

# **Research on the Impact of HBCUs on African American Communities**

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## **Abstract**

*The authors conducted a formal research study to investigate the perceptions of faculty, staff, and community residents regarding town-gown relationships and the sustainability of African American communities as related to educational benefits, home ownership, employment and job training, earning potential, and graduation rates.*

Collaborations between the university and the community continue to receive acknowledgement of their potential to enhance the benefits to town-gown relationships, especially between White universities and African American communities (Bombyk, Ohren, and Shue 2003). Universities interact with the community to improve the relationship by realizing that the community knows what its problems are but lack the resources to properly address those needs. The university, in turn, can match the resources to fit the communities' needs along with guiding the community in the process of being empowered with the knowledge and proper tools to address future needs (Young 1995).

Even as town-gown relationships are developing, many citizens within the African American community are mistrustful of the intentions of the university. Citizens may perceive the university as an institution with its own agenda, one that looks for future ways to expand and encroach upon their community and property. The encroachment can lead to an "institutional form of gentrification" where citizens are displaced from their homes against their will. Other problems associated with the relationship include the university's unwillingness to share information with the community, displacement of tax burden on the community because of the university's tax free status, and treating the community as a place where data for studies can be drawn and not as a community with viable resources of its own (Ehsan 2006). On the other hand, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have led a long history of being involved in neighborhood revitalization in the African American community. Many HBCUs have been identified as "Urban Serving Institutions" for this very purpose. In addition, HBCUs still continue to meet their mission of education by teaching, providing opportunities for students to learn by apprenticeship or with the assistance of mentors, and through ongoing research (Ehsan 2006).

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of faculty, staff, and residents concerning town-gown relationships as it relates to education, home ownership, employment and job training, earning potential, and graduation rates.

In short, an answer to the following question was sought: What are the differences in the perceptions of faculty, staff, and residents with regard to the effectiveness of town-gown relationships on the sustainability of the community as it relates to educational benefits, home ownership, employment and job training, earning potential, and graduation rate?

## **Research Hypotheses**

The following research hypothesis was formulated from the research question:

**H1:** There are statistically significant differences in the perceptions of faculty, staff, and residents with regard to the effectiveness of town-gown relationships on the sustainability of the community as related to (a) educational benefits ( $H_{1a}$ ), (b) employment and job training ( $H_{1b}$ ), (c) earning potential ( $H_{1c}$ ), (d) home ownership ( $H_{1d}$ ), and (e) graduation rates ( $H_{1e}$ ).

## **Methodology**

The researcher used a descriptive survey design in this empirical investigation. A survey design as a methodological paradigm is one which assesses people's attitudes, opinions, and behaviors toward a certain phenomenon (Berg 2001). According to Berg, the survey as a research design can utilize the mailed questionnaire approach as well as personal interview procedures. The mailed questionnaire was used in this investigation.

In summary, the survey design can provide the most efficient means for studying the perceptions of directors, employees, and residents regarding the effectiveness of a town-gown relationship on a community (Marshall and Rossman 1999).

## **Population**

The population of the study consisted of employees, faculty, staff, and residents associated with HBCUs in urban areas in the United States. Ten HBCUs were selected because all of them were located in urban areas with a population of at least 300,000. Additionally, all ten institutions are located in the area of the city where the residents are predominately African American.

## **Sampling Procedures**

Three different sampling frames were employed in this study. All employees who resided in the zip code of a Historically Black College or University were identified by the researcher in conjunction with the Office of Human Resources at each institution. Once identified, these employees were assigned a number from 01 to N, where N is the total number of employees within the desired areas. The table of random numbers was used to select the employees (Levy and Lemeshow 1999, 6-23).

Finally, all civic associations or clubs with memberships of fifty or more residents within the zip code of the university were identified by the researcher in conjunction

with the directors of the Economic Development Programs. Once the list of residents was provided, the researcher assigned a code from 01 to N, where N is the total number of residents in the associations or clubs. The table of random numbers was used to select the residents (Acock 2006a). Two hundred of the four hundred questionnaires administered to the sample were returned to the researcher. This represented a return rate of 50 percent. According to Babbie (1989, 242), a response rate of 50 percent is considered adequate, even though response rates are only rough guides and have no statistical basis. In addition, to eliminate response bias, surveys arrived over a period of five weeks and involved the mailing of a reminder note. One would argue that late respondents more closely resembled non-respondents, in which case, if a response bias exists, late respondents would differ from early respondents.

## **Survey Instrumentation**

The “University and Community Survey” was employed in this study to collect the data. The University and Community Survey consists of two major sections. Part One contains fifteen items regarding background information of the participants. Part Two of the investigative survey consists of twenty-five items under the auspices of six major areas. The items in this section of the survey were in a Likert format. They required the participants to check one of five fixed-alternative expressions: Strongly Agree; Agree; Undecided; Disagree; and Strongly Disagree. The stated expressions were assigned the following weights for analysis purposes: Strongly Agree (5); Agree (4); Undecided (3); Disagree (2); and Strongly Disagree (1). Therefore, items in this section were scored one to five with the highest score representing a favorable perception and the lowest score representing an unfavorable perception.

## **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

To establish validity, the researcher submitted the University and Community Survey to a group of authorities in public school administration as well as in evaluation and research and asked them to determine the degree to which the items on the survey measured the appropriateness of the survey. The authorities agreed that the University and Community Survey was a valid instrument for the present study, and the researcher conducted a pilot test of the instruments (Marshall and Rossman 1999).

The researcher employed the Split-Half procedure. This method involved correlating scores of even numbered items. The Split-Half procedure assessed reliability for half of the test. The Spearman-Brown Formula was used in conjunction with the Split-Half coefficient to compute reliability. Coefficient of .70 is needed for an instrument to be considered reliable (Marshall and Rossman 1999) A Split-Half reliability coefficient of .741 was computed when the Spearman-Brown formula was applied to the Split-Half procedure. A reliability of .772 was calculated for the test as a whole.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

To begin the actual study, the researcher mailed a letter, together with the research proposal, to each director at the selected HBCUs who had a town-gown relationship. The letter explained the theoretical framework of the study and outlined the methodology and procedures to be used. Once these steps were completed, an authorization letter from each director was secured before the researcher proceeded with the study (Kalbfleisch 2004). The procedure for administering the questionnaire involved a two-fold process. First, the participants were sent letters explaining the purpose of the study and requesting their participation. Secondly, the researcher administered the questionnaires to each participant by mail (Kalbfleisch 2004).

The participants were asked to respond honestly to all the items on the survey so as to eliminate non-responses. Moreover, to ensure the anonymity of the respondents, the participants omitted signing their names. All of the completed surveys were logged and examined for non-responses and errors. Questionnaires not properly completed were discarded. Once the foregoing activities had been completed, the researcher coded the data from the questionnaires and entered the code into the computer. For statistical purposes, the researcher employed applications from the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the data (Acock 2006b).

## **Null Hypotheses**

The following null hypothesis was formulated from the research hypotheses:

$H_0$ : There are no statistically significant differences in the perceptions of the community with regard to the effectiveness of town-gown as related to educational benefits ( $H_{0a}$ ), employment and job training ( $H_{0b}$ ), earning potential ( $H_{0c}$ ), home ownership ( $H_{0d}$ ), and graduation rate ( $H_{0e}$ ).

Null Hypothesis 1 was generated from research question 1. This hypothesis was tested with the One-Way Analysis of Variance and the Scheffe' Multiple Comparison Test.

## **Statistical Analysis**

Inasmuch as the instrument for this study did yield both qualitative and quantitative data, a parametric technique was utilized, namely the One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). According to Neuman (1997), the ANOVA determines the mean differences between two or more independent samples. Therefore, if differences were found between the sample means the researcher utilized the Scheffé procedure, a follow-up test which was used to determine whether the difference between sample means was significant or whether it could be due to random sampling fluctuation. Finally, the hypotheses formulated for this study were tested at the .05 levels or better (Andranovich and Riposa 1993).

# Results

## Demographic Profile of Participants in the Study

Descriptive statistics were presented on the participants of this study. The participants were analyzed by status, gender, age, level of education, income, home ownership, and marital status.

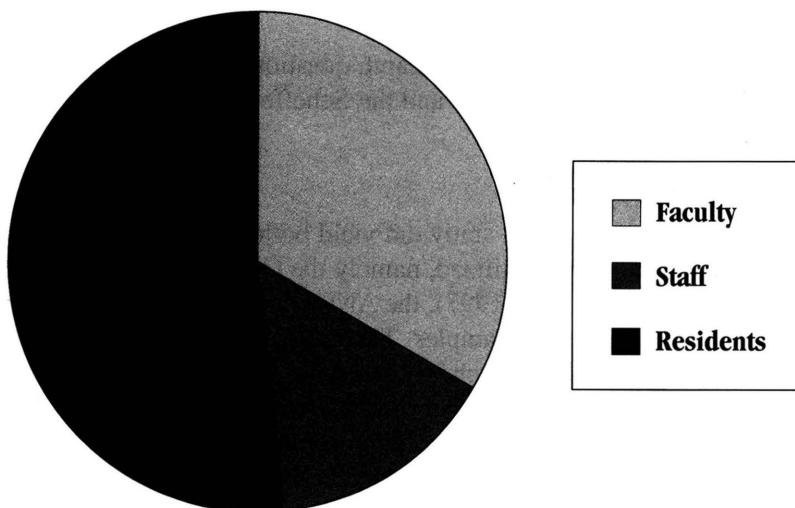
### Status

Sixty-seven (33.5%) faculty members and thirty (15%) staff members participated in the study. By contrast, 103 (51.5%) residents responded to the survey. See Table 1 for these results.

**Table 1**  
**Employment Status of the Participants**

Variable	Number	Percent
<i>Status</i>		
Faculty	67	33.5
Staff	30	15.0
Resident	103	51.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Figure 1**



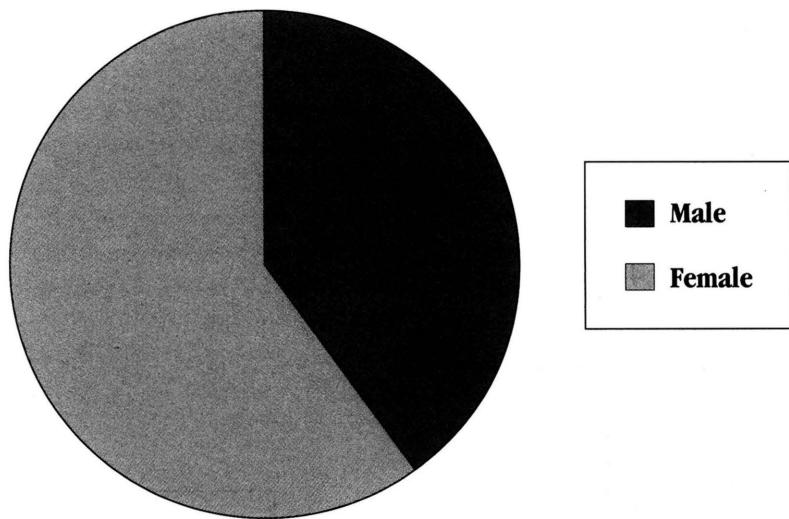
## **Gender**

Regarding the variable gender, there were eighty (40%) male participants in the study and one hundred twenty (60%) female participants in the study. See Table 2 for these findings.

**Table 2**  
**Gender Status of Participants**

Variable	Number	Percent
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	80	40.0
Female	120	60.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Figure 2**



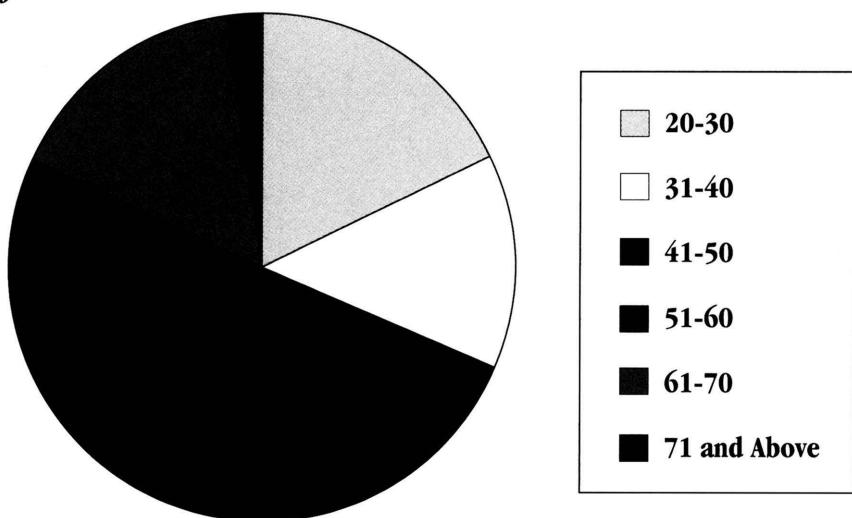
## **Age**

The variable age was divided into six distinct categories. There were thirty-six (18%) participants who were between the age of twenty and thirty; twenty-seven (13.5%) were between the age of thirty-one and forty. In addition, forty-six (23 %.) participants reported their age as forty-one through fifty (27.5%); and fifty-five participants said they were fifty-one through sixty years of age. Also, thirty-two (16%) participants indicated their age as sixty-one through seventy, and four (2%) indicated they were seventy-one years of age or older. See Table 3 for these analyses.

**Table 3**  
**Age Status of Participants**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Age</b>		
20-30	36	18.0
31-40	27	13.5
41-50	46	23.0
51-60	55	27.5
61-70	32	16.0
71 and above	4	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Figure 3**



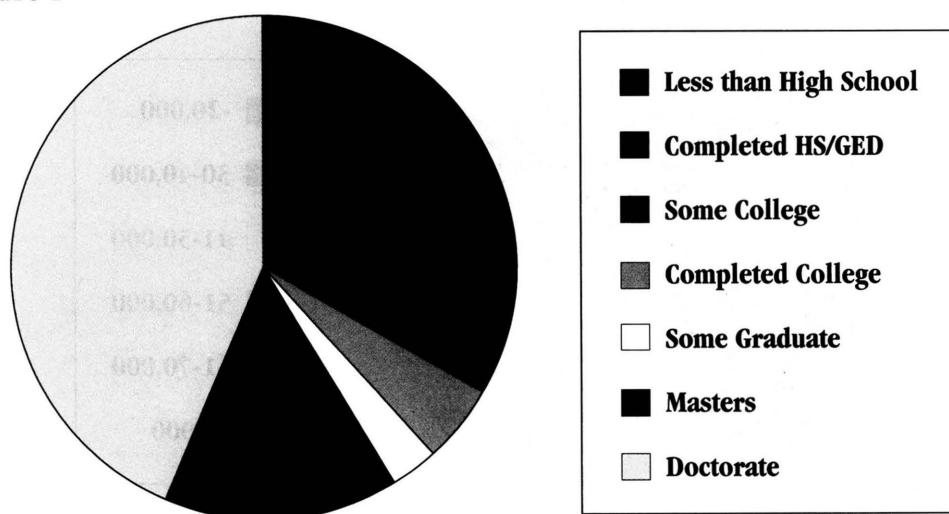
## **Level of Education**

Regarding the participants' levels of education, eight (4%) reported they had less than a high school education; twenty-nine (14.5%) had completed high school or earned GEDs; and thirty (15%) had had some college. On the other hand, ten (5%) participants said they had completed college; six (3 %) had received masters degrees. Finally, eighty-seven (43.5 %) of the participants had earned a doctorate. See Table 4 for these results.

**Table 4**  
**Education Status of Participants**

Variable	Number	Percent
<b><i>Education</i></b>		
Less than High School	8	4.0
Completed HS/GED	29	14.5
Some College	30	15.0
Completed College	10	5.0
Some Graduate School	6	3.0
Masters	30	15.0
Doctorate	87	43.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Figure 4**



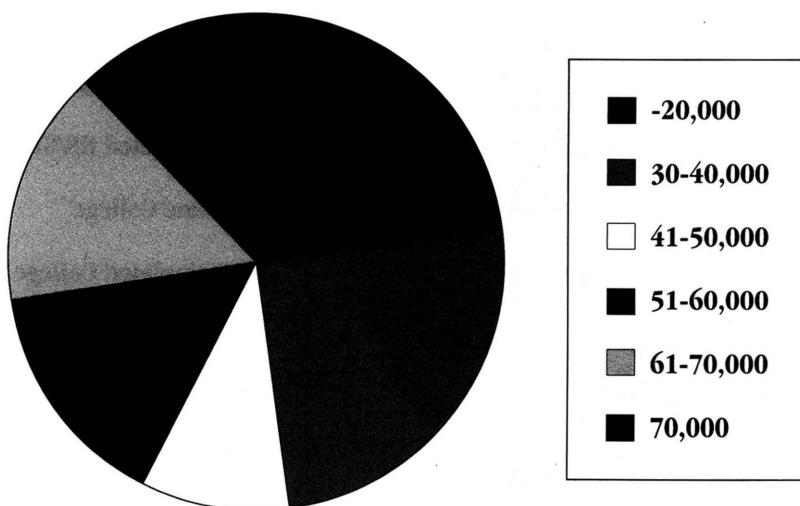
## **Income**

Relative to the annual incomes of the participants, forty-six (23%) of them reported their incomes as less than \$20,000, and fifty (25%) revealed their income as being between \$30,000 and \$40,000. Additionally, nineteen (9.5%) participants identified their income as \$41,000 to \$50,000, and thirty (15%) indicated their earned income was \$51,000 to \$60,000. Also, thirty-one (15.5%) participants expressed their income as \$61,000 to \$70,000 and twenty-four (12%) reported income over \$70,000. See Table 5 for these findings.

**Table 5**  
**Income Status of Participants**

Variable	Number	Percent
<b><i>Income</i></b>		
Less than \$20,000	46	23.0
\$30,000 to \$40,000	50	25.0
\$41,000to \$50,000	19	9.5
\$51,000 to \$60,000	30	15.0
\$61,000to 70,000	31	15.5
\$70,000 and above	24	12.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Figure 5**



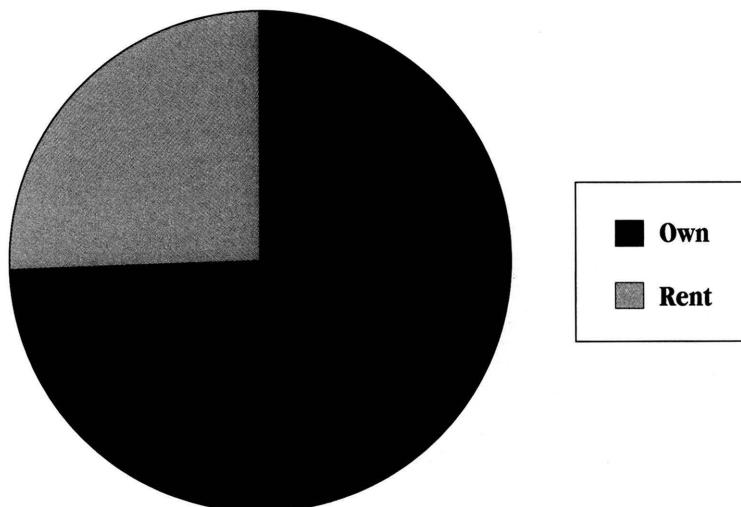
## **Home Ownership**

The variable home status was categorized into a dichotomous item for this investigation. One hundred forty-nine (74.5%) participants indicated they owned their own home and fifty-one (25.5%) reported they rented their places of residence. See Table 6 for these analyses.

**Table 6**  
**Home Ownership Status of Participants**

Variable	Number	Percent
<i>Home</i>		
Own	149	74.5
Rent	51	25.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Figure 6**



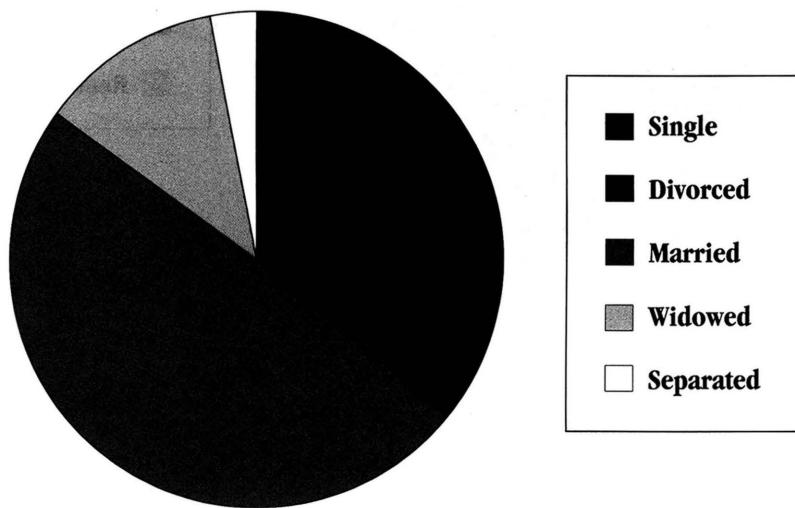
## **Marital Status**

There were fifty-seven (28.5%) participants who identified their marital status as single and fifteen (7.5%) reported they were divorced. By comparison, ninety-eight (49%) participants indicated they were married, twenty-four (12%) were widowed, and six (3%) were separated from their spouse. See Table 7 for these results.

**Table 7**  
**Marital Status of Participants**

Variable	Number	Percent
<b><i>Marital Status</i></b>		
Single	57	28.5
Divorced	15	7.5
Married	98	49.0
Widowed	24	12.0
Separated	6	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Figure 7**



# **Examination of Hypotheses on the Community Perceptions**

The following hypothesis was tested in this investigation using the One-Way Analysis of Variances and the Scheffé Post Hoc Test. Hypotheses 1A through 1E were developed to answer research question one.

**Ho1:** There is no statistically significant difference in the perception of faculty, staff, and residents with regard to the effectiveness of a town-gown relationship on the sustainability of the community as it relates to educational benefits, employment and employment and job training, earning potential, home ownership, and graduation rates.

**Educational Benefits (Ho<sub>1a</sub>):** Reported in Table 8 are the One-Way Analysis of Variable results on the perceptions of faculty, staff, and residents regarding the effectiveness of the town-gown relationship on the sustainability of the community with respect to educational benefits. No statistically significant difference was found on the sustainability of educational benefits in the community ( $F = .743$ ,  $df = 2/197$ ,  $P > .05$ ) at the .05 level. Thus, Hypothesis 1A (H<sub>1a</sub>) was accepted. Therefore, it showed that there is no difference in the perception of faculty, staff, and residents regarding the effectiveness of the town-gown relationship on the sustainability of the community with respect to educational benefits.

**Table 8**  
**Analysis of Variance Summary Regarding the Perceptions of  
Faculty, Staff, and Community Residents on the Sustainability of a  
Town-Gown Relationship on the Educational Benefits of the Community**

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	p
Between Groups	18.537	2	9.268	.743	.477
Within Groups	2456.243	197	12.468		
<b>Total</b>	<b>2474.780</b>	<b>199</b>			

**Employment and Job Training (Ho<sub>1b</sub>):** Indicated in Table 9 are the Analysis of Variance findings regarding the perceptions of faculty, staff and residents toward the effectiveness of the town-gown relationship on the sustainability of the community in terms of employment and job training. A significant difference was not found among the groups on the sustainability of employment and job training in the community at the .05 level ( $F = 2.619$ ,  $df = 2/197$ ,  $P > .05$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 1B (H<sub>1b</sub>) was accepted.

**Table 9**  
**Analysis of Variance Summary Regarding the Perceptions of Faculty, Staff, and Community Residents on the sustainability of a Town-Gown Relationship on Employment and Job Training in the Community**

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F	p
Between Groups	47.211	2	23.606	2.619	.075
Within Groups	1775.809	197	9.014		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1823.020</b>	<b>199</b>			

**Earning Potential ( $H_{1c}$ ):** Presented in Table 10 are the ANOVA results pertaining to the perceptions of faculty, staff, and residents regarding the effectiveness of the town-gown relationship on the earning potentials component of the sustainability of the community. As revealed in this table, statistically significant differences were found among the perceptions of faculty, staff, and residents with regard to the effectiveness ( $F= 5.265$ ,  $df=2/197$ ,  $P<.01$ ) of the town-gown relationship on the sustainability of earning potentials in the community at the .01 level. Accordingly, Hypothesis 1C ( $H_{1c}$ ) was rejected. Therefore, it indicated that there were significant differences in the perceptions of faculty, staff, and residents with regard to the effectiveness of the town-gown relationship on the sustainability of earning potentials in the community.

**Table 10**  
**Analysis of Variance Summary Table Regarding the Perceptions of Faculty, Staff, and Community Residents on the sustainability of a Town-Gown Relationship on the Earning Potentials of the Community**

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F	p
Between Groups	94.543	2	47.272	5.265	.006**
Within Groups	1768.652	197	8.978		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1863.195</b>	<b>199</b>			

\*\*Significant at the .01 level

Since the Analysis of Variance indicated significance but did not reveal where the differences were, the Scheffé Test was used. Further data analysis using the Scheffé Multiple Comparison Test revealed that the residents viewed the town-gown relationship as having been effective in increasing the earning potentials in the community more than they viewed the university staff members' involvement in the increase (Table 11). No other mean differences were observed.

**Table 11**  
**Scheffé Results of Earning Potential by Status**

Mean 1 (Faculty)	Mean 2 (Staff)	Mean 3 (Resident)	Observed Mean Difference	p
15.41 .644	14.80			0.61
15.41		16.54	-1.13	.059
	14.80	16.54	-1.74	.021*

\*significant at the .05 level

**Home Ownership ( $H_{o1d}$ ):** The One-Way Analysis of Variance was computed among the perceptions of faculty, staff, and residents regarding the effectiveness of the town-gown relationship on the sustainability of the community with respect to home ownership. As reported in Table 12, a statistically significant difference was found among the groups ( $F=4.117$ ,  $df = 2/197$ ,  $P<05$ ) on the sustainability of home ownership in the community at the .05 level. Consequently, Hypothesis 1D ( $H_{1D}$ ) was rejected.

**Table 12**  
**Analysis of Variance Summary Table Regarding the Perceptions of Faculty, Staff, and community Residents on the Sustainability of a Town-Gown Relationship on Home Ownership in the Community**

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F	p
Between Groups	43.850	2	21.925	4.117	.018*
Within Groups	1049.025	197	5.325		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1092.875</b>	<b>199</b>			

\*Significant at the .05 level.

Since the Analysis of Variance indicated a significance but did not reveal where the differences were, the Scheffé Test was used. Further data analysis employing the Scheffé as a follow-up test revealed that the faculty perceived the town-gown relationship had been effective in enhancing home ownership in the community more than that of staff members (Table 13). No other mean differences were observed.

**Table 13**  
**Scheffé Results of Home Ownership by Status**

Mean 1 (Faculty)	Mean 2 (Staff)	Mean 3 (Resident)	Observed Mean Difference	p
12.19	10.80		1.39	.024*
12.19		11.49	.70	.158
10.80	10.80	11.49	.69	.350

\*significant at the .05 level

**Graduation Rate ( $H_{1e}$ ):** Illustrated in Table 14 are the Analysis of Variance results regarding the perceptions of faculty, staff, and residents toward the effectiveness of a town-gown relationship on the sustainability of the community with respect to graduation rates. No significant differences were found among the groups ( $F=.479$ ,  $df=2/197$ ,  $P>.05$ ) on the sustainability of graduation rates in the community at the .05 level. Based on the above analysis, Hypothesis 1E ( $H_{1e}$ ) was accepted. Therefore, it showed that there were no differences in the perceptions of faculty, staff, and residents regarding the effectiveness of a town-gown relationship on the sustainability of the community as it relates to graduation rates.

**Table 14**  
**Analysis of Variance Summary Table Regarding the Perceptions of Faculty, Staff, and Community Residents on the Sustainability of a Town-Gown Relationship on Graduation Rates in the Community**

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	f	p
Between Groups	17.958	2	8.979	.479	.620
Within Groups	3696.042	197	18.762		
Total	<b>3714.000</b>	<b>199</b>			

## Discussion

One of the most significant findings of the present study pertained to the perceptions which faculty, staff, and residents had regarding the influence of town-gown relationship on home ownership. To be sure, faculty members perceived the town-gown relationship as being effective in enhancing home ownership in the community more than staff members. This finding was consistent with those of Bluestone, Maloney, and White (2003); Young (1995), and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2003). All of the aforementioned researchers reported that the

relationship between HBCUs and communities had been instrumental in improving housing conditions and home ownership in these communities. A plausible explanation for this finding might be that faculty members are usually the ones who readily recognize that home ownership is important if individuals in these communities are to be involved and to have feelings of personal security and stability.

Another noteworthy finding of the present study was associated with the earning potential of the community. Specifically, these findings of the present study revealed that residents perceived town-gown relationships as being effective in increasing the earning potentials in the community more than did university staff members. This finding paralleled those of Gilderbloom and Mullins (1995), of the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2003), and of Bluestone, Maloney, and White (2003). The aforementioned researchers reported that the town-gown relationship between HBCUs and their communities was important in enhancing the earning potentials of individuals within these communities. A reasonable explanation for the current finding might be that residents perceived economic development as the most persistent problem facing their communities and that the monies provided by HBCUs had been instrumental in helping in this area.

Moreover, another interesting finding of this present study was the lack of influence which the town-gown relationship had on employment and job training, educational benefits, and the graduation rates within the communities as perceived by faculty, staff, and residents. To be sure, faculty, staff and residents had similar perceptions regarding the influence of the town-gown relationship on employment and job training, educational benefits, and graduation rates. These findings did not correspond to those of Gilderbloom and Mullins (1995); Wiewel and Lieber (1998); and the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2003). The results from the research conducted by the above researchers revealed that the town-gown relationship between HBCUs and their communities did provide a significant impact on the sustainability of employment and job training, educational benefits, and graduation rates within these communities. These findings growing out of the present study can probably be explained by the Advocacy Planning theory whereby all the individuals within the community, especially faculty, staff, and residents, have a strong need to be involved in finding solutions to the problems hindering their communities.

## **Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn, based on the findings of this study:

1. In general, faculty, staff, and residents exhibited similar perceptions regarding the town-gown relationship on the substantiality of the community with respect to graduation rates, educational benefits, and employment and job training.
2. It appeared that residents perceived that town-gown relationships had been more effective in increasing the earning potentials in the community than did the university staff members.

3. Data suggested that faculty members, more than staff members, perceived that the town-gown relationship had been more effective in enhancing home ownership in the community.

## **Implications**

The following implications were derived from the findings of the study:

1. Inasmuch as significant differences were found between the perceptions of faculty, staff, and residents regarding certain components of African American communities with respect to the sustainability of these communities and in relation to home ownership and earning potentials, some form of advocacy relationship should be implemented between the university and the community. In view of the various differences that exist between faculty and staff and residents, a concerted attempt on the part of both university leaders and community leaders needs to be made so as to institute a people-centered advocacy committee whereby decisions concerning African American communities can reflect a collaborative effort, thus enabling individuals to become more involved in improving their communities.
2. The findings pertaining to the lack of relationship between HUD monies and the sustainability components of African American communities are somewhat disturbing to say the least. The lack of the relationship between four of the five components of sustainability and HUD monies seems to indicate that there is a conflict in what HUD's mission is to urban areas and what HUD is doing to improve these areas. Some type of policy needs to be developed and implemented to ensure that African American communities receive their just share of revenues so as to minimize the crippling effects of poor health care, crime, high unemployment, and a disintegrated social structure.

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

The following recommendations are offered to extend the findings of the study;

1. A study needs to be done to measure the total effect of HUD monies on the overall sustainability of African American communities and other similar communities of color.
2. A quantitative study needs to be conducted about how directors perceive the town-gown relationship for the university and on the reception of this relationship among community residents.
3. A more extensive study needs to be conducted to develop models to measure the effectiveness of town-gown relationships on all communities.
4. Finally, a follow-up study needs to be done to explore the influence of Advocacy Planning on the perceptions of faculty, staff, and residents. Such a study will provide additional information on the effects of town-gown relationships on African American communities and their nearest University neighbors.

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## **Author Information**

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