani who said “I wouldn’t have it as intense cuz real college was not like that. Like...just the structure of it. Really honestly, I think that we, we didn’t have a break until the end of SUPER...” Other participants also spoke to how intense the program was, but Imani was the only one that mentioned she would want to change that. Some participants found a positive in the intense atmosphere of SUPER. Another subtheme dealing with the atmosphere of the program is “Change Student Selection.” Tomika spoke in length about wanting students in the program who really want to participate. She said the selection process did not select the type of student she thought should be a part of the program.

I think the application process would have been a little bit more telling of the type of, you know, individuals and what their motivations were. Though if it were to be based on, you know, if they're gonna get accepted, I know that that leaves, you know, a few outliers as far as, you know, motivation. But I think it could've been a little bit more, at least put more effort into it because I don't feel like I had to do anything out of the ordinary to be accepted into the program. I did have to, I wasn't in the selected students who were able to apply to SUPER. We just heard about it. And then I had to wait to see if there were students who weren't going to participate so that I could have a spot. And I was really like, you know, academically driven so I feel like it's not fair for those students who may have, you know, been really interested in doing a program like that. So I would've changed that. And I can't really think of anything else.

Tomika was not in the original selection of SUPER and she felt that others like herself should have this opportunity. Tomika, as mentioned earlier, is from a background much different than the majority of the sample for this research, and she does not meet the stipulated criteria for SUPER selection. It seems that she was not completely aware of the reasoning for this program. But she does make a good point that students like her who want a head start should have the opportunity, but perhaps simply signing up for classes a semester early would be enough.

The subtheme of "Change Nothing" had three references all who said they would change nothing about SUPER. Tonya simply said "nothing" in response to the question about what she would change about the program. Nia said "I loved SUPER. I wouldn't change anything." Jasmine shared "But I don't, I don't think that I would change anything about the program." Besides the things students would change, the participants also mentioned what they recommended for the program. Of course many of them recommended extending the program

further into the students' college career. Shanice spoke about having SUPER students come together every so often to talk about how things are going; talk about how classes are going and any struggles they are having. She also spoke about having older SUPER students help out.

I'm thinking maybe, it wouldn't hurt to have all... It wouldn't hurt to have all SUPER students from previous classes or, you know, different classes like that. Cuz they'll have stories, too, you know, just different things. I know at one point, they did have some SUPER students from previous years to come and speak with us and that was interesting, just seeing them there, seeing them around campus. (Shanice)

Tomika had the idea of bringing in people from different majors to talk to SUPER students.

“You know, like maybe like incorporating more information about their actual college, what they were gonna major in. Connecting them with not just SUPER students but other students that are in their major...” Ebony also thought that having SUPER students' grades checked on throughout each semester would enable the staff to keep records on the students and give help when it was needed. The “I Would Change...” major theme shows that some of the participants felt that SUPER could have been improved with a few changes. It also showed that three individuals thought nothing should have been changed about SUPER. The recommendations the participants suggested do not seem like extensive work on the program. It is important to hear what the students of SUPER would like to be different about a program they experienced firsthand.

Impressions on 1994 Changes

In 1994 under the authority of Betty Sanford the SUPER program went through some changes. The two major changes were making the number of students chosen much less and adding freshman year onto the program. A total of four subthemes were created under the major

theme of “Impressions on 1994 Changes.” All twelve participants thought that lowering the number of students from 100 to 30 was a good idea. This subtheme is “30 Students Better.”

Imani thought that SUPER would not have been able to do the same things it did with a larger group.

I would say that’s more functional learning especially with the kind of program SUPER is, that’s almost more well suited for it to be more successful. You know what I’m saying? To have a smaller group of participants. I can’t see, I don’t know. I can’t see 100 people being in the same, the same stuff that we did... How would you fit 100 people into that? Like it would seem like it would’ve been well suited to make it successful at least for a smaller group of people. 30, 40 people.

Numerous participants referenced the fact that 100 students would not have allowed the bond that was created between the participants. Christopher thought having 100 students would promote the creation of cliques. Nia thought that the familial atmosphere would be more difficult to create with a larger number of people. Simone thought the smaller group helped foster true relationships. Tonya stated “I think it was better to have a smaller group because it allows people to get more of that one on one connection and build, you know, deeper relationships with people.” Jasmine also spoke to the building of friendships in SUPER:

Oh. Well, I think that’s kinda better. You know, cuz I don’t know if I would’ve had like the same connection or, you know, the same bond, you know, so many people. Like 100 people, that’s a lot. Whereas, you know, with us 30, like I said, like we, we stuck together, you know what I’m saying? Like it was like almost like a family, you know, and I think the smaller group helped like build long lasting relationships and it was, it was easier for the mentors to, you know, pay, pay attention to, you know, us, you know,

and our concerns. And the advisors, same thing. You know, so I think that if it would've been that big of a group that, I mean, it would've been, we wouldn't've been so recognizable as each individual.

Some of the participants were concerned with how students would be able to interact with the staff of SUPER if there were so many people to accommodate. Tia's response was "But I just can't imagine like being able to have like open office hours for 100 people on a consistent basis and be able to provide the same support that we got..." Tomika thought the lower number simulated the small class size and better prepared the participants:

I think that it's a good change because the program didn't seem to be structured to accommodate that large number of students. So that was probably a good thing. The lower numbers made, it was comparable to a class size which is a good experience for the classes that were offered. ... And I feel like it just would've been too much to handle, to have 100 students. Especially with some of the disciplinary actions that were taken over the time. I don't think 100 students would've been very beneficial. I think it may have adversely affected other students' learning and, or experience. And my class started off, I think we had 27 and ended with like 22. So just because they had a large number, it probably wouldn't mean, you know, that they would actually stay through it. But it's still, that's a huge number. Even when we had such a, we only ended up, I think, 20, 22 people can survive a program like that, it's definitely something to take into consideration in the future, how many people should be in it but I think the number was fine.

Tomika brings to light the concerns about people leaving the program for different reasons, and the way that having a larger number could create more problems in the program. It is clear that the students viewed the change in amount of students as positive. Jamal, prior to saying that he

thinks he “benefited from SUPER being smaller because it was more intimate,” he expressed that having more people means more people benefit from the program. This response to wanting more participants makes up the subtheme of “100 Students Better.”

The remaining two subthemes of the major theme “Impressions on 1994 Changes” are “Freshman Year Better” and “Summer Only Better.” Similar to the response to the change in amount of participants eleven responded that adding freshman year to the program was a better idea, with only one thinking that summer session was enough time. Christopher mentioned freshman year as helpful follow-up:

I thought that was really good. I thought it was really nice, you know, to have a follow-up. That’s what I looked at it as, just a follow up to make sure we’re still on track and we’re still on task instead of just like throwing us into the, into the wild and just, like a free for all. You know, it still was, had that structure during the fall and everything like that. Like which was very helpful because we used to have like little meetings and stuff like that and, you know, Betty would come to us and ask us, you know, how was the first half of your freshman year and, you know, everything like that. She would email us and everything, make sure that we were still on track during that whole freshman year... I felt like when sophomore year came, I was thrown into the woods. Like I didn’t have that, you know, cushion or that comfort zone anymore. It was like, okay, you’re on your own now and everything. You have to make these decisions without the backbone of SUPER and everything like that. Like that shell is gone and passed away and now it’s all on you. You know, you have to have the time management skills and if something happens, it’s on you. It’s not, you know, Betty can’t fix you up and everything like that. It’s all on

you. So that's why I feel like it was, it was a great thing for them to actually have us during the first year.

What Christopher mentions is a reminder of the desire for SUPER to add more years onto the program. Imani, Simone and Bianca thought that having freshman year allowed SUPER staff to track the success of their students and keep an eye on them. Jamal thought the incorporation of freshman year was needed:

I feel like, you know, this allowed the staff to have a greater influence on the students. It allowed the students to get more tools for college. You know what I mean? And like I said, I wish that it was longer so I think that was not only like a benefit but it was necessary. It was needed.

Shanice and Nia thought it was good because the staff was still around to support them. Nia said "I think that was a good change because it was nice to still have that support throughout the year." Tonya thought it was a good idea because learning something over the summer could be forgotten when the campus becomes more populated and classes are not filled with SUPER students. Tia also mentioned that freshman year adds the stereotypical activities of college life, but she was accountable because she knew she would have to meet with her mentor once a month.

Tomika was the only one who thought adding freshman year was not a good idea. She thought there were too many requirements for both CAAP and SUPER.

Yeah. I just think it was, it's too much. When, if they're a CAAP student, they have classes, they have tutoring, they have all these other obligatory activities they have to participate in that are all supposed to be academic success strategy seminars. Regardless of how helpful they actually are at the end of the day, they still have all this stuff to do.

And so to add something else in there, it's kind of like, you know, just throwing a wrench in the objective in the first place. It's like now, manage your time to accommodate all these other activities where you're not necessarily gonna get any credit for it. It's just to improve your experience, but it's like that could be time you could be like studying or like going to office hours or, you know, organizing your dorm room. Whatever it is. It takes away from the adjustment time and so I didn't, I didn't think that that was, you know, good. I think summer program, fantastic. Get the kids ready for summer and give them a head start for fall semester. But just time alone, the time commitment is a lot and you have kids who have to work, too, and so it's like, and then fit in this other like seminar or dinner or something like that.

It seems that Tomika thought freshman year took away time one could be studying. The changes made in 1994 were well received by those who were a part of the changed SUPER. Only two people thought one change or the other was not a good idea.

Application Process

The application process for SUPER participants all required an application to be filled out and interviews, but the way people heard about the program was different. One student found out about SUPER by a phone call. Another three found out by mail. One individual found SUPER online and decided to apply. One person heard by word of mouth. A couple did not remember how they found out. Three people said that the reason they decided to attend MSU was because of the SUPER program. Bianca was accepted to another Michigan university but found out they did not have a program like SUPER so she decided not to attend that school. She also mentioned that all her friends who did go to the other school had dropped out. Shanice stated:

[SUPER] was actually my, that was actually the determining factor for me to attend at Michigan State cuz I got accepted to quite a few other schools but after looking into this program and being accepted, that made, that allowed me to make the decision to go to Michigan State... It made me wanta go to Michigan State.

Tia was also looking at other schools, but when she found out she was accepted into the program it was easy for her to make the decision to go to MSU. It seems that having retention programs could be a benefit to universities because it may help sway a potential student into deciding on that school with the program.

Conclusion

The results began with participant demographics which revealed that most of the participants were from Detroit, between the ages of 20 and 30, mostly middle class and most were not first generation. What was most influential to the students; advisors, the structure of the program, Ms. Sanford and becoming acclimated to the campus were some of the most referenced. The experience the students had with one another helped them gain diversity and feel like a family. Looking at what SUPER gave the students it was evident that academic confidence, social confidence, acclimation to the campus and a head start were most common. The four major characteristics of the SUPER program were the experience students had in classes, the attributes of the faculty, the way in which SUPER was difficult and the way in which it was like a family. The majority of the participants said that their high schools did not prepare them but SUPER most definitely better prepared them for college. In regards to graduating from MSU, the majority said that without SUPER they would have taken longer to graduate and one person said they would not have graduated at all. The major aspect of the program that the participants wanted to change was the length of the program; specifically to make it longer. The

majority of the participants thought that the changes made in 1994 were for the best. The application process revealed the fact that the participants found out about the program numerous ways, but mostly via mail. Also three individuals said that the reason they chose MSU was because of the opportunity with SUPER. Overall the results reveal that the participants viewed the program in a positive light. Nevertheless there were some aspects they wanted to change, but these changes are only to make the program better, and they do not outweigh the positives.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

SUPER influenced twelve individuals in both similar and different ways. This chapter sets out to discuss those ways that were most influential for the majority of the participants. This research was initiated to find out how SUPER was able to retain students and it was suggested in the results chapter that there were many ways that the program aided in retaining the participants. There were eleven subthemes which in data analysis presented in more than half of the participants' responses. The themes were: "Staff as Influential," "Staff as Support," "Faculty as Helpful," "Peers as Support," "SUPER as Family," "Acclimation," "Head Start," "Academic Confidence," "Social Confidence," "Classes as the Same," "SUPER Better Prepared," and "Change Length of Program." It was most important that themes were mentioned at a higher amount than how strong the responses were in the interviews. It is important to recognize what aspects of the program were mentioned the most in the interviews as associated with the participants' academic and social development. All of these subthemes have a relation to social capital, and a collegiate type of social capital is needed to succeed in college. Several of these subthemes label processes that helped integrate participants into the college environment which aligns with the integration theory of Vincent Tinto. "Academic Confidence" aligns with research establishing that academic self-efficacy aids in college retention. These subthemes will be explored and connected to any literature based on such topics. This chapter will conclude with suggestions for future research and implications for policy and practices.

Social Capital Aids Retention

Pierre Bourdieu defines social capital as "the mobilization of actual or potential resources, which are linked to possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships

of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in obligations or connection” (Anyon, et al., 2009, p. 140). Nan Lin defines social capital based on scholars such as Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam as “investment in social relations with expected returns” (Lin, 2001, p. 6). Based on these definitions social capital is necessary for transitioning to and functioning within college. I surmise that social capital is the actualized utilization of social networks that allow students to engage and understand the culture on campus, thereby increasing opportunities for success. Social capital in academia is the knowledge of the many aspects of college; knowledge that will enable a student to easily transfer into college with a better chance at succeeding. With the grounded theory approach the data collected produced themes which when thought of in whole worked to help the participants gain social capital and thus do better in school. The selected participants, for the most part, lacked the social capital necessary for smooth adjustment into the college life. For the majority of the participants they lacked any shared knowledge from parents about what to expect from college life and how to succeed in college. These participants for the most part were not doing as well in high school as the average incoming freshman at Michigan State University. This means that some did not understand or experience the culture of high achieving students which could make the adjustment to college more difficult. The lack of a social atmosphere that could facilitate resources that would aid in academic achievement made this group of participants a group of students that needed a program like SUPER. SUPER was able to give the majority of these students resources that aided in their progress in their time at MSU. The major resources gained dealt with the type of professor the students encountered in the summer, a higher self perception within the students and the resource of being acclimated to the college environment. The literature, the little that has been dedicated to assessing persistence and its relation to social capital has found social capital to be positively linked to retention.

(Smart, 2009)

The acclimation to campus allows for students to feel comfortable with their new surroundings avoiding any feeling of being overwhelmed by the shock of large, highly populated new surroundings. Because of the social relations the SUPER students had during the summer environment, which incorporates the students, they became comfortable. SUPER being in the summer time was able to help ease these students into the campus atmosphere, having a lesser amount of people could have assisted in this transition. The campus had fewer students but the courses, and other obligations of the program set an example for what freshman year would demand in regards to managing a new environment. Experiencing the dorm life, and having the knowledge of how to behave when living with others beside family is a form of social capital. Being mentored by others who already knew the system of MSU allowed for the SUPER students to become a part of the campus culture, culture which required the knowledge of certain aspects of college life; such as knowing the language used for listing courses on the course enrollment website, or what their college ID is used for. SUPER students were certain of their position on campus; they knew what college life would be like and how to manage the core aspects. These students were less likely to gain such knowledge at home or within their high school social networks. The knowledge they gained and the comfort was a form of mental acclimation to the MSU environment, which occurred due to social relations.

Students with parents who attended college and spent time with their children to share their experiences, have the social capital that informs them about college life and thus in turn helps them comfortably adjust (acclimate). The literature points out that the more privileged student is more likely to attain a degree (Smart, 2009). With social capital, students would feel more entitled to be on campus and to gain a degree. This entitlement would allow them to feel

confident, even if they needed to ask for help. The SUPER students found acclimation extremely important to their adjustment and progress in college. Having a bridge program prior to freshman year, on campus is important to aiding in retaining students that first year.

Another aspect of the SUPER program which gave the students social capital was the idea of getting a head start. In regards to social capital and the idea of gaining a resource from social network, a head start was the experience of college level classes prior to freshman year. Many of the students came from inner city Detroit and were not active in AP (Advanced Placement/College) courses, and coming from poorer schools the AP courses available were probably not on the same level as AP courses outside of the city. Those more privileged students, out in the suburbs, have the social capital of AP courses that are indeed similar to college courses. AP courses allow for academic preparation but also give a social atmosphere that can inform students of what to expect from professors and peers when in college. The AP course atmosphere also allows for students to have an outlook that positions them to enter college and to believe they will complete college. Taking an AP course is for college preparation and potential college credit which means the students enrolled are college bound. Courses lower than AP are not always occupied by students with ambition to attend college. What SUPER did was introduce the participants to college courses within a more close knit atmosphere similar to high school, allowing them to gain a better self perception prior to entering freshman year. The SUPER students were more likely to have been in high school courses with students less likely to aspire to attend college and teachers working to maintain economic norms which could negatively inform the students about what happens next in life. According to Jay MacLeod “schools socialize students to occupy roughly the same position in the class structure as that of their parents” (1995, p. 13). Based on the answers to several questions the majority of

participants of SUPER had a self perception that they were not prepared for college and in turn would have a very difficult time working to complete college or they would not finish. Having the college level courses the summer before allowed these students to begin to believe in themselves thanks to not only the academic preparation but the social environment from both peers and professors. The social network gave the students a better self perception prior to beginning MSU. Because a majority of the participants felt that SUPER gave them a head start, something they did not have prior to college, it seems that getting to students of this demographic prior to the first day of classes would aid in their transition and potentially in their retention. It is very important for students to be in an environment where people like themselves believe that they can attend and complete college.

The professors of summer session SUPER were chosen by Ms. Sanford with particular requirements in mind. Ms. Sanford wanted professors who could teach small classes, be interactive with the students and would reach out to the students; particularly the ones having trouble. Once a week the professors would get together with Ms. Sanford to discuss the progress of all the students. Being a professor for SUPER required dedication which participants stated the faculty did indeed have. Professors would even have office hours in the dorm in the evening. Being easily available to the students makes these professors for purposes of this study to be considered professors in “residence,” not specifically living with the students but made available at hours most professors are not. The professors took initiative to make sure the students were following in class and could do the work. These professors became a resource thanks to the social network of SUPER which introduced the students to these professors. SUPER students have invested time into taking courses and in return investment in their professors which gave them a resource some students may not receive until second or third year in college—a professor

that is truly dedicated to each student.

It cannot be securely concluded from this data that social capital directly aided in retaining the select participants. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that aspects of SUPER worked to give the participants social capital and resources they did not have before the program. Acclimation, and a head start are themes that were positively referenced by a majority of the participants which reiterates the importance of these aspects of the program in their academic career at MSU. Professors in “residence” was an aspect not specifically referenced as a theme but social networks created this resource. After being removed from the SUPER program for years these participants still remembered the ease of their transition due to the social capital the program instilled within them. Perhaps this specified importance shows that these two themes and one concept, and in turn social capital, had some relation to the participants’ success at MSU.

Academic Integration

Academic integration defined by Vincent Tinto is the connection of students to the intellectual life on campus. SUPER was able to assimilate the participants into the academic components of MSU. This came about with college classes, interaction and comfort with advisors, mentors, faculty and Ms. Sanford (staff). Based on data from the interviews the participants felt comfortable with their academic atmosphere and felt that they could find their way to resources to help them academically.

The subtheme of “Classes as the Same” proved that for the twelve participants the majority felt as though the classes they took during the summer of SUPER were the same as the classes they took during regular semesters. The expectations of the professors were the same as well. Being able to work in a class atmosphere the same as what MSU offers year round allowed

for the SUPER students to believe that they can indeed do the work that is required of them. Attaining passing grades in one's first college course ever would be reassuring and could make the transition into fall semester that much easier. For a bridge program to be able to give the students an understanding of what college life will be like, the program must do its best to provide classes that are the same as those during regular semesters at the college. Being familiar with college courses prior to freshman year could aid in one's retention, especially if the course outcome was positive. Unlike the social capital aspect of taking college courses prior to freshman year, the academic integration aspect in this regard is discussing the academic preparation not so much on the social aspect of taking courses early. Taking these summer courses are also a way to gain social capital. This experience with the core of academia allows for the academic integration Tinto promotes. With this integration comes persistence.

Another aspect to gaining academic integration would be being able to interact comfortably with the people who teach, advise and mentor the students. SUPER was able to encourage this interaction, and from such the students learned how to gain access to resources necessary for academic progression during their college career. The data showed that the participants gained support from all parts of the staff of SUPER and a majority also believed that the staff was influential in their academic success. From the interaction with staff the students were able to seek advice, guidance, encouragement, one-on-one support, and they experienced the investment the staff had in the students. Staff was even there when students simply needed personal and social support; this compares to the strong feelings the participants had about staff being like family. Having such a connection to the staff allowed the SUPER participants to gain knowledge of how to go about interacting with future staff in their academic career. This action would allow for academic integration for the students.

Academic integration is not simply the experience of sitting in a classroom taking notes, but the experience of interacting with professors and any other staff that is needed for advancement. Nevertheless, experiencing the lectures and assignments of a college course prior to beginning college also aids in the integration process. Seeking help is a prime example of initiating the road to academic integration as well; it adds the component of more experienced students and academic staff. With positive academic experiences the students are more likely to persist. This research can conclude that academic integration was a major component to the SUPER program and based on the positive acknowledgements of such a concept by the participants, along with prior research, academic integration assists in retaining students.

Social Integration

A key part of the college experience is learning from, interacting with, and experiencing new things with peers. To be social could be viewed as synonymous with college. Just as academic integration increases student persistence, so too does social integration. In fact research has shown that having both academic and social integration makes persistence more likely than having only one (Tinto, 2006). The majority of participants reported that they received support from peers. A majority gained some form of social confidence. And a majority found a second family in the SUPER students and staff. These participants overall began social integration during the program giving them a better chance of being retained.

Having friends enables one to not only have social companionship but also have support. The participants in SUPER expressed extreme positivity towards their peers. During a summer session which some labeled as difficult, these participants had one another. They bonded because they were in the same situation and perhaps with similar backgrounds. They were not alone and they all worked hard together. This summer session enabled the participants to begin their social

integration into the MSU community.

A majority of the participants spoke to the idea that SUPER gave them social confidence. Having confidence in one's ability to communicate with others assists one's endeavors to socially integrate into the college community. The confidence came with simply having a group of people one could relate to and ask for help if necessary. Having such strong relationships when beginning a new chapter in life could promote the creation of more relationships and an increase of confidence in personal and social interactions. Participants also mentioned that they learned how to talk to people who could potentially help them; this will only aid in a student's road to graduation. Students even gained the confidence of speaking publicly; this is essential for those class presentations and something as simple as asking a question in a room of 100 people. SUPER encouraged students to develop the ability to socialize on a personal and professional level. Having social confidence helped in the procurement of social integration.

There were several subthemes where the idea of family was of primary subject. SUPER, through peers and staff, created a familial atmosphere for the participants. Participants saw an extended family in SUPER and felt unity due to feeling close to one another. This family was not only for the summer session but it extended into the rest of the participants' time in college. It is not simply the fact that SUPER students found themselves in a familial social environment during the summer but that those persons would be there throughout their time at MSU. This type of connection with students and staff begins and further enables the process of social integration. Because SUPER was made up of smaller groups of students, creating this type of atmosphere is probably easier. This creates a decision for universities in their outreach to students; do you go for a smaller number to create a familial atmosphere aiding in social integration, or do you select a large number in order to reach as many students as possible. In

supportive services programs the number of students in programs could create a major dilemma. With the responses the participants gave about what the SUPER family created for them it is clear that social integration occurred and thus aided in their retention.

Social integration can be gained by numerous types of interactions with peers and staff. For SUPER social integration occurred through support from peers, healthy interactions due to social confidence and the experience of a familial environment. As mentioned with academic integration, social integration has been found to help with retention on its own but a student will do even better with both academic and social integration. It can be concluded that SUPER was able to begin the process of social integration and even lay solid ground for continued integration during MSU regular semesters.

Academic Self-Efficacy

One of SUPER's major goals was to increase both social and academic confidence for the participating students. Academic confidence aids in the rise of self-efficacy, specifically academic self-efficacy. It would be important to assist students in achieving higher levels of academic self-efficacy, especially those students who had less success in high school. SUPER was able to complete this task; something referenced by three quarters of the participants.

Academic self-efficacy was increased for the SUPER participants by learning study skills and improving knowledge of writing a paper through course work. Having these new skills is considered part of the definition of academic self-efficacy in the literature. Because of this new knowledge the participants felt more confident in their academic abilities. Also succeeding in SUPER gave some students more academic self-efficacy, which relates back to what the literature says about successful events increasing one's academic confidence, thus their academic self-efficacy (Mattern & Shaw, 2010). For example, one student even said "I can do this" when it

came to their new found academic confidence.

SUPER was comprised of classes and exercises that helped increase the participants' confidence in their academic abilities. Due to these aspects of the program the idea of academic self-efficacy became a part of the positive influences of the program. Academic self-efficacy has been proven to positively influence a student's retention in college.

Limitations of Study

There are some limitations to this study. They begin with the literature review; there is a lack of literature looking at specific retention programs and analyzing how and why these programs worked. There is also not very much research done on African Americans and retention. There was research done on how high school grade point average and SAT/ACT scores relate to retention of students but there were inconsistencies in findings. The research done was honest in their inconclusive determinations. Nevertheless, the program in this research looks for participants with lower GPAs and SAT/ACT scores in order to work with them in their adjustment to a more rigorous academic environment.

At first I thought there would be a major limitation to this research due to the sampling. As mentioned before the prior director of SUPER, Betty Sanford, was the only source to gain access to participants. The IRB made it clear that I could not look at the rosters on my own, but that Ms. Sanford would have to pick the people and contact them prior to me receiving their information. Unfortunately, the rosters were not placed and Ms. Sanford had to choose names from her memory. I thought this would be a limitation because the only people chosen were SUPER participants who Ms. Sanford remembered; this could mean they stood out more than the others most likely in a more positive or negative way. She probably also picked those participants who would most likely be willing to help with this type of research. This would

include those people who were eager to talk about SUPER positively or negatively, and besides a few comments by participants all comments about SUPER were positive. Nevertheless, this type of sampling can be categorized as those who were exemplar. Looking at the successful students allows for a better understanding of what worked for SUPER and in turn produced productive college students. Another aspect I initially thought to be limiting due to the selected few is that they all finished the SUPER program and they all graduated from MSU—they were exemplar. Some participants made reference to a select few of SUPER participants who did not finish the program. If I were to have talked to these students the comments may have been less positive due to frustration, and data may not have been as complete simply because these participants did not experience the full extent of SUPER. Despite an initial consideration of the sample selection as limiting, it turns out that the sample selection makes for a more well rounded report on SUPER.

As previously stated these participants are a select few. The sample size may be proven good for data saturation, but it is still a small sample. I was unable to gain insight on all the years of SUPER, or even a well supported view of one or two years of the program. The program had the same shell for the years after 1994, but each session would incorporate different students and staff creating different dynamics for each year. These dynamics would best be found by using a much larger sample. The Noel-Levitz award SUPER received in 2003 showed that the years the evaluators reviewed were ones of success; this award came in a year after the 1994 changes but the selected sessions were not duplicated the years after 2003. This means that the data collected is not an accurate overview of the sessions the award evaluated, because most of the participants were in the 2000s.

There were 12 participants in this study and eight of them were from Detroit, Michigan. The remaining four were from different cities with no overlap. This places a limitation on the

generalizability of the findings in this research because Detroit is a distinct city with distinct educational problems. What may work for these participants may not work for individuals from a rural environment, which was not present in the residency of the participants. If one wanted to create a program similar to SUPER for inner city African Americans using the findings of this research it would not be a limitation but a great asset.

Other demographics of the participants did not correspond to the defining aspects of SUPER participants. SUPER set out to help students who were first generation and had economic hardships, however when collecting this information from those participants who I interviewed the findings were inconsistent. As I defined in my literature review, first generation means that neither of one's parents attended college. Nonetheless, only five participants were first generation by this definition, the majority but not all of the remaining participants had parents who went to college but did not finish. A major insight a student of parents who went to college gain is the insight that they too can do it and knowledge of how to go about completing the task of higher education. If parents never finished, it seems that not only do their children lose any potential insight into how to complete school, but they also experience the knowledge that their parents could not finish their undergraduate education. Perhaps first generation should be extended to incorporate those students whose parents may have entered college but never finished.

The other demographic that did not correlate to the requirements of SUPER was socio-economic status. Three participants self reported that at the time they entered college their family was of the lower class. The majority reported their socio-economic status as middle class and two reported as upper-middle class. SUPER does not stipulate what class one must belong to in order to be a part of the program, and the stipulation of economic hardship could also occur in

families that are not specifically lower class. Also self report from members of the family who are not primary in the household income could be incorrect. This self reporting creates another limitation. This research study has limitations but it is my belief that the findings outweigh these limitations.

Implications for Practice and Policy

A major point of change for the SUPER program suggested by the participants was to change the length of the program. Some participants simply wanted SUPER staff to continue to monitor the participants throughout their time at MSU—perhaps by keeping informed on the students’ grades and performance and in turn offering assistance. With this monitoring would come any necessary assistance the students needed in order to keep on track and focused. Participants thought the program should have been present not only during freshman year but also sophomore, junior and senior years. Another suggestion was for the program to be sure not to be overwhelming for the students, and obviously not as intense as the summer session. The idea of tapering off in program presence was presented during interviews. With this knowledge from participants who still managed to graduate, it seems important to take their suggestion when implementing a program such as SUPER. In retention and bridge programs, the program must not simply prepare the students for college and then disappear when college is in full effect. All but one of the students thought that the 1994 change of SUPER from only a summer session, to both summer session and freshman year was a positive change. One student thought the freshman year follow up was very helpful, yet the lack of assistance during sophomore year made him feel as though he was “thrown into the woods.” It seems that universities looking to assist students, like those in SUPER, should not only begin in the summer prior to first semester, but also allow for assistance throughout their time at the university.

The change in 1994 of reducing the number of SUPER students from 100 to 30 was considered positive for all twelve participants. It seems that the family atmosphere SUPER created, during the summer session and for some students for the remainder of their time in school, was made possible by the small number of students in the program. Everyone knew everyone else, and they were able to create a familial bond within the group. The staff was also able to know everyone by name and give one-on-one attention as needed and requested. There were no interviews from those participants prior to 1994, which means that it is not conclusive that a family atmosphere can only be created with a small group of students. Nevertheless, the participants have spoken, and for them a small group of students was more beneficial. This could mean that universities need to have these types of programs with smaller numbers. Or it could simply mean that a large group of students in such programs should be broken down into smaller groups with their own staff to encourage the familial dynamic. This larger group would allow for the institutions to reach more students.

All of the participants but one stated that SUPER better prepared them for college than their high schools did. Some even went on to say that they felt an advantage over peers from their high school who entered MSU at the standard time of fall semester freshman year. They not only felt prepared due to academic help but they also felt prepared socially—the primary components of college life. With this information gained from a group of students who had lower HSGPAs and SAT/ACT scores it seems important for universities that accept students of this caliber to pay attention to efforts that improve a student's college preparation. Policy wise perhaps universities should implement programs like SUPER for all students with academic credentials at a certain level lower than the university average. This is not simply important on the student level, but financially as well. It costs universities more to recruit new students than it

does to retain current students. If university admissions is going to take a chance on this type of student, then the administration should go all the way in helping these students reach academic success at their institution. These students lack social capital necessary for college life and programs like SUPER are geared towards increasing that social capital prior to freshman year.

Retention programs should most likely begin prior to freshman year in order to promote acclimation to campus and a head start academically and socially. The summer should incorporate university classes that are the same as those that are administered during the regular semesters. The staff for these programs should be individuals who will not simply instruct or advise but will invest in the students and feel comfortable being considered a part of an academic family. The program should provide classes that promote communication, literacy, verbal and non verbal skills, or even workshops to help the students with communicating with peers and staff at the university level. And in order to promote an increase in academic self-efficacy the staff must be dedicated enough to work with the students as needed in order to provide successful outcomes during the session prior to freshman year.

Future Research

When analyzing the data in this research it became obvious that the SUPER program was promoting social capital to students who had little to none. Based on the participants' interview responses some of the ways in which social capital was gained came to the forefront. This also occurred with aspects of academic and social integration and also academic self-efficacy. Nonetheless, there should be more research on what tools and techniques can best promote social capital, academic self-efficacy and academic and social integration. Gaining such knowledge can only better inform universities about what their retention efforts should look like.

Another form of research that should occur, which some researchers have already called for, is internal research on retention programs. Many retention programs do not record and analyze their data on the progress or lack of progress of their students. Even further still, these programs are not publishing their efforts and resulting outcomes. Universities are not all the same, so gaining insight from many different universities can help inform those that are similar. It can also allow for comparison of universities with different composition, to see what the differences are between each group of students. Along with this review of outcomes there should also be a breakdown of the program participants by gender and race to find any differences and gain insight to any specific needs of such groups. The literature already points out that there are differences, particularly between races in regards to college retention.

Conclusion

SUPER was a positive, academically and socially influential experience for the majority of the interviewed participants. It was established that this program set out to help its students gain social capital. The way in which this social capital was gained, was by acclimating the students to campus and giving them a head start on academic and social life prior to their first semester. It implemented tools and techniques that promoted and increased both academic and social integration at MSU. SUPER also promoted academic self-efficacy by helping the students increase their academic confidence. These are the major ways in which SUPER was able to retain these select African American Michigan State University graduates.

CHAPTER SIX

A Recommendation

The following chapter is dedicated to introducing and recommending a bridge and retention program for incoming first generation, economically disadvantaged, lower academic credentialed and African American freshmen. Due to the findings of this research being from the words of African American students, I make this recommended program for such a group. Nevertheless, I think that the following program could be useful for all underrepresented students, particularly those on predominately white campuses. In spirit of Michigan State University, I have named this program Spartan Scholar. It could be adjusted to whatever mascot the university using the program has. I would like to add that this program originated in my career counseling course a few years ago in a group project. Together the group came up with a four year plan for students with some examples of what each year would entail; nevertheless what I am presenting in this chapter is much more extensive. One major difference is the incorporation of a summer session prior to freshman year. Spartan Scholar is designed to facilitate retention by communal support, the gain of social capital and academic self-efficacy through confidence building. The program will also promote social and academic integration.

Summer Session

The summer session of Spartan Scholar would occur the summer before freshman year having a duration of eight weeks. Prior to the students coming to the summer session they must be accepted into the program via an application process that would begin after their acceptance into the university. When a student is accepted into the Spartan Scholar he or she is then informed of the full requirements of the program from summer session through senior year. He or she must then accept or decline their acceptance into the program. During the application

process, those giving interviews would inform the applicants of the program requirements but would emphasize the potential success the students would have with the program assisting them. On the application and during the interviews it would be made evident how being an underrepresented person on a predominately white campus could hinder progress based on research conducted on these topics. This would be done to promote the program and what it can do for the prospective students. The summer session would be free for the students, including travel to and from the university, tuition, room and board. Depending on the size of the incoming group, incentives such as a free laptop, free course books and supplies, and a summer weekly stipend of a small yet substantial amount would be something to decide on. I think that if nothing else, the students should receive a voucher for course books and materials to the school bookstore for every semester the student is enrolled fulltime and is considered in good standing in the Spartan Scholar program.

Prior to the first day of the summer session the students who have accepted the requirements of the program will be given a career interest inventory in order for the program staff to pick the proper summer course in a subject the student would most identify with. The inventory would also guide both the student and their assigned advisor toward a subject for future academic major selection. A test to assess the level of math ability would also be given to the student to take before beginning summer session. Also prior to the first day the student would have a phone conversation with their assigned staff advisor to discuss their inventory and math assessment results and the student's own thoughts about future study. Before the students arrive for summer session, their course schedules would be created based on the information gained from tests and discussion. The students would have three classes, one being a required writing course, another being a math course at their ability level and the final course would be one of the

students' interests. That final course should be one the student is interested in and one that could help the student better determine what he or she would like to select as their major or what they do not wish to select.

The first two days of the summer session should be an orientation to the program, the campus and a meeting with the students' staff advisors. During orientation the students would be informed of the resources the program has, and the requirements of study hall, mentor meetings, advisor meetings and workshops. The SUPER program reduced its number of students to 30 from 100 and all the participants interviewed felt that it was a good alteration. I think, from personal experience, and from careful thought, that a group of 100 could be made productive. Perhaps this group of 100 should be broken down into cohorts of 20 based on the subjects of the students' final course selection. This would allow those interested in science or the humanities to be in a cohort together. This cohort would have some orientation events together; nonetheless there would still be a part of the orientation for the entire group. This cohort would also be placed in the same writing class if scheduling allows it. Cohort members would be in mentor groups together as well.

The required events would include the following: at least two study halls per week (study halls will be offered every night Sunday through Friday), one group mentor meeting a week (mentors are upperclassmen in the program and the groups will have no more than seven participants), two support groups per month (led by a professional or in training counselor and an upperclassman in the program with no more than 10-12 participants), meet with staff academic advisor twice in the eight weeks (discuss and decide on fall classes and a preliminary outline of their four year plan), and one office hours visit with one of their three professors. The workshops required would include the following: Adjusting to College Life, Scheduling College

Requirements, several workshops led by upperclassmen (Academic Expectations, Studying, Social Life, and a final workshop answering any questions that were submitted prior), and two final workshops, near the end of the summer session in order to have the content be fresh in the students' minds freshman year, Affording College/Ins and Outs of Financial Aid, and a short workshop on Packing for College. There will also be tutoring available, but it will not be required unless the student's advisor or the student requests it. A library visit will be required as well, perhaps through the writing class.

The summer session will end with a final banquet with student awards. Awards can be most outstanding student and professors of the course selected on interest can nominate students for an award based on their performance in the course. Sometime during the summer session a barbeque at a local park would also occur with activities for the students. There should also be an exit survey in order to assess the summer session and help with coordinating the next summer session. By the end of the eight weeks, students should be acclimated to the campus, feel comfortable asking for assistance from peers, mentors, advisors and professors, gain social capital and confidence in academic abilities due to success in the summer session and a feeling of both academic and social integration.

Freshman Year

Freshman year in Spartan Scholar would require attendance of six workshops which each one would be offered once a week for a month followed by the next workshop the following month. There are more than six options for workshops which mean some will overlap in a month, which could also mean that the students could finish their six workshops early. Because the workshops are on topics students need it would be encouraged for the students to attend as many as possible. Students must sign in at the end of the workshop. The workshops could be the

following: Majors and the Careers they Facilitate (with guest speakers from different careers), Tools for Academic Success (including study habits and time management), Managing Stress (which would only be offered once a month to be sure that it is available throughout the year), Scheduling College and Major Requirements (offered once a month), Academic Etiquette, Optimum Utilization of Advisors, Professors, Teaching Assistants and Upperclassmen, How to Talk to Parents about College, How to Manage Exams, Writing Workshop (once a month), Primary, Secondary and Inappropriate Sources, and A Senior's Advice (four graduating seniors with different majors discuss their freshman year and anything they would do different). There are 11 workshop options here, advisors should sit down with their students after summer session and discuss which workshops would be most productive for the student.

Students will also have to meet in a mentoring group with people from their cohort with two juniors or seniors as the mentors (no more than ten freshmen per group). It would also be required that the students meet one on one with their same staff advisor from summer session at least three times freshman year, to discuss progress and reassess major selection and adjust their four year plan. There would also be optional resources. Study rooms dedicated to specific subjects, such as engineering, writing and math would be set aside Sunday through Friday at the same time for an hour with an upperclassman versed in the subject—with a group of 100 students, having upperclassmen who are also a part of the Spartan Scholar run these sessions will not require a big commitment for the upperclassmen individually. Tutoring will also be made available to those students advisors see need it, or those students who request it. It is important for these students to be able to have someone or a group to talk to when times get difficult. At the beginning of the year students can sign up for several support groups administered by professional or in training counselors. It would be a good idea to have university graduate

students in the counseling, social work or psychology field to be a part of the Spartan Scholar program. These graduate students could be the designated counselors for this program allowing program students to sign up for one on one sessions. These graduate students should also conduct the support groups, groups such as the following: Women's Support Group, Ethnic Support Groups (Asian, Latino, African American), and a Social Anxiety Support Group and others. The program staff should also publicize the groups made available by the university counseling center. The study rooms and counseling options should be made available all four years of the program. At the end of freshman year along with sophomore and junior years there should be an exit survey to assess the year and help with coordinating that year for the next group.

Sophomore Year

Sophomore year in Spartan Scholar would require attendance of five workshops which each one will be offered once a week for a month followed by the next workshop the following month with some overlap just as in the freshman year. The major difference between this academic year and freshman year is that the staff will encourage extracurricular activities to help with social integration on campus. The students should be required to go to an organization fair for the university. Students should also go to a study abroad fair, and in order to continue to gain resources from the program, students should look more at summer study abroad, also to keep the students on track with requirements for graduating in four years. Students will see their advisors three times in the year to reassess progress and become more concrete on major selection. Monthly mentoring groups will also be required. Tutoring will be available, along with study rooms and counseling services.

The preliminary options for the five workshops are the following: Selecting Organizations and Activities, Taking Care of Yourself, Financial Success (handling money and

credit) and Steps to Take before Next Year. In addition repeats from freshman year: Majors and the Careers they Facilitate, Scheduling College and Major Requirements (once a month), Writing Workshop (once a month), Managing Stress (once a month) and A Senior's Advice (on their sophomore year). Once again advisors and students will decide on the best workshop selections. Sophomore year is the year that many students must make a decision on their major and the steps they must take to finish in their fourth year.

Junior Year

Junior year in Spartan Scholar would require attendance of four workshops which each one will be offered once a week for a month followed by the next workshop the following month with some overlap just as in the freshman and sophomore years. Junior year will require a visit to a career site in the second semester, which means that the students must decide on the site in the first semester with assistance of their staff academic advisor. By junior year the students should be set in their academic major choice and have a good idea of what is next for them after attaining their undergraduate degree. If they are still unsure about their future this is the year to determine what is next. The students are also required to meet with their staff academic advisor three times in the year. There is no required mentoring groups after sophomore year, but the juniors are required to participate as a mentor either during the year or apply for being a mentor during the upcoming summer session for the new incoming group. They also must help with the study rooms; leading ones that fit their major selection.

Optional aspects are the study rooms and counseling services. The staff will encourage students to do internships for their future career; some may be required to complete one because of their major. For those students going on to a graduate degree there will be GRE/LSAT/MCAT preparation courses offered in the fall and spring. The requirement for these courses is that the

student must attend all classes. The classes are free to the students but students must sign a contract before beginning the course due to the high cost of the classes. In order to avoid interference with university classes and other required and optional events of the program these courses will be offered on the weekend. Students should begin taking their graduate school standardized tests the second semester of junior year. Spartan Scholar will give students a voucher for their first test taken to help with the burden of cost. Students should also work with their advisors to decide on what graduate schools they would like to apply to in the fall and what requirements the schools have. They should also consider what jobs they will apply to in their senior year.

The choice of workshops are the following: Internships in Staple Subjects, Interviewing Strategies, Resume and Cover Letters, Strategies for Searching for Graduate Schools, Managing Stress (once a month), Writing Workshop (once a month), Majors and Careers they Facilitate, and A Senior's Advice (on what junior year entailed and what to do senior year). Junior year is very important, students are set in their major and thinking about what will happen after college. This is also a year to do internships and study abroad. It also needs to be a year for giving back to the program, which can add to their applications for graduate school and jobs.

Senior Year

Senior year in Spartan Scholar would require attendance of three workshops which each one will be offered once a week for a month followed by the next workshop the following month with some overlap just as in freshman, sophomore and junior years. It would be required that the seniors meet with their staff advisors at least twice and as needed throughout the year. Seniors will be required to mentor freshmen and sophomores. They will also need to facilitate some of

the workshops for freshmen and sophomores. The seniors would also have to complete an exit interview with their advisor to give the program feedback on its procedures and events.

Optional aspects to the program during senior year include the study rooms and counseling services. If applying to graduate school, a voucher is given for one application. Advisors will help with graduate school and job applications when asked. In the fall students can take GRE/LSAT/MCATs prior to graduate school application deadline—if it is their first test a voucher is given. At the end of the year prior to graduation a senior banquet with awards will be given for the program. Awards can be given for honors graduates, people with outstanding service, and most outstanding mentor voted by the underclassmen. A banquet program which, could be more like a senior yearbook, can publish what is next for each student (job or school). One senior from each cohort, voted by other seniors, will give a short speech on their experience in the program and at the university.

The workshops available for senior year will be the following: Application to Graduate (required), Searching for Graduate Schools and Jobs, Applying to Graduate Schools and Jobs, Interviewing Strategies, Resume and Cover Letters, Managing Stress (once a month), and What to Expect in Graduate School (Spartan Scholar Alumni come in to discuss Graduate, Medical and Law School). Hopefully the majority of the students will graduate in four years. If Spartan Scholars do not graduate in four years, the fourth year would be similar to junior year and the fifth year will incorporate senior year requirements and activities. This program is extensive but I believe it could increase the retention of underrepresented students on predominately white campuses by increasing social capital, academic self-efficacy and social and academic integration.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What about SUPER or who from SUPER was most influential in your academic progress?
2. Tell me what you think SUPER gave you that you would not have had and has helped you in your college experience.
3. What was it like living and learning with other students in similar situations like your own? Both during the summer session and your freshman year.
4. How were the summer classes you took during SUPER similar to or different from the classes you enrolled in your freshman year at Michigan State University?
5. What was your impression of the faculty working with SUPER?
6. If there was one thing you could have changed about SUPER what would it have been?
7. What did the support system consist of for the students of SUPER?
8. How did SUPER influence your self-confidence both socially and academically?
9. When the summer session of SUPER was over did you feel acclimated to the campus?
10. Tell me about your high school experience and how it prepared or did not prepare you for college life. Do you think SUPER better prepared you for college?
11. Tell me about your familial academic history.
12. What was your family's economic status when you entered college?
13. What is your ethnic background?
14. When you entered college did you live in a rural, suburban or city environment? What is the name of the place where you resided?
15. How long did it take you to finish your bachelor's degree? Do you think it would have taken longer if you did not participate in SUPER?
16. What is your current occupation? What are your future goals?
17. When SUPER was offered as an opportunity how did you receive this program option?
18. SUPER used to have about 100 participants but later in its tenure it lowered its number to around 30 participants, what are your impressions about this change?
19. SUPER used to only be an 8 week summer program, but it altered its duration by incorporating freshman year, what are your impressions about this change?
20. Please express any other experiences or impressions you had about SUPER.

Appendix B

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Study Title: The Evaluation of a Retention Program: An analysis of efforts to retain underrepresented students on the campus of a public predominately white mid-western university from 1995-2006

Researcher and Title: LaToya T. Brackett, Doctoral Candidate

Department and Institution: African American and African Studies, Michigan State University

Address and Contact Information: 300 East Main St. Apt 220, Lansing, MI 48933. Email: bracket9@msu.edu

1. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:

- You are being asked to participate in a research study of a retention program entitled, Summer University Program-Excellence Required (SUPER) which operated on the campus of Michigan State University from 1988 to 2006.
- You have been selected as a possible participant in this study because you either participated in the program or helped with the administration of the program. You may also have been a part of the administration of the College Achievement Admissions Program (CAAP). Your name was found through the files given by Betty Sanford and by Betty Sanford personally.
- From this study, the researchers hope to learn how SUPER aided in the retention of first generation and low economic status African American CAAP Students at Michigan State University. The researcher wishes to learn what aspects of the program were related to the students' academic progression.
- Your participation in this study will take about one hour. The researcher may follow-up with clarifying questions.
- If you are under 18, you cannot participate in this study.

2. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

- Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no.
- You may change your mind at any time and withdraw.
- You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

3. COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY:

- You will not receive money or any other form of compensation for participating in this study.

4. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher LaToya T. Brackett, 300 East Main St. apt# 220, Lansing, MI 48933, bracket9@msu.edu, 607.262.6123. (Email is best) Principal Investigator contact information:

Matthew Diemer, 513D Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48823,
diemerm@msu.edu, 517-355-6684.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

5. DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by beginning this phone interview.

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