

# Inadentefikan Chinatsaga ni' Kumontribubuyi i Kinaguan Tinaka' Siha para i Lalåhen CHamoru gi i Unibetsedåt Guåhan: Identifying Hurdles Contributing to Achievement Gaps of CHamoru Males at the University of Guam

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## **The Problem**

The University of Guam is a public, open admissions, accredited, four-year, land grant institution (Western Association of Schools and Colleges [WASC], 2016). The institution started in 1952 as the College of Guam and presently offers 34 undergraduate bachelor degree programs and 14 graduate programs (WASC, 2016). The UOG mainly serves postsecondary students from the island of Guam and throughout Micronesia (WASC, 2016). The student population for UOG is approximately 4,000 (WASC, 2016).

At UOG, the achievement gap among CHamoru males is of notable concern (A. Leon Guerrero, personal communication, May 2, 2019). The Office of Institutional Effectiveness [OIE], University of Guam [UOG], 2019) provided an analysis of retention and graduation of first time, full time freshmen cohorts and compared the overall cohorts to the CHamoru male student population for the period 2009-2017:

**Retention.** The University of Guam tracks Fall-to-Fall retention rates of full time, first time freshmen cohorts in fall semesters. These rates are further disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, and academic program for further analysis. The calculated Fall-to-Fall retention rates for the 2009 through 2017 cohorts range from a low of 67% for the 2009 cohort to a high of 77% for the 2014 cohort and with the most recent rate of 73% for the 2017 cohort. The overall average for the nine cohorts is 73%. When the cohorts are disaggregated by gender the overall average retention rate for male cohorts is 70%, three (3) percentage points lower than the overall retention rate. Further disaggregating the male cohorts by ethnicity and gender results in a fall to fall average retention rate of 65% for Chamorro males which is eight (8) percentage points lower than the overall average retention rate and five (5) percentage points lower than the overall average retention rate for male cohorts.

**Student Success (6-year Graduation Rates).** The University of Guam tracks graduation rates of full time, first time freshmen cohorts in fall semesters. These rates are further disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, and academic program for further analysis. The calculated 6-year graduation rates for the 2009 through 2012 cohorts range from a low of 27% for the 2009 cohort to a high of 35% for the 2011 cohort and with the most recent graduation rate of 33%. The overall average graduation rate for the four

cohorts is 31%. When the cohorts are disaggregated by gender the average graduation rate for male cohorts is 26%, which is five (5) percentage points lower than the overall graduation rate. Further disaggregating the cohorts by ethnicity and gender results in a graduation rate of 23% for Chamorro males which is eight (8) percentage points lower than the overall average graduation rate and three (3) percentage points lower than the overall average retention rate for male students.

**Matriculation.** The University of Guam tracks annual retention rates from the second year through to the sixth year of full time, first time freshmen cohorts each fall semester and disaggregates these rates by gender, ethnicity, and academic program for further analysis. An analysis of the retention rate of the percent that continue to the 6th year for the 2009 through 2013 cohorts reveals that the overall average is 63%. Further disaggregating the cohorts by gender shows a fall to fall retention rate of male students at 25%, a staggering 38 percentage points lower than the overall continuation rate. Further disaggregating the cohorts by ethnicity and gender shows a fall to fall average continuation rate of 26% for Chamorro males, which is 37 percentage points lower than the overall average retention rate, but one (1) percentage point *higher* than the overall average 6th year continuation rate for male students. The overall average stop out rate by the sixth year is 37% compared to 63% for Chamorro male cohorts (OIE, UOG, 2019).

May 2019 Student Success Indicators	Overall Cohort Averages	Male Cohort Averages	Chamorro Males Cohort Averages
Fall to Fall Retention Rates (cohorts 2009-2017)	73%	70%	65%
% Graduated in 6 Years (cohorts 2009 – 2012)	31%	26%	23%
% Continued to 6th Year (cohorts 2009-2013)	63%	25%	26%

Source: Certified Fall Semesters Enrollment and Certified Graduation Records; Colleague; UOG.ENR, ACAD.CRREDENTIALS

Moreover, highlighting the issue, a study that was conducted on the prediction of freshmen to sophomore student retention at UOG between Fall 2006 and Spring 2008 semesters showed that “male Guam-based Chamorro freshmen, and freshmen from the Federated States of Micronesia and Palau, are at unusually high risk for stopping out and/or losing academic good standing” (Smith, 2008, p. 1). Many contributing factors lead to student retention or non-retention in the higher education context (Smith, 2008). Some examples of dependable and established predictors

include the availability of financial resources and subsistence, standardized test scores, family's background regarding higher education, and the student's ethnicity, sex, and social economic condition (Smith, 2008). Thus, the achievement gap among the CHamoru and FSM male population is a growing concern for UOG.

Further commenting on the achievement gap of CHamoru males at UOG, Smith stated:

I'm also wondering how CHamoru males define masculinity, and what the role of scholarship is, in such definitions. If, for example, teen CHamoru males grow up believing that CHamoru men tend to be relatively less skilled at academics and that education is not part of what makes CHamoru men special or appealing as men, their beliefs — which can lead to reduced academic motivation and confidence — may become self-fulfilling prophecies. Social psychologist Claude Steele refers to this as "stereotype threat." Stereotypes are often untrue, but if people in the group so labeled *believe* those stereotypes, then that can be enough to hold them back.

Dr. Gerhard Schwab (in Social Work) completed a dissertation that addressed CHamoru masculinities. It would be very helpful for us to talk with him.

Finally, I have spoken with colleagues who believe that CHamoru families often assign less importance to academic success than do Filipino families on Guam. This leads me to another question. Given recurring problems in Guam public schools (e.g., not enough textbooks or qualified teachers), are CHamoru families less likely to compensate (e.g., with tutoring; with admonitions to their children, to work harder) than are (for example) Filipino families? If so, would fewer compensations uniquely affect CHamoru *male* teens (in comparison with CHamoru females)? (K. Smith, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

CHamoru males struggle to seek and complete higher education for a variety of internal and external reasons. This research study will not close the aspiration gap; however, it may help to identify reasons for the gap, which continues to disempower the young men of Guam. The study explored the hurdles influencing the academic achievement of CHamoru males within the postsecondary education environment. The analysis of the data was critical in ascertaining if the aforementioned factors impacted the achievement gap of CHamoru males in college.

Interestingly, women, more than men, are making tremendous educational advancements in earning a degree (Center for Community College Engagement, 2014; Marrs, 2016). At UOG, men are more likely to stop out or withdraw from courses for a number of reasons such as work schedule conflicts and lack of interest in the course (Smith, 2008). Specifically, Guam-based CHamoru male freshmen as well as freshmen from other Micronesian islands are likely to stop out, lose academic good standing, or withdraw from their courses (Smith, 2008). On the other hand, Smith (2008) corroborated that Filipino female freshmen are more likely to advance to sophomore status, to maintain good academic standing, and to remain enrolled in individual courses.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

This research study investigated the achievement gap of CHamoru male students at the post-secondary level, the roadblocks leading to academic achievement, and their perspectives about success. Hence, three research questions guided this study:

1. What are the hurdles influencing the achievement gap of the CHamoru male student population at the University of Guam?
2. What are the attitudes of CHamoru men toward seeking a higher education?
3. What effective interventions and programs can UOG implement to support CHamoru male students to persist and complete a college degree program?

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings from this study provided a better understanding of how UOG can help to improve the educational experiences, persistence, and success of CHamoru male students in the higher learning landscape. In addition, the retention rates of UOG among the CHamoru male population may see significant improvement. Further, the study provided valuable information to UOG on the needs of CHamoru male students when they enter higher education. Resolving the achievement gap of this group may help the Guam community have effective and efficient CHamoru male leaders as future administrators and prospective civic leaders.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study draws on theoretical frameworks from three disciplines: sociology, education, and psychology. For the sociology frame, this study builds on literature concerning Guam's culture and the concept of masculinity. For the education frame, this study examines the achievement gap at the college level and the barriers that prevent CHamoru males from successfully completing a degree. The psychology frame is incorporated through a focus on motivational theory and attitudes toward a college education.

### **Social Factors**

In CHamoru culture, men traditionally assumed roles in the community serving as chiefs, spiritual leaders, or combatants (Sanchez, 1991). In ancient Chamorro society, young men and boys were valued for their skills and unique talents (Cunningham, 1992). They had mentors (Cunningham, 1992); they learned in a supportive community (Rogers, 2011). During the United States' naval period, the brutal Japanese occupation, and during post-war Guam, CHamoru men displayed a strong sense of a spirit of patriotism through enlistment into one of the United States Armed forces (Ballendorf, 1997; Untalan, 2016; Viernes, 2010). Military life and vocation was the choice for most CHamoru men on Guam (Untalan, 2016). In addition to fighting for their country and island through military affairs, CHamoru men also assumed political roles that shaped Guam's

political status in becoming an unincorporated Territory of the United States (Carano & Sanchez, 1969; Rogers, 2011).

As discussed, in Guam's history, Chamorro men engaged in and assumed critical and vital roles for the survival and protection of their family and island community. Although, evidence showed that Chamorro men exhibited courageous, valiant, and heroic qualities, assumptions about masculinity may be an impediment to the academic success of most males (Jackson & Dempster, 2009). Some males think that the elimination of scholastic pursuits is a manifestation of their manhood (Kimmel & Sommers, 2013), and that the pursuit of educational accomplishment is indicative of feminine behaviors (Kehler & Greig, 2005).

### **Educational Factors**

The achievement gap of college degrees in the United States is at a crossroads for many male students (Ross, Kena, Rathbun, KewalRamani, Zhang, Kristapovich, & Manning, 2012). A significant number of college male students in the United States continue to grapple in academic achievements (Marrs, 2016). To help bridge the gap between aspiration and attainment of a higher degree, the former First Lady, Michelle Obama, established The Reach Higher Initiative, in support of former President Obama's North Star ambitious goal (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The objective of North Star is that the United States of America produce the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by the year 2020 (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

On Guam, the achievement gap among CHamoru males is troubling for the University of Guam (Smith, 2008). Many contributing factors hinder CHamoru males from attaining a college degree such as work, family obligations and responsibilities, lack of motivation and confidence to attend college, and a lack of college readiness (A. Leon Guerrero, personal communication, May 2, 2019). Smith contended, "one hypothesis is that CHamoru males are particularly likely to have strongly competing commitments as wage-earners, which take time away from their studies. I don't know whether that's the case, but it's worth checking with relevant data" (K. Smith, personal communication, May 30, 2019). CHamoru male students at the University of Guam are at a high risk for stopping out and not completing a college degree (Smith, 2008).

### **Psychology Factors**

Motivation is described as "activation to action. Level of motivation is reflected in choice of courses of action, and in the intensity and persistence of effort" (Bandura, 1994, p. 2). An essential element to academic accomplishment and success in higher education is motivation (Sogunro, 2015). Motivation permeates every facet of educational behavior and performance (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). In terms of gender, research shows that female students are highly motivated in the academia context versus male students who have lower levels of motivation (Sax, 2008; Sheard, 2009). Student motivation in higher education is dependent on the choice that each learner will make (Pedescleaux, 2010).

At UOG, Leon Guerrero stated regarding the lack of motivation of CHamoru males, "I've observed those who really want to succeed despite their challenges and make it through their first semester and those who give up either because of their challenges and/or lack of motivation. With the non-traditional mature CHamoru males, their motivations and attitudes are more positive than

some of the younger Chamoru males” (A. Leon Guerrero, personal communication, May 2, 2019). Smith observed:

There's a lot of diversity among CHamoru young men, in terms of the importance they attach to their work at UOG, and the centrality it has in their lives. I have worked with many who are highly dedicated to the degrees and the careers they're pursuing. And in some freshman classes, I've also worked with young men who are feeling lost and inadequately prepared, and less motivated in part as a result. Feeling motivated requires both wanting something, and believing it is attainable. If they don't see doing well in college as attainable, they're not going to be motivated, no matter how much they want a college education and the opportunities that come with it (K. Smith, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

The theory of perceived self-efficacy is defined “as people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994, p. 1). A student’s attitude of successfully achieving and obtaining a college degree is dependent on his high level of self-efficacy (Conner, Skidmore, & Aagaard, 2012). On Guam, the once optimistic attitude that students had toward education has slowly dematerialized (Hendricks, 1990).

### **Methodology**

The contributors were selected using snowball sampling as the strategy. The researcher worked closely with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), UOG, to obtain a list of prospective contributors. Further, the researcher obtained the ten contributors through OIE, and asked other contributors for referrals until the contributor list was completed.

Ethical considerations in qualitative research are critical because, to some degree, the validity and reliability of a research study is dependent upon the ethical standards of the researcher (Merriam, 2002). In the data collection and throughout the research process, the confidentiality of each of the identities of the participants was kept private and secret (Creswell, 2007). Thus, the researcher did not identify the participants by name in any reports using information obtained from the interview, and that the confidentiality of a participant in this study will remain safe and secure. The researcher assigned all 10 participants with a pseudonym to keep the identities of the participants confidential and all demographic information was presented as aggregated information. Pseudonyms were used to mask and protect the identities of participants. Any identifying markers such as place of current employment were masked to further decrease the probability of identity.

The study employed a qualitative approach using a collective case study of 10 CHamoru males (18 years old and older) who had attended UOG for at least one semester between spring 2009 thru fall 2018 without re-enrollment for the spring 2019 semester. The use of a demographic survey and in-depth interviews were the means for the collection of data. The educational experiences of CHamoru males at UOG were described and explained in the responses of individual contributors

Participation was voluntary. The contributors could withdraw from the interview and study at any time during the interview without negative consequences. Further, the contributor could

decline to answer the survey or any questions that make the contributor uncomfortable. The risks associated with this study included retrieval of personal memories or conflict, time, loss, and physical or emotional fatigue. The researcher provided a referral listing of Guam Mental Health providers to contributors to help minimize any risk. The researcher would make follow up calls to the contributor to see if more support was needed.

The contributors were helped to understand that participation could be beneficial to them as well as others who face struggles in the education system since this purpose of this study is to improve educational achievement and success for CHamoru male college students. Information gained is intended to uncover insights in to the experience of CHamoru males in a higher education institution.

## **Findings**

The data for this study was collected in two segments. In the first segment, a demographic survey was completed by the contributors. The second segment consisted of recorded interviews with contributors each answering 16 questions. A general overview of the demographic characteristics of the 10 contributors is provided. Next, the findings of the face-to-face interviews with the study's contributors are presented. The findings were gathered and organized from the analysis of the transcriptions of the 10 recorded interviews and from research field notes taken during the interview process. The researcher utilized open coding and selective coding to identify emerging themes in the transcriptions and designate categories for these themes.

The contributors were CHamoru male students who attended the University of Guam between the years 2009-2018. The age of the contributors ranged between 19 and 35 years. At the time of stop out from UOG, five contributors were in good academic standing, four on academic probation, and one on academic dismissal. The data concerning college attendance and completion of male siblings showed that only one contributor had at least one male sibling start and complete a college degree program. Further, seven contributors highlighted that their male siblings, either older or younger, are not currently enrolled nor do they plan to pursue a college path. The other two contributors reported that they did not have any male siblings.

A general review of the themes that resulted from the in-depth face-to-face interviews with the 10 CHamoru male contributors relative to each of the three Research Questions is provided. The members of the study who were interviewed were nervous, and somewhat anxious, but at the same time willing to participate in the interviews and relate their responses. During the interviews, they expressed their individual perspectives with all seriousness, and with very little to no emotion. The contributors were assigned a pseudonym to help reveal his experiences in a more personal way. The following pseudonyms were assigned to the contributors: Hurao, Tano', Miget, Pedro, Puti'on, Quipuha, Maga'láhi, Anghet, Taga', and Matá'pang. Throughout this article, these pseudonyms will be used as their responses are uncovered and themes emerged.

### **Hurdles Impacting the Achievement Gap**

The interviews generated 155 coded responses addressing Research Question #1: What are the hurdles influencing the achievement gap of the CHamoru male student population at the University of Guam? The collected data emerged in three theme categories: (a) financial constraints, (b) lack of self-motivation, and (c) social distractions. The pertinent findings on the participants' financial constraints comprised 78 coded responses. The participants disclosed the

theme of financial constraints most often. Additionally, the data generated 29 coded responses for lack of self-motivation. For social distractions, 48 coded responses were reported.

### **Attitudes of Chamorro Men toward Higher Education**

The interviews generated 53 coded responses pertinent to addressing Research Question #2: What are the attitudes of CHamoru men toward seeking a higher education? Three principle themes surfaced for Research Question #2 from the coded participants' responses: (a) positive outlook, (b) perspectives on success, and (c) words of encouragement. The applicable findings of the theme of positive attitude toward higher education comprised of 23 coded responses. For the individual perspectives on what success means, 9 coded responses were noted. The findings for the words of encouragement theme consisted of 21 coded responses.

### **Support of Chamorro Male Students**

The interviews generated 55 coded responses pertinent to addressing Research Question #3: What effective interventions and programs can UOG implement to support CHamoru male students to persist and complete a college degree program? Two fundamental themes emerged for Research Question #3 from the coded participant's responses: (a) financial aid and (b) support programs. The relevant findings to the participant's response related to financial aid consisted of 35 coded responses. For the replies on the supporting programs theme, 20 coded responses were identified.

### **Insights, Discussion, and Recommendations**

The study explored the achievement gaps of CHamoru male students at the University of Guam. The focal point of the research study was to gain a better understanding of the social, educational, and psychological factors that impacted their achievement gap. The study was conducted in two phases: a survey and an individual, face-to-face, in-depth interview. The two components were used to collect data for this research study. Creswell (1998) discussed that open coding is the act of discovering emergent themes, allowing the researcher to form categories of information based on contributors' responses. Thus, the data collected during the interview process was analyzed through open, axial, and selective coding (Thorne, 2000). Insights were derived from the contributors' responses to the survey and interview questions. Finally, the researcher provides the connection of the literature and collected data, implications for practice as well as present general recommendations.

#### **Insights**

1. In the demographic survey, 100% of the contributors felt that higher education was important to them. At the same time, all the contributors said that their respective families expected them to pursue higher education. On Guam, familial support in any endeavor, including the pursuit of higher education, runs deep and strong. During the interviews, several contributors highlighted that their parents, grandparents, and other loved ones greatly supported their educational endeavors.

2. Significant responses from four contributors revealed that obligations to family, relatives, and extended relatives made finishing their college degree programs a challenge. On the other hand, six contributors said that commitments to family were in no way a threat to their finishing their degrees.
3. The demographic survey noted that 70% of the contributors highlighted that their high school education prepared them for a college degree. On the other hand, 30% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that their high school education did not prepare them for a college path.
4. The survey divulged that 100% of the contributors received support and encouragement for student achievement and college success from UOG faculty and staff. As far as student services and faculty interactions with students were concerned, the demographic survey revealed that 80% were satisfied, and on the other hand, 20% were not satisfied.
5. Based on the demographic survey, 70% of the contributors recognized and reported that outside distractions such as clubbing, bars, and parties hindered and interfered with their completing a degree, whereas 30% of the contributors said that distractions were not a problem to seeking a college degree.
6. One of the factors that impacted the educational achievement gap of CHamoru males at the college level proved to be financial constraints. Four contributors reported that they were on the *Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA)* to help fund their higher education. Interestingly, the demographic survey reported that 50% of the contributors responded that due to financial problems, they needed to seek employment rather than continue with their higher education. For instance, one contributor said that was a major reason why he didn't finish his degree program at UOG and that he feared being in debt with student loans. On the other hand, 50% mentioned that financial setbacks were not an issue for them continuing with their education at UOG. Several contributors expressed that family members such parents, grandparents paid for their college education while they attended UOG. Also, two contributors highlighted that the G.I. bill paid their tuitions and other related expenses.
7. The survey disclosed that 90% of the contributors preferred to earn a college degree than to join military service. For instance, one contributor reported that although he comes from a family with military background, greater incentive to enroll in school was of utmost importance.
8. The personal interviews revealed that 100% of the CHamoru male contributors showed a positive attitude toward obtaining a college degree. Several contributors saw the personal benefits that would result because of a higher education. For instance, one contributor said that he enjoyed the educational experience that he received at UOG. Further, the positive attitude was reflected in the contributors' responses that they would one day return to UOG. One contributor, who initially

said all he wanted to do was have fun in life and play games, had a change in attitude when he mentioned that one day he would return to college to complete his degree.

9. During the in-depth interviews, the 10 contributors expressed their personal views on the meaning of success. At the same time, 100% of the contributors felt that holding a college degree is in some respects beneficial, the attainment of a degree is not the only way to success.
10. Of interest to note, the contributors offered words of encouragement to both the present and future CHamoru male students aspiring a college degree. These words of encouragement reflected their positive attitude toward a higher education. For instance, one contributor urged, “just do it. Get that education” (Matã’pang, p. 5). Another contributor encouraged to “make the most of it” (Hurao, p. 5).
11. Responses from the contributors highlighted two important ways in which UOG can help support CHamoru male students. One way is through financial aid such as scholarships and grants aimed specifically to help finance the higher education of Pacific Islanders. Another aspect that UOG can do to aid CHamoru male students is by providing good customer service to students. For instance, one contributor mentioned that an office gave him the runaround and that he was frustrated with the system.

### **Discussion of Results**

In this research study, the phenomenon of the factors related to the achievement gap of CHamoru male students at UOG was approached using three disciplines: sociology, education, and psychology. Taking this three-framework step approach not only may add to the first-year college retention and diversity literature but also may begin to develop a wide understanding of what is needed to help close the achievement gap affecting the overall college success of present and future CHamoru male students at the college level.

Historically, CHamoru males have played a huge part in military service through their participation and enlistments (Ballendorf, 1997; Untalan 2016; Viernes, 2010). Military service was a vocation of choice for many CHamoru males on the island of Guam (Untalan, 2016). Interestingly, however, according to the data generated from the demographic survey and the interviews, 90% of 21st century American CHamoru male contributors for this study preferred the college path versus enlistment into military service. For example, one contributor admitted, “it’s more pressure going to college just because of what my family was expecting” (Quipuha, p. 3). Matã’pang acknowledged, “I never really thought about joining the military. I thought about joining college” (Matã’pang, p. 4).

The concept of masculinity stressed the idea that the display of masculine traits and behavior by men is opposed to educational accomplishment and a display of feminine behaviors (Kehler & Greig, 2005). Further, some men feel that elimination of educational pursuits is a manifestation of their manhood (Kimmel & Sommers, 2013). Nevertheless, as noted in the contributors’ responses, several contributors said they had plans to return to UOG to complete their degree programs. For example, one contributor related, “Yes, I would go back. I do think higher education is important. Certain jobs require a diploma but yes, I would go back” (Tano, p.

2). In addition, the 10 contributors extended and offered words of inspiration to present and future generations of CHamoru male students pursuing or planning on attending UOG. Maga'lâhi put it this way, "stay on top of your work. Don't miss classes and if you ever feel overburdened, I guess, seek help" (Maga'lâhi, p. 4). Tano' further encouraged, "don't give up...there's that sense of achievement at the end" (Tano', p. 4).

The educational framework within the literature review showed that according to a US Department of Education publication a great number of males drop out of college due to financial reasons (Ross, Kena, Rathbun, KewalRamani, Zhang, Kristapovich, & Manning, 2012). Yet, the data generated from the demographic survey showed that 50% of CHamoru male contributors reported that they had some sort of financial support to attend college, whereas 50% reported that they lacked the financial means to continue their higher education. For one contributor in particular, funding for a higher education was a challenge in his case. He said, "it became very difficult to balance full-time job and also paying for school. I did qualify for federal assistance loans but at the same time, I don't feel too comfortable acquiring so much debt even with that assistance. It does get scary" (Pedro, p. 1). Taga' acknowledged, "I have FAFSA right now so it doesn't cover everything so that's like an extra bill for monthly expenses" (Taga', p. 2).

In the literature, college male students continue to struggle in academia (Marrs, 2016). In the United States, notable disparities persisted in college readiness and enrollment (Nagaoka, Roderick, & Coca, 2009). In Guam, the Guam Public School System has used the ACT Aspire to track students' progress toward college readiness. In the data generated from the demographic survey, seven contributors averaged an A or B and the other three contributors averaged C or D in their high school performances. As far as college preparation was concerned the contributors were divided on the preparation for college they received in high school. 30% of the contributors reported that their high school education did not prepare them for a college degree program; whereas the other 70% contended that their high school had prepared them to pursue higher education. The prediction of freshmen to sophomore student retention at UOG between Fall 2006 and Spring 2008 semesters showed that Guam-based CHamoru freshmen male students are at a very high risk "for stopping out and/or losing academic good standing" (Smith, 2008, p. 1). The theme lack of self-motivation was identified as one of the three categories addressing Research Question #1 on the hurdles influencing the achievement gap of the CHamoru male student population at the University of Guam. Responses from the in-depth interviews highlighted that CHamoru male students were not driven in the college environment citing exhaustion because of concurrently working and going to school at the same time. Also, a few of contributors divulged that having fun as a young man contributed to their lack of motivation to move forward with their college aspirations. One contributor admitted that, "video games, cell phone, girls, just partying...those are my distractions, at least" (Puti'on, p.1).

In the literature, motivation is described as, "activation to action. Level of motivation is reflected in choice of courses of action, and in the intensity and persistence of effort" (Bandura, 1994, p. 2). In academia, motivation is vital for every student to succeed. Additionally, motivation pervades every dimension of educational behavior and production (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). Pedescleaux (2010) asserted that student motivation in higher education is contingent on the choice that each student makes. Thus, for this study several of the CHamoru male Contributors' motivation was based on their individual choice and decision not to complete their degrees. In support of Research Question #2, in general, the contributors to this study exhibited a positive attitude toward pursuing a higher education. Overwhelmingly, contributors cited many personal benefits that can come by pursuing and obtaining a college degree. One contributor said that a

college degree is a “very important factor...if you want to be successful. A degree would achieve that goal...” (Puti'on, p. 3). Additionally, their positive attitude toward a higher education was indicated in their determination to one day to return to UOG to complete their degrees. One contributor said, “yeah, definitely I want to go back...I feel that I've waited long enough” (Anghet, p. 3). Further, in the data generated from the demographic survey, the 10 contributors said family expectations were high to attend college. Responses from the interviewees established familial support and encouragement as a significant factor to their positive attitude toward seeking and completing higher education. One contributor acknowledged that “I do have a good support system from my family...they are very encouraging to me to go to college and they still encourage me to go back” (Tano, p. 3).

From the psychology framework, the concept of perceived self-efficacy is defined as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994, p. 1). Conner, Skidmore, and Aagaard (2012) contended that a student’s attitude of achievement and completing a degree program is conditional on his high level of self-efficacy. Hence, the contributors’ responses from the interviews indicated that CHamoru male students, although they did not complete a degree, showed a high level of self-efficacy toward higher education, highlighted in their desire to return to UOG to complete their respective degrees.

The contributors shared their perspectives on what success meant during the interviews. A contributor remarked that success means being able to, “provide for yourself and your family...I think that’s the ultimate goal you want to live a good life” (Hurao, p. 3). Significant contributor responses stipulated that, while holding a college degree is helpful, it is not the only way to success. One contributor said that having a degree is, “a good thing. It doesn’t necessarily translate to success and that is part of the reason that people either become entrepreneurs or fined a trade or craft that paid \$20 an hour and they’re fine and happy with that” (Hurao, p.3). Miget acknowledged, “I had to do it my way and that meant not going to school and putting all my time into the arts and, so yeah, that’s my own pathway to success”(Miget, p. 5).

Although the published studies in the literature review did not indicate any support programs geared towards aiding CHamoru males’ achievements in academia, the contributor s’ significant responses from the demographic survey and interviews were noted supporting Research Question #3. This is related to the types of effective interventions and programs UOG can implement to support CHamoru male students to persist and complete a college degree program. Eight contributors were pleased and contented with the student services rendered at UOG whereas two were not satisfied. Although the majority of contributors were pleased with some of the services and degree programs UOG had to offer, contributors’ responses showed that the institution can make improvements such as by promoting an awareness of the various types of student services available to UOG students, building support programs aimed at assisting Chamoru males, and providing customer service training for its staff. Further, based on the demographic characteristics, eight of the contributors felt that UOG provided a sense of belonging and reported feeling that the institution’s faculty and staff encouraged to achieve and reach their potential in college.

### **General Recommendations**

In discussing the issues surrounding the achievement gaps of CHamoru males at UOG, the researcher interviewed a few UOG faculty members who provided recommendations on what

UOG can do as an institution to create effective and evidence-based interventions, programs, and settings that can better support the CHamoru male population in order to maintain high retention rates for the respective groups. UOG can work to design effective mentorship programs aimed towards the CHamoru male population. An instructor and counselor of student services at UOG encouraged the creation of “mentorship programs that provide more CHamoru male role models” (A. Leon Guerrero, personal communication, May 2, 2019). Smith maintained:

I believe that many of these young men respond very well to peer mentoring and to mentoring by faculty. I'm glad that CLASS, TRIO and the University more generally are providing students with more of these opportunities.

In addition to the peer mentoring and mentoring by faculty that I mentioned earlier, I believe that UOG faculty need systematic training in advising that works for our particular student populations... CHamoru men, included (K. Smith, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

For example, UOG could design a program that is geared towards assisting CHamoru males with their educational achievements similar to that of City of New York Black Male Initiative (CUNY BMI). CUNY BMI’s “vision is to create model projects throughout the University that are intended to provide additional layers of academic and social support for students from populations that are severely underrepresented in higher education, particularly African, African American/Black, Caribbean and Latino/Hispanic males” (Best, 2018). The CUNY BMI model has proven effective in larger universities throughout the United States. UOG’s proposed program could be named *Progrãman Sinaonao Lalãhen CHamoru para ge'hilo na edukasion: The CHamoru Male Initiative Within Higher Education*.

Further, encouraging advocates for this group such as the establishment of a student organization for CHamoru males. Currently, there is no CHamoru student club or organization here at UOG aimed to support CHamoru males’ educational endeavors (A. Leon Guerrero, personal communication, May 2, 2019). A Professor of Social Work at UOG suggested:

We can put together (in a user-friendly way) what we know about young CHamoru male UOG students, then invite male CHamoru students to discuss and interpret what we think we know about them. And if we can build some degree of trust with some of them, they may be of significant help to better understand the factors that influence them as UOG students. This may be an interesting project to do in close collaboration with CHamoru Studies. Depending on how we approach it, it may lead to some sort of participatory action research, where the research objects become the research subjects and co-authors of the knowledge produced. But even if the above does not work out, we still can make a focused institutional effort to ensure what every students should get; an academic advisor who meets regularly with the new students, make sure that the student know all resources available to him, link the student into support systems and positive social networks, ... and we keep very good student records, as we should for every student (Schwab, personal communication, June 3, 2019).

As a final recommendation, Smith asserted:

I also believe that with the new requirement of declaring a major by the time that the student completes 30 credits, we will need new interventions in place to help these students make that decision. It's true that students who declare are more likely to stay enrolled, but they will need easy-to-access resources that will help them choose. After all, for many of them, half of those first 30 credits will be in the Core Competencies, which are not designed to familiarize them with fields in which they may wish to major and launch a career (K, Smith, personal communication, May 30, 2019).

### **Conclusion**

The achievement gap among male students in the higher education environment across the United States is on the increase--males attending UOG on Guam are no exception. Statistics from UOG show that CHamoru male students struggle to complete a college degree. Through this research study, the contributors shared their experiences in great detail that centered on the hurdles that have affected their student achievement and overall success at UOG. These stories presented a thick and rich description of the difficulties and issues faced by the CHamoru student population at UOG that impeded their educational endeavors such as financial constraints, the distractions of social life, and lack of motivation. Overall, the contributors displayed a positive attitude toward seeking a college degree and expressed their desires to eventually return to UOG. To help close the achievement gap particularly of the CHamoru male population, UOG must be diligent in their persistence and retention efforts by examining 21st century strategies, methods, and practices in the higher learning landscape.

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