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Seton Hall University

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT & POLICY

APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

LaQuan Dyce has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D.** during this **2021 Spring** Semester.

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The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and submit a copy with your final dissertation.

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Dedication

First, I dedicate this work to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Without your grace and mercy, I could not have completed this work. Thank you for ordering my steps. Thank you for your guidance, your wisdom, your gift of discernment, and your unconditional love. Thank you for being the sacrificial lamb, and thank you for saving me. I knew that with man, this was impossible, but with God, all things are possible.

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Joan Faye Prendergast (Nanny) and my late aunt Pastor Joyce Tirado; to my aunt Toya (I love

you, Auntie); and to *all* my cousins, from Sidney on down.

Abstract

This study aimed to illuminate the perceptions of whether higher education support services function as a barrier or conduit to Black male undergraduate students' academic persistence. The relationship between 13 Black male undergraduate students and their higher education institutions was examined. The researcher proposed a model of qualitative exploratory methodology. This study was motivated by three research questions: (1) What resources are instrumental in helping Black males persist academically? (2) How do Black male students navigate and make sense of institutional support for their academic persistence? and (3) In what ways do Black male students perceive the quality of the support services at their institution?

Williams (2015) queried Black brains matter: why are graduation rates so low? This question is a fundamental inquiry in higher education. We argue that a new generation of research in this area needs to address the extended problem: how Black male students perceive the quality of the support services at their academic institutions. Despite literature that suggested and supported Black male students' academic persistence, there was never an exploration into how Black male students perceived higher education support services in conjunction with their academic persistence. Qualitative data consisted of individual interviews with 13 Black male undergraduate students and one focus group with 6 of the same 13 participants. Once collected, transcribed, and analyzed, a thorough thematic analysis revealed six emergent themes. The results indicated that Black male students perceived higher education support services to support their academic persistence. Still, the quality by which support services are rendered ought to be customized and executed with care.

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Chapter I

Introduction

American society illuminates the marginalization of Black men. Jenkins (2006) stated the trends that demanded immediate consideration included the underachievement, lack of inclusion, and backward progression of Black men within American society, especially within the educational arena. Jenkins (2006) further asserted that Black men's low academic persistence in America required urgent care.

During the era of slavery in the United States (U.S.), Blacks' education was habitually discouraged, except for religious instruction. South Carolina passed the first laws prohibiting slave education in 1740. Randall (2000) stated that the U.S. was the only country of notice to have banned the teaching of slaves. Douglass (1968) supposed that knowledge was the pathway from slavery to freedom. He asserted that a slave who learned to read would be free from mental bondage and unfit for slavery.

Statement of the Problem

Noguera (1997) estimated that 44% of all Black men are functionally illiterate. "The high school dropout rate for Black males is also high with 20% to 30% of urban Black male youth leaving school before graduation" (Noguera, 1997, p. 128). According to the 1900 U.S. Census, 57% of Black males were uneducated. Approximately one hundred years later, 44% of all Black men are still illiterate (Noguera, 1997). Jenkins (2006) found that after 100 years from 1900, the literacy rate for Black men had improved by only 13%.

The wrecked phenomenon of failing Black males is thematic across various areas within American society. In juxtaposition to the educational system, approximately 39.8% more Black men are registered within the criminal justice system than enrolled in higher learning institutions,

according to Jenkins (2006). "One in five Black men live in poverty as opposed to 1 in 12 White men, and Black men hold an unemployment rate that is 2.3 times higher than White men" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 128). Inside the employment realm, Black males earned 73% of their White male counterparts (Jenkins, 2006). Noguera (1997) posited that the average Black male with a college degree made less than the average white male with a high school diploma.

Dulabaum (2016) found that students of color — males, in particular — faced significant challenges in higher education. She reported that Black male students, on average, were less successful academically than other racial/ethnic groups, including Black women. Black male students had the lowest persistence rates (Dulabaum, 2016). Since college academic persistence is a significant variable in obtaining higher earnings, more extraordinary efforts are needed within higher education to help Black men complete their education. With an unbiased system that supports and promotes equitable career readiness and opportunities, the economic disparity could be on the pathway of extinction. Palmer & Young (2009) concluded, "educational attainment has consequences for social mobility, future earning opportunities, and marketability [...] Furthermore, despite the marginal increase in the number of Black males in higher education, they continue to lag behind their female counterparts. The problems of retaining Black males have many social and economic implications" (p. 478). Therefore, the persistence and acquisition of a college degree must be at the forefront of academic institutions' goals and objectives.

Thernstrom & Thernstrom (1997) posited that income inequality and diminutive opportunities for advancement kept African Americans in poverty. They further asserted that African Americans were kept dependent and uneducated, with restricted possibilities: possibilities of true freedom, life, liberty, economic equality, and the pursuit of happiness.

Harper & Simmons (2019) stated that "higher education in the U.S. is a public good. While it confers enormous personal and material advantages to individuals, it more significantly profits our broader society" (p. 6). Harper & Simmons (2019) affirmed a strengthened economy and boosted innovation when there is a significant increase in postsecondary degree attainment and found that Americans who graduated from college were far less likely than those without degrees to be unemployed, dependent on government assistance, and constricted to low-wage jobs with insufficient employee benefits and inadequate opportunities for upward mobility. Harper & Simmons (2019) concluded that higher education institutions helped make this probable.

Despite efforts of equality, Black males remain economically disenfranchised. This economic disparity, as mentioned, is correlated with Black men having the lowest higher education graduation rates amongst all other races and ethnicities. According to data researched by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), African American male college graduation rates from 2010 to 2016 were 40% compared to 49% for African American females. The same data reported the graduation rates for white students and Asian American students at 69% and 77%, respectively (Understand African American Male College Rate in 2020). The achievement gap is a problem for Black male students, their families, and communities, but it affects the entire country's financial well-being. Ladson-Billings (2006) defined the achievement gap as disparities in standardized test scores between Black and White, Latina/o and Whites, and recent immigrant and White students. McKinsey & Company (2009) studied the persistence of academic achievement gaps and concluded that such disparities impose the financial equivalent of a perpetual depression on the nation's economy.

According to Roach (2003), for a society to reap the full benefit of its investments, Black men must be seen as a valuable asset and tied to the development of the economy, social justice,

and equality. Malcolm X (1964) stated that there must be a guarantee that Black men receive an equitable quality education. Subsequently, will and skill are required. Hillard (1978) said that quality education was achievable if there was a concerted effort to educate Black students.

Purpose of the Study

"The plain fact is that there are some Americans who, in the aggregate, are consistently doing worse in our society. Groups that have had the odds stacked against them in unique ways that require unique solutions; groups who've seen fewer opportunities that have spanned generations," President Barack Obama (2014). From the Negro Act of 1740 to today's dismal academic persistence rates of Black men, educational infrastructures designed to enhance social mobility via education is lacking. Therefore, higher education support services, such as academic advisement, financial assistance, and career services that seek to strengthen Black male students, are needed. This study examines the perception of higher education support services as either barriers or conduits to Black male students' academic persistence.

Methodology & Research Design Overview

This study employed a qualitative research method. Qualitative methods are useful in disclosing participants' visions, experiences, and perspectives; therefore, a qualitative methodology fits this study (Arantzamendi et al., 2012b; Green and Thorogood, 2009). This dissertation was an exploratory study that allowed students to voice varying aspects of their respective academic institutions' experiences. The development and refined beliefs derived from the common themes gathered and analyzed from the data established guided this exploration.

The qualitative research strategy explores how humans experience the world around them. Research studies utilizing qualitative methodologies are vital to human ethos because of the culture established through the ensemble of stories we tell about ourselves (Geertz, 1975).

Berger (1997) stated that storytelling is such an essential measure because narratives help individuals shape their experiences into expressive chapters that call upon social manners of rationale and exemplification. Qualitative research harvests complete understandings of rich, contextual, and mostly unstructured, non-numeric data (Mason, 2002) by engaging in dialogues with the research participants in a natural setting (Creswell, 2009). The significant item of qualitative study research is its focus on *how* and *why* questions (Myers, 2009) and, for this reason, is appropriate for descriptive and exploratory studies (Mouton, 2001).

Examining how current Black male students perceive institutional higher education support created a suitable research approach. Therefore, exploring the depth of their perceptions, often associated with one's reality, impacts higher education resources as either a barrier or conduit to their persistence.

In this study, the participants were recruited by random solicitation via email and social media. This study consisted of 13 participants who self-identified as a Black African American male. Each student in the study was an active full-time student. This exploratory research process contained online one-on-one interviews and an online focus group.

Webster & Mertoya (2007) posited the exploratory inquiry provides researchers with "a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted in their stories" (p. 3). Qualitative analysis allows for the same. It augments the research by creating greater awareness through the lens of the participants. Just as a story develops the intricacies of characters, interactions, and backgrounds, this exploratory study illuminated Black males' experiences in higher education with academic advising, financial support, instructional, and career support.

Chapter III offers greater detail of the exploratory qualitative research design. Overall,

this strategy obtains answers to the query indicated in the Research Questions section.

Assumptions

By applying a qualitative methodology, Atieno (2009) stated some common assumptions that exist include but are not limited to: (1) being concerned primarily with the process, rather than the outcomes, (2) being interested in how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their worldview, (3) being the primary and human instrument for data collection and analysis, rather than through exclusively via inventories, online surveys, or machines, (4) being physically able to go to the people, setting, site, or institution to observe or record behavior in its natural environment, (5) being interested in the process, meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures, and (6) having an inductive approach where abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details.

This study's overarching assumption was the values of academic persistence in higher education from Black male students related to the support provided by their respective colleges and universities. The hypothesis was that resources supporting Black male students' continuance weren't sufficient. Finally, the underlying assumption was that participants in the study were sincere and truthful with the data provided in the online surveys, interviews, and focus group. According to Simon (2011), while privacy may be in order, at any time, without warning, the participants may withdraw from the study, either physically or mentally.

Research Question(s)

The exploratory qualitative design encouraged participants to express their attitudes freely with little limitations. In addition, this methodology examined the primary variables associated with higher education resources that either helped or hindered Black males' academic success (persistence) in higher education. The following research questions navigated the

dialogue in the study:

      1. What resources are instrumental in helping Black males persist academically?

      2. How do Black male students navigate and make sense of institutional support for

      their academic persistence?

      3. In what ways do Black male students perceive the quality of the support services at

      their institution?

Definition of Terms

Throughout this research are terms used to describe and reference a plethora of variables. One such term is *higher education*, referred to as the undergraduate division of universities and colleges. Within higher education support are four categorizations: (a) *academic advising*, (b) *financial assistance*, (c) *instructional support,* and (d) *career support*. David Crocket (1985) defined academic advisement as the "developmental process which assists students in the clarification of their life/career goals and the development of educational plans for the realization of these goals" (p. 248).

Voorhees (1985) defined financial aid as grants, loans, and federal need. His research examined the impact of financial assistance on a college student's ability to persist or drop out. Voorhees concluded that federal-based campus aid was essential to the persistence of college students. Arnold & Kaufman (1986) affirmed that "any assistance obtained to make up the difference between what a student and his or her family can afford to pay, and the total cost of higher education" (7).

Additionally, the institution's instructional support services are services via writing centers, math centers, professional tutors, and peer tutors. Career services are services provided by the institution that help prepare, equip, and assist students in obtaining employment.

According to Kretovics, Honaker, and Kraning (1999), "Career services is the department directly responsible for connecting students with employment" (p.77). This study employed the definition above.

The second term in this study references *academic persistence.* Cuccaro-Alamin, S. (1997) stated that persistence refers to the act of continuing toward an educational goal, for example, earning a bachelor's degree. For this study, academic persistence is acting toward the educational purpose of earning a bachelor's degree.

Lastly, the third term, *Black male students* are defined as active undergraduate students who self-identify as male. They also are of African descent or have a family whose ancestors are born in African.

Summary of the Study

This dissertation comprises five chapters. Chapter I delivers the introduction as well as a backdrop to this study. It states the research questions that direct the investigation at large. Chapter I identifies the purpose and significance of the study as well as defines critical terms. Overall, Chapter I highlights the importance of higher education support for Black male students' academic persistence. Chapter II gathers the relevant theoretical frameworks associated with this study. It expounds upon researchers' exemplary work to serve as either credence to this author's work or conflicting ideology for further examination. Chapter III provides a comprehensive rationalization of the qualitative methodology chosen to collect and analyze this study. Chapter IV platforms the findings from the data collected. It also describes who the participants are and highlights why their backgrounds are imperative to the sample. Finally, Chapter V addresses thematic conclusions derived from the study and recommendations and implications for further research.

Chapter II

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature surrounding the significance of higher education support serving as either a barrier or conduit to the academic persistence of Black male students. It reflects on research and methodologies analyzing the importance of higher education, higher education support services, and academic persistence as they pertain to Black male college students. More specifically, this chapter examines the disproportionate number of Black male students who do not academically persist at the undergraduate level in contrast to their White counterparts.

This chapter defines American higher education as well as its historical origins, outlines the educational resources and support services, highlights the phenomena of Black students in higher education, and reviews the literature on the role higher education support has on academic persistence for Black male students. Bush (2004) stated that many Black males attended higher education institutions because they perceived these universities as venues that could assist their economic advancement. This chapter sets the groundwork for descriptive analysis with the findings in Chapter IV.

Higher Education

Though many colleges and universities have added graduate-level degree programs, research centers, and other undertakings that extend beyond the bachelor level, U.S. custom has traditionally leaned toward the notion that when speaking of higher education, the conversation is referencing the undergraduate level or college. Gasman (2003) declared when speaking of higher education, no matter the generation, it is assumed the emphasis is on undergraduate college studies. Trow (1993) described higher education as "the large, untidy, uncoordinated

from the center, and without national standards for the admission of students, the appointment of academic staff, or the awarding of degrees" (p. 40).

An important element that further establishes higher education is the accreditation that is conferred upon an institution. Kells (1984) stated that conferral of accredited grade designates that an institution or program in instructor education, for example, is accepted by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education while the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of business evaluates programs in business and administration. Franzosa (1996) stated institutional accreditation ascertains the assertion that "a college or university as a whole: (a) has appropriate purposes; (b) has resources needed to accomplish its purposes; (c) can demonstrate that it is accomplishing its purposes, (d) gives reason to believe that it continues to accomplish its purposes" (p. 130).

Thelin (2011) stated, "To grasp the 370-year history of American higher education in a single glimpse is both unwieldy and unwise" (p. 3). Therefore, this study examined the historical origins of higher education in America.

Historical Origins of Higher Education

The history of higher education in America is directly connected to the history of Harvard College (currently known as Harvard University). When colonizers settled to the New World (currently known as America), Harvard was the only existing English institution of higher learning. Its establishment in 1636 was a college to train ministers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In *New England's First Fruits,* London (1643), the likely author and scholar, Hugh Peters, asserted, "[One] of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our present ministers shall lie in the dust" (p.12). One of the rules and precepts that was observed in

the early college according to Kimball's (2010) book, *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Documentary History,* was "Everyone shall so exercise himself in reading the Scriptures twice a day that he shall be ready to give such an account of his proficiency therein, both in theoretical observations of the language and logic and in practical and spiritual truths, as his tutor shall require, according to his ability; seeing the entrance of the word giveth light; it giveth understanding, to the simple (Psalm 119:130, p. 199).

Handlin & Handlin stated (1974) while educating and equipping ministers was the genesis of colonial colleges, that commitment was not the only purpose of the undergraduate Bachelor of Arts curriculum. According to Gasman (2003), the charge of the higher education institution was to certify the preparation and experiential discipline of a future leadership cohort. Although this was the intent of college education, the Native American group attested to unfair treatment when their children attended these schools. Gasman (2003) explained a recollection by Benjamin Franklin (1784); how during one occurrence after the chief fathers of a group of Native American students returned home, was accused of their children coming back from school being sluggish, unhealthy, and incapable of making good decisions. Subsequently, college enrollment was restricted to White males only, Gasman stated, "most from established, prosperous families and members of the colony's dominant protestant denomination" (p. 6). American higher education has undertones and blatancy of discrimination very early on. According to Mosses (1999), the U.S. was initially established as a country that afforded educational opportunities for only wealthy, elite, White males, while not incorporating women, all people of color, and even poor White males.

Outtz (1995) stated, "The notion of 'higher education for a chosen few' is changing to one of 'higher education as a basic need for all,' and our society is now depending on higher

education institutions to prepare huge numbers of individuals for their roles as workers, informed citizens, and parents" (p. 65).

Historical Origins of Blacks Entering Higher Education in the U.S.

Titcomb (2020) created a chronological timeline of major milestones in the advancement of Black people in higher education. He documented that in 1799, John Chavis, a Presbyterian minister and teacher, was the first Black person on record to attend an American college or university. In 1823, Alexander Lucius Twilight earned his bachelor's degree from Middlebury College in the state of Vermont, becoming the first known African American to graduate from a college in the United States.

In 1833, Oberlin College was established in the state of Ohio. According to Titcomb (2020), the institution was open to Black men and women and had a reputation and dedication to African American higher education. Though the institution didn't become degree-granting until 1932, Titcomb (2020) recorded that Cheyney University in Pennsylvania was established in 1837 designated for recently freed Black people. By 1880, 45 Black colleges and universities were in existence, and ten years thereafter approximately 64 Black colleges were open for student enrollment, according to Titcomb (2020). In 1900, after over 100 years since the first Black person attended college in America, Black colleges opened for business increased to 78, according to Titcomb (2020).

Support Services in Higher Education

Academic Advisement

Greenwood (1998); Schein & Laff (1997); Schneider (1998); and Turkey (1996) argued responsibility student academic advice has in successfully concentrating on the objectives of the students as well as the institution. Turkey (1996) noted the importance of taking a "systems"

approach to academic advice. According to Colton, Connor, Shultz, & Easter (1999), support services that include proactive involvement has been found to create powerful academic and retention outcomes. Successful academic advisement programs focus on academic, social, and emotional issues, goals interpretation, and matters relating to student engagement and relationship to the educational institution, according to Colton et al. (1999). Tinto (1993) and Mayo et al. (1995) stated that successful academic advisement that has a mentoring element offers suitable role models and/or counselors who encourage and support students through their educational development, as well as help students adjust to the nuances of the higher educational institution they attend.

Yarbrough (2002) studied the engagement approach to academic advisement, which adopts that the primary academic adviser as the primary mentor in supporting the students in recognizing and deciphering their academic goals and objectives.

Haworth and Conrad (1997) provided the following outlook concerning engagement theory and the quality of an academic program: "high-quality programs are those in which students, faculty, and administrators engage in a mutually supportive teaching and learning: students invest in teaching as well as learning, and faculty and administrators invest in learning as well as teaching" (p. 27). According to Haworth and Conrad's (1997) engagement theory of academic program quality: "Students who learn from committed scholar-teachers become more inspired professionals who are more committed to their profession and to their ongoing professional growth and development" (p. 31). According to Schein and Laff (1997), this ideal of academic advice concentrates on the goals and objectives of incoming students, matching with faculty-advisors who are also mentors and likely share the same interests.

Financial Assistance

Biggs, Torres, & Washington (1998) and McNairy (1996) argued organizational institutional barriers mentioned in the literature on retention for Black students included inadequate financial assistance. Parker (1998) said there was a scarcity of college funds for programs that focused on engaging in supportive relationships with students. Stampen (1983) revealed that approximately 67% of students who attended public higher education institutions needed some sort of financial assistance. Tinto (1983) said failure to direct consideration to the finances of higher education students as an effective factor for academic persistence was a major limitation.

According to Voorhees (1985), student financial aid was the greatest grant to higher education in the federal budget. He noted that most of the financial aid capital from the federal government was directed to students which then went to the higher education institutions that said students elected to attend; therefore, these institutions were major stakeholders in increasing recruitment and academic persistence for all students.

Voorhees (1985) studied "the connection between the federal campus-based financial aid programs and the persistence of high need freshmen" (p. 21). Astin (1975) noted the conventional wisdom and influence that certain types of higher education support have on academic persistence. Jensen (1981) disagreed with Astin's take. He reported that from 1968 to 1981, federal financial aid increased 36 times as much, which rejects the null hypothesis of the effectiveness of financial aid on academic persistence. Voorhees (1985) concluded that his findings contradicted one another; therefore, failed to provide substantial instruction to financial aid officers on how to construct financial aid packages to significantly affect academic persistence in a positive way. He concluded that the success of institutional approaches to

increase the academic persistence of students in need of financial assistance relied on the involvement of financial aid officers and specialists.

Geronimo (1985) studied whether or not higher education students decided to drop out of college based on their financial situation. She found that financial assistance was directly correlated to the achievement of college degrees and was the third most significant effect on persistence. St. John, Andrieu, and Oescher, and Starkey (1992) found that the number of grants awarded had a positive effect on academic persistence when students were enrolled in private higher educational institutions.

Once again, Jensen (1984) disagreed. He inspected the categorical connections of student financial assistance and the links to selected aid packages with higher educational academic persistence. The findings implied that financial aid had a small positive influence on academic persistence, yet according to Jensen (1984), "… it can be speculated that the combined effects of student aid on access, persistence, and subsequent degree attainment is substantial" (p. 126).

Career Services

According to Kretovics, Honaker, and Kraning (1999), "employment is an end result of education that has brought career services to the center stage at many colleges and universities across the U.S. On most campuses, career services are the department directly responsible for connecting students with employment" (p.77). Feldman & Turnley (1995) believed the definitive measure in the thoughts of many higher education stakeholders or persons of interest was whether or not the student was able to obtain employment after they matriculated. Patterson (1993) stated that students with undecided goals ought to be referred to career counseling. Meznek (1987) said definitive goals concerning a chosen profession and why that field was selected were positively connected with academic persistence.

According to Teal & Herrick (1962) in 1919, Yale University started one of the initial models of the placement centers. According to Zunker (1998), Parsons' three-part Trait and Factor Theory provided the underlying theoretical assumptions of the placement center:

1. A clear understanding of yourself, aptitudes, abilities, interests, resources, limitations, and other qualities.

2. Knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensations, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work.

3. True reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts (p. 10).

Kretovics, Honaker, and Kraning (1999) suggested as companies and organizations demand for young, capable workers increased, the significance of career placement centers, employment offices, and career development at higher education institutions began to rise. Lorick (1987) stated that institutional career services support, in connection with the efforts of faculty, student affairs experts, and alumni worked to match students with employment opportunities. Bishop (1966) added that several job-related training programs brought forth greater attentiveness to placement centers on the university campus. Rentz & Sanddlemire (1988) attested that career theory made the transition from Trait and Factor (abilities, preferences, attitudes, job requirements, performance demands), used mainly in placement centers in the beginning stages to more human capital or people-oriented focus deriving from counseling and student development theory.

As Herr et al. (1993) stated,

"The placement event needed to be viewed as the end of a process of career development that involved knowledge, exploratory activities, the 80 Journal of Student Affairs, Vol. VIII, 1999 development of skills, career planning, the choice of a major as an

intermediate career decision, and learning that began before the entrance to college and continued through diverse learning in higher education and that ultimately brought the student to the activity called placement" (p. 3).

As the student affairs profession evolved from student development to student learning, Blimling (1998) and Schroeder (1998) stated career services were innovating from the placement and planning models to today's most dominant model and networking model according to Casella (1990). He characterized this model as:

An intersection where students and alumni, employers, and faculty and staff meet to deal with all the many varieties of career matters in an active association of ... human, print, and electronic career resources [as] the most efficient and effective method of performing both the job placement and career planning activities (p. 33).

Academic Persistence and Black Males

Levin and Levin (1991) stated that "equal access" to higher education increased the faith of those as a solution to the financial and social problems that Black people experience. "Education continues to be a major vehicle for upward mobility, and attainment of a bachelor's degree is the largest single factor responsible for the creation of the present Black middle class" (Dervarics, 1989, p. 3). Although Black students' high school graduation rates increased, the number of Black students enrolling in college decreased by approximately seven percent between 1976 and 1985 according to Lang (1992). Lang attributed this to many factors including but not limited to, rising tuition costs and a lack of serious investment in equal opportunity by some higher education institutions. Equal opportunity or access, unfortunately persisting academically for Black people, especially males, has been an issue of equal concern.

Low academic persistence or lower graduate rates has been custom in American history.

According to Chavez & Maestas-Flores, (1991); Clewell & Ficklen, (1987); Grayson, (1998); and Levin & Levin (1991), Black students have lower graduation rates, higher attrition rates, and more reports of academic difficulty when compared with their White counterparts. Act (1998), Grayson (1998), and the Higher Education Research Institute (1998) reported that after four years of schooling, only 19.4% of Black students earned bachelor's degrees versus 43% of their White counterparts earning a bachelor's degree over the same time period. Act et al. (1998) also reported that after nine years of schooling, 33.9% of Black students graduated with bachelor's degrees versus 47.3% of their White counterparts earning a bachelor's degree during the same time frame.

Wood and Williams (2013) studied first-year academic persistence amongst Black male students enrolled in community colleges. They found environmental properties were significantly more of a predictor of academic persistence than factors in other areas. Whereas Wood & Turner (2011) stated that the likelihood of academic persistence for Black males attending higher education institutions, specifically community colleges, was low. Wood and Williams (2013) researched that according to the U.S. Department of Education "11.5% of Black male students depart from a community college within one year of admission, 48.9% leave after three years, and 83% leave after six years, without achieving their intended certificate or degree" (p. 2).

Wood & Turner (2011) alluded that Black male students receiving support services in two-year schools versus four-year schools were totally different. Flowers (2006) stated that Black male students at four-year schools received greater academic benefits versus Black male students at two-year institutions. Flowers (2006) "studied and compared academic and social integration patterns between Black males enrolled in two- and four-year colleges and found that

Black males had significantly lower levels of academic and social integration experiences at two-year institutions than they did at four-year institutions" (Wood & Turner, 2011 p. 4).

Wood & Turner (2011) concluded that studies have delivered significant insight into the factors that affect Black male academic persistence. He determined that a sense of urgency was necessary in this regard as analytical relations between theory, research, and practice were needed to assist Black male students with their academic needs. Eventually, such dialogues, steered by the results of quantitative and qualitative research, can lead to policies, practices, and strategies that produce better academic outcomes for Black male students.

Higher Education Support Services and Black Males

Beyond access to support services, scholars believe in order for Black males to academically persist, support services from higher education institutions must proactively seek Black male students. Tinto (1993) indicated that for the academic success of Black males, they need to use more support services, yet historically Black males underutilize support services. Robert & Thompson (1994) claimed reactive programs that are initiated by the student are found to be successful for non-Black students but unsuccessful for Black students. They suggested the need for intentional strategic programming to increase the chance of success for Black male students. Shultz, Colton, & Colton (2001) stated proactive (versus reactive) programs do not gamble with academic success by way of mandating students to engage in program activities that are planned to support students to avoid the social and academic behaviors and pitfalls that lead to failure and/or dropping out. Tinto (1993) recommended that programs such as these were vital for Black male student success.

Early intervention may be a major solution to the hesitation of Black male students seeking help and higher education institutions providing help. Seidman (1996) believed the

importance of checking on students and having an early warning technique that notifies faculty and administers to potential academic problems is a must. Levin & Levin (1991) agreed with Seidman (1996) and indicated that academic intercessions are most optimal when issues are caught in adequate enough time to put in place a plan of action that makes a substantial difference. Norman & Norman (1995) said that being able to discover one's own perceptual prejudices, mindsets, and decrees along with understanding and embracing diversity in cultures and languages that students carry to campus strengthen support networks for Black male students.

Yarbrough (2002) reflects on studies done by Matthay (1995). [Matthay] examined specific strategies for working with students from culturally and socially diverse backgrounds. In addition, he used a specific seven-section approach to prepare high school guidance counselors for advising students about college selection and admission. The seven sections discussed examining techniques for motivating students; preplanning for academic, extracurricular, and financial success; exploring options for higher education; explaining the application and admission process; exploring the needs of specific populations; reviewing issues of professional growth and development; and outlining a sample plan for student advising (p. 62).

Black males find it hard to seek and ask for help. Robert & Thomson (1994) said that Black male students feel too embarrassed to ask for help with their studies. Levin & Levin (1991) acknowledged that Black male students "have difficulty (a) recognizing that a problem exists, (b) asking for help when they realize that they have a problem, and (c) asking for the available help in time for that assistance to be of benefit" (p. 325).

McBride (2017) declared that although some colleges and universities have implemented programs to address the needs of Black male students. If a difference will be made for them to

complete school and earn a college degree (persist), we must continue to respond to their unique needs. She stated understanding what contributes to a college experience that motivates students to academically persist is important, especially for Black men. McBride (2017) stated we must not forget that for many Black men, college life can be fraught with traumatic or stressful experiences. Yet many colleges and universities aren't accommodating Black male students. They lack Black male professors and mentors, mentorship programs, and specialized financial aid advisers, and those authentically concerned with the student as a person. When Black male students are admitted to a college or university, their experience should look different from that of the majority of students. McBride (2017) asserted we know Black males are resilient, remarkable, and capable of excelling when given the tools to do so. Perry-Burney (2013) declared that many Black male students "see themselves as the person who can change his family's life cycle, who moves his family out of poverty, and who is respected by white people."

Brooms (2018) positioned the efforts by colleges to boost the academic performances and educational experiences of Black males including but not limited to institutional, state, system-level, and national programs, policies, and calls to action. He lamented, among the aforementioned efforts is the establishing Black Male Initiative (BMI) programs, which are predominantly structured as social unity programs and intended to increase students' retention and graduation rates. Brooms (2018) concluded:

> Four major themes emerged from the data with respect to how Black males in college experience their engagement in BMI programs: (a) sense of belonging – comprised of statements of mattering and feeling connected on campus; (b) gaining access – comprised of statements where students expressed the importance of increased access to sociocultural capital; (c) academic motivation – comprised of statements positing the

efforts of BMI to support and enhance students' academic and educational performances; and (d) heightened sense of self, or feeling connected to a collective identity and consciousness among BMI staff and peer BMI members (p. 146).

Summary of Literature Review

Smith (2011) found Black men face hurdles that influence their sense of belonging and health in U. S. society and its educational institutions. As opposed to their counterparts, Billings (2011) found that Black male students in K-12 regularly are expected to participate in what Haberman (1991) calls the 'pedagogy of poverty': a teacher in an urban school who did not engage in basic acts as the primary means of instruction would be regarded as deviant. Warren (2016) stated knowledge, policies, and examples of what it takes to provide high quality schooling experiences to Black boys is within our grasp as an intellectual community. The wide-ranging discussion on Black male school achievement has been overrun with examples of their school failure with few bright spots of hope for wide-scale school reform. These experiences have stayed consistent and have evolved beyond K–12 into higher education. Solorzano (2000) concluded that race, racism, racial stereotypes, and the campus racial climate must continue to be deemed through the eyes of Black male students. The experiences of Black male students demonstrates that even at high levels of accomplishment (i.e., at elite undergraduate universities), where educational conditions might on the surface appear to be equal, inequality and discrimination still exist, albeit in more subtle and hidden forms.

Smith (2007) found that Black male students confirmed in their own words, by telling their own life experiences, that racial encounters produce painful psychological stress responses. Academic persistence of Black male students is critically influenced by their social environment (Clark 1991). The home life of Black male adolescents is quite different from that of their white

peers. Some do not have as many resources for their educational needs. Family support may be lacking if the school environment denies their cultural expression and heritage (Baker, 2005; Pinkney, 2000). In addition to minimizing their academic abilities, many Black students limit contact with other students and increase contact with same-race peers to help maintain positive self-esteem and minimize stress (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005).

Chapter II provides an overview of theoretical frameworks allied with Black male student persistence along with a brief summary of the historical development of Blacks or African Americans in higher education. Several studies identified mentoring as one way to increase retention and persistence (Strayhorn, 2014). Therefore, this study emphasizes the need to develop mentoring programs and initiatives for Black male students, especially at PWIs. Mentoring has been found as a resource to be instrumental in Black males academically persisting.

Significant networks with faculty and peers on campus allow students to feel attached to the campus community. Palmer & Young (2009) stated success in college isn't the sole responsibility of just one individual, including the student, but the responsibility of the entire university community. In conjunction with the student, the entire higher education community works together to address persistence. Community and connectivity may be one way in which Black male students navigate and make sense of institutional support for their academic persistence.

Persistence and graduation rates continue to be a pressing issue facing many colleges and universities, especially since financial funding is entwined to student success rates. Sparks (2019) stated that it is "… essential to look at African American male initiatives and the perceptions of their beliefs to add to the research on mentoring initiatives for this population" (p.

38). We understand the existence of support services to help assist Black male student persistence; the next step will be to measure the quality of said programs. Black male students are the primary benefactor of support service programs. Therefore, studying the ways Black male students perceive the quality of the support services at their institution is paramount.

Chapter III

Methodology

This study's chapter delivers an overview of the research framework and a thorough report of the sample populace. This study was qualitative in nature and exploratory in design. Exploratory research is inexpensive, highly interactive, and open-ended in the heart. It is designed to answer questions like *how* and *why*. It was conducted solely to develop and refine beliefs derived from the common themes gathered and analyzed from the data established. Furthermore, this study detailed the individuals' experiences and deliberated the significance of those experiences.

This research examined the extent to which higher education support services act as either a barrier or conduit to Black male students' academic persistence. Bush (2004) stated that many Black males attend higher education institutions because they perceive these universities as venues that provide economic advancement. This chapter sets the groundwork for a descriptive analysis of the data gathered. Furthermore, this chapter, by way of three research questions, elicited Black males' perspective and their lived experiences with higher education support services at their respective institutions. The questions are as follows:

1. *What resources are instrumental in helping Black males academically persist?*

2. *How do Black male students navigate and make sense of institutional support for their academic persistence?*

3. *In what ways do Black male students perceive the quality of the support services at their institution?*

Qualitative Analysis

This study was qualitative in design with an exploratory approach. Because of the

narrative method's storytelling nature, the researcher was able to explore and better understand the complexity of a phenomenon. According to Williams (2007), a qualitative research method is a general approach that encompasses discovery. Creswell (1999) stated that qualitative research is also defined as an unfolding ideal that occurs in an environment that supports the researcher to foster a level of detail from significant participation in the authentic practices. According to Corbin (2008), qualitative research methodology is measured to be appropriate when the researcher or the investigator either explores a new field of study or aims to discover and theorize protuberant matters.

The qualitative methodology with an exploratory research strategy is designed to understand a particular phenomenon better. This study, therefore, was set to examine how Black male students perceived and experienced higher education support services, or a lack thereof, while persisting through college. While this study focused on each individual's experience, the information was gathered through the collection of their stories and their individual experiences are conveyed.

Wang and Geale (2015) pointed out the significance of inquiry as a means to explore the meaning derived from the participants' experiences. It applies storytelling as a way of interconnecting the participants' truths to a greater audience. They concluded that the data acquired can bid the reader a greater depth of understanding subject material and added awareness to employ the stories to their own context.

According to Sandelowski (1991), the exploratory research approach is a collaborative and revelatory outcome even before it becomes subject to the researcher's resolutions. According to Wang and Geale (2015), exploratory qualitative researchers look for ways to comprehend and then present real-life occurrences through the stories of the research members, allowing dynamic

descriptions of these experiences and an assessment of the significance that the contributors develop from their experiences. This dissertation incorporated the exploratory research design element as a means to illustrate the stories told by the participants. Since this research is a relatively new examination on a social science topic, this methodology is best utilized.

Wang and Geale (2015) said, "Qualitative methodology … has an underlying philosophy and access that enables the illumination of real people in real settings through the 'painting' of their stories. It is a methodology in which the researcher attempts to illuminate the meanings of personal stories and events" (p. 195).

A qualitative research design utilizing reflective interviews was commissioned (Reiff, Gerber, & Ginsberg, 1997) for this study. The sample selection utilized a purposive method usually employed when a researcher wants to discover, understand, and/or gain perceptions of a particular population (Merriam, 1988). According to McMillan and Schumacher (1997), purposeful sampling is selected when the sample is prone to be familiar and informed about the phenomena the researcher is exploring. Therefore, one needs to select a sample from which one can have optimal insight, which was the case in this study.

The data gathered in this study were from students in the Northeast region of the U.S., more specifically in the states of New York and New Jersey. This study focused on Black male students attending both private and public institutions, including but not limited to predominantly white institutions (PWIs) and Catholic institutions. It excluded students who attended their classes 100% virtually or online, yet students who may have had a hybrid curriculum (online classes and face-to-face classes) were incorporated.

Within this exploratory research method, three different approaches were employed to collect data: (1) online surveys, (2) online interviews, and (3) online focus groups.

Data Collection

Online Surveys. The first approach included online surveys. The online surveys were executed via the Google forms platform. This first layer gathered data that distinguished between participants over and beyond being Black, a college student, and of the male gender. Hampton (2017) stated that online surveys support access to sizable amounts of participants within a short period of time. The online surveys were constructed via Google form and emailed to potential participants for completion. Based on the data collected from the online surveys, participants were qualified to participate in the next stage within the narrative research process.

Online Interviews. The second approach with this narrative research process were the one-on-one online interviews via Skype, or a comparable platform, such as Zoom. Interviews were particularly useful for getting the story behind the participants' experiences. The interviews began with a structured interview protocol where the same first few questions were asked of every participant. Sample interview questions included: "How long have you been attending college?" "How would you describe yourself as a student?" and "What is it like as a Black male student at your college/university?"

Thereafter room was given for the interviews to be partially unstructured based on the data collected after participants were asked questions from the protocol. Unstructured interviews give license and freedom for the participants to expound upon their stories. Furthermore, it allows the interviewer to follow-up with the query that is connected to the last statement or answer from the participant. This technique promotes and enables the interview to be more conversational. The interviewer pursues in-depth information around the topic. McNamara (1999) stated that interviews are developmental to particular respondents of the online survey, e.g., to an additional examination of responses. Creswell (2014) depicted that suitable

[exploratory] research existed when the researcher conducted interviews with participants and the interviews were unstructured with open-ended questions. Dana (2013) defined unstructured interviews in which each interviewer could ask different questions of different applicants in whatever way he or she saw fit.

Furthermore, an open-ended inquiry was performed and was guided by the aforementioned open-ended questions asked. The data collected from the open-ended questions were used to collect initial understanding from the outlooks and opinions of the participants. As such, the aim of grounded theory and in-depth interviews is to create "categories from the data and then to analyze relationships between categories" while attending to how the "lived experience" of research participants can be understood (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1162).

The one-on-one interviews were administered via video conference instead of in person. The virtual interviews took approximately 30-45 minutes in duration. According to Nehl (2015), "video-conference interviews take place synchronously, with the participant and interviewer using a computer, tablet, or other devices to communicate at the same time" (p. 141). Nehl (2015) stated that digital platforms such as Adobe Connect, Apple's Facetime, Google Chat, Zoom, and Skype are just some of the many options available for one-on-one communication in real-time via technology. From the aforementioned platforms, Zoom was utilized to administer online one-on-one interviews. Lastly, similar to Deakin and Wakefield (2013), the researcher believed "the online interview should be treated as a viable option to the researcher rather than just as an alternative or second choice when in-person interviews cannot be achieved" (p. 3).

In Skype or Zoom interviews, ethical issues are considered the same as in face-to-face interviews. Researchers get informed consent via online email or other forms, and all participants are fully aware of audio or video recordings. Interviews are recorded by a computer-based

recording software and then transcribed (Cater, 2011; Fox, Morris, & Rumsey, 2007). The online interview gives participants the right to withdraw from the interview process in uncomfortable situations just by clicking a button. This technological communication could increase the absentee rate and rescheduling of interviews compared with face-to-face interviews. However, when research is done in this innovative way, resources from the perspective of time and finances are saved (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013).

This qualitative study employed one-on-one interviews with 13 Black male full-time students. It gathered the uniqueness of each participant's story and experiential perspective. These Black male students attended colleges in New York City (NYC) and the state of New Jersey's (NJ) metropolitan area. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the percentage of college students in the U.S. who self-identify as Black has been rising. The percentage of Black students enrolled in college increased from 10% in 1976 to 14% in 2016.

In New York City, a high volume of Black students, specifically, Black male students, have enrolled in colleges or universities. According to the USC Race and Equity Center report (2019), New York City houses some colleges and universities where there is as much as 35% Black student enrollment. According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2019, Black people make up 24% of New York City's population. Research conducted in this location may lead to greater participation, which can yield a depth of data collection.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in New Jersey, there are universities and colleges with as much as 23% of Black student enrollment, with Black people only making up 13.7% of New Jersey State's population. The overwhelming number of Black students per capita in the New Jersey metropolitan area makes for a suitable location for

this study, whereas Black students may have a different experience because of their less diverse environment.

Online Focus Group. Thirdly, the focus group elicited answers about specific sets of topics/themes developed and introduced new questions as themes of interest emerged throughout the course of the interviews. This study assembled and analyzed the themes and concepts from the one-on-one interviews. These common themes were deciphered from the data collection. The theme(s) that were commonly illustrated by the participants initiated the focus group. The participants were drafted to the focus group in accordance with the commonly designated theme. The focus group included 6 of the 13 total participants of the study. The members of the focus group were also asked to comment on other themes that arose from the interviews. Only one focus group was conducted because of the limitations of the varying schedules of the participants.

This study employed the focus group to exclusively extrapolate themes and concepts gathered from the interviews. This study attempted to observe the interactions (verbal and non-verbal) between these individuals in response to the common themes and concepts from the one-on-one interviews. The interactions of Black men with one another are relevant to this study because said interactions may serve as social and/or moral support, which can be beneficial to the success of Black male students.

The focus group, like the interviews, were also administered via video conference, Zoom. Video-conferencing environments allow real-time communication with both audio and video (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Nehl (2015) declared the mounting popularity of video-conferencing preferences meant that a wider audience would be pliable and able to participate in research using this method. The researcher felt this technique contributed to the innovation of research.

According to Hine (2005), "this air of innovation and anxiety is a valuable asset that online research can build on and sustain, in order to maximize the potential for reflexive thinking …" (p. 246).

For clarity, the participants from the surveys were the same members participating in the interviews. Furthermore, the participants used in the surveys and interviews were also the same members who participated in the focus group.

Participants

Three things needed to be true in order to support the most suitable study. Therefore, the target population in this study were at least:

(1) full-time college students who,

(2) self-identified as male in gender, and

(3) self-identified as racially as Black.

To ensure the accuracy of the aforementioned criteria, all participants completed an online survey to qualify for the study. Adhering to this controlled qualification promoted a higher level of, as discussed in Reid's (2019) presentation, credibility (believability and trustworthiness), transferability (the degree that the findings of the research can be transferred to other contexts), dependability (consistency with which results could be repeated and result in similar findings), and confirmability (a measure of objectivity used to evaluate results), in all data collected in this study.

There were 13 participants in total for this study. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect his identity and ensure complete confidentiality. The pseudonyms for the participants were coded with a Hip-Hop theme. Each participant was referred to and identified as an already existing Hip-Hop artist for the purposes of the confidentiality of the data collection.

Adjapong (2017) found that students' general reaction to being involved using Hip-Hop approaches made them feel excited to learn because it was directly connected to their culture and made them feel comfortable.

Participants' Background

A Boogie wit da Hoodie. This student was coded as Hip-Hop artist A Boogie wit da Hoodie, or A Boogie for short. He hailed from Valley Stream, Long Island, New York and was 19-years-old. He just finished his sophomore semester at a public New York City college. His major was finance, with a minor in law & policy. When asked what made him choose his major, he stated that he had "… always been interested in finance since high school … taking all of these electives with business management marketing is one of the classes I paid close attention to. Getting to see the insides of a business or like the spreadsheets and see how these companies are profitable and seeing how they make their money is what I'm interested in." A Boogie lived on campus and had a 3.4-grade point average (GPA).

A Boogie came from a two-parent household that had instilled the importance of education in him since he was young. His mother completed her bachelor's degree, while his father had a master's degree. His father was currently pursuing his doctorate. A Boogie said, "the fact that both my parents have a degree motivates me to at least get my bachelor's. My dad is ODing, though. I want to get my master's, but I'm not trying to get no doctorate, though."

Chance the Rapper. This student was coded as Hip-Hop artist Chance the Rapper or Chance for short. He hailed from Newark, New Jersey and was 19-years-old. He just finished his sophomore semester at a private Catholic New Jersey university. His major was sports management. When asked what made him choose his major, he stated,

"When I was deciding what major I was going to choose, I met with my academic

advisor, and we broke down a whole list of majors … I tried to look at which one I would

enjoy the most so that college wouldn't be a waste of time and money. We dialed it

down, we started off broad, and we narrowed it down. I knew I wanted to be in the

business. I know I want to do sports. I played sports in high school, and I always want to

be around it, and I knew I liked being a businessman. I like to talk, and I like to go. We

narrowed it down to its very minimum to see who had the top management programs in

the country, and I chose my school according to that."

Chance commuted to school and had a 2.7-grade point average (GPA). Chance also

worked part-time at a local supermarket. Chance came from a two-parent household. His mom

had a bachelor's degree, and stressed to him the importance of getting at least a bachelor's

degree. His dad had only obtained his high school diploma but also emphasized how important a

college degree was for Chance's socioeconomic future. Chance also lived with his older sister,

who had a bachelor's degree. Chance said, "My mom and sister tell me all the time that I got to

graduate college. So that, and my mentors have convinced me that this is just something I have

to do if I want a better life for myself."

Danny Brown. This student was coded as an underground Hip-Hop artist, Danny Brown.

He hailed from Brooklyn, New York and was 21-years-old. For the purposes of this study, in

some cases, he was referred to as Danny. He just finished his sophomore semester at a public

New York City college, graduating with his associate's degree in marketing management and

sales. Danny Brown will be pursuing his bachelor's degree at another New York City college

during the upcoming semester. He will major in finance with a minor in data science. When

asked what made him choose his major and minor, he stated,

"In science, I wanted to be a nuclear physicist. Then I learned that if you go to school for

science, you are going to need to get your Ph.D. and have a 4.0 GPA and is still really hard to get a job in that field because there aren't a lot of places that are looking for scientists and those places usually like somebody who's really qualified so I figured finance would get me a job … I know somebody who graduated with a Ph.D. and really still can't get a job in physics, and he loves physics."

Danny Brown commuted to school and had a 3.3-grade point average (GPA). Danny Brown lived with his dad in New York City. His mom lived in Florida with her spouse. Danny Brown was really close to his mom and not as close to his dad. Danny Brown said, "People haven't really told him to get a degree, outside of some professors." His intention, according to him, was "… to complete school so that he can get a good enough job, to move out of my dad's crib, and get my own apartment."

Dave East. This student was coded as Hip-Hop artist Dave East, or Dave. He hailed from Westbury, Long Island, New York and was 22-years-old. For the purposes of this study, in some cases, he was referred to as Dave. He just finished his lower senior semester at a private university in New Jersey. He attended school on a full athletic scholarship. Dave East was a high school all-American football player. His major was strategic communication. When asked what made him choose his major, he stated,

"It's a long story. I went to prep school out of high school, and my SATs were low, but I still had a decent GPA, so what happened was I went to prep school, got qualified, and I got an offer. I told my coach, and he's like, what you want to major in? I told him, 'exercise science.' He looked at me and said, "I did exercise science, and it's extremely hard. And to do that and play football is impossible."

The researcher probed Dave further on this, asking the race of the coach. Dave stated that

the coach was "white." Dave elaborated:

"Even though he got the degree, he was telling me like, man, pick something else because exercise science is really hard. Man, I still think about that every single day. I'm not going to lie to you. I think about that every day. Because it's like I'm almost done with Communications. I basically got one semester left. But it's like, damn man, communication is cool, but it's something that doesn't interest me. Exercise science, how the body functions, how the body works, that's what I'm interested in. People ask me how you do this how you do that, so it's like second nature to me."

Dave lived on campus as a student-athlete and had a 2.66-grade point average (GPA).

Both Dave East's parents had degrees, as well as his older brother. His dad had earned a doctorate in technology. Though his household had obtained multiple college degrees, Dave East wasn't sold on education. He stated, "If it wasn't for football, I probably wouldn't even be in college, to be honest. I feel that football is my drive, and I love it so much to the point where if I'm just in school as a student, I don't think I could do it. I probably could, but I probably wouldn't be as motivated."

Fabolous. This student was coded as Hip-Hop artist Fabolous. He hailed from Brooklyn, New York and was 23-years-old. He finished his senior year at a private Catholic university in New York, graduating with a bachelor's degree. He intended on pursuing his master's degree but was unsure which school he would be attending. He attended his school on a full athletic basketball scholarship. His major was cross-disciplinary, whereas he was allowed to highlight three majors of his choice: humanities, social science, and criminal justice. When asked what made him choose those majors, he stated, "I didn't really know what I wanted to do, so I tried to pick anything that I was most interested in." Fabolous lived on campus as a student-athlete and

finished college with a 3.2-grade point average (GPA).

Fabolous was never primarily motivated to persist academically. Much of his motivation derived from his father, whom he loved so much and was extremely close to. Fabolous said, "My father always pushed me to be a studious guy. He always told me that education was the key …" His dad had recently passed away, and in his honor, Fabolous was in pursuit of his master's degree.

Future. This student was coded as Hip-Hop artist Future. He hailed from Queens, New York and was 23-years-old. He just finished his lower junior semester at a public New York City college. He held an associate's degree in business administration from another New York City community college. His current major was business communications. When asked what made him choose his major, he stated, "When I first came to this school, I was going to school for business management and at the time I didn't get into that program because I failed a calculus class so by default I majored in business communication." Future commuted to school and had a 1.8-grade point average (GPA). He also had a part-time job working in retail.

Future lived in a single-family household with his mom. Before he was born, his mom migrated from Jamaica in pursuit of a better life. Future was motivated to help his mom make a better life for both of them. His academic pursuits were motivated by socioeconomic ascension. Future said, "Once I finish my bachelor's degree, I'm going straight for my master's degree. After that, I'm going to get a high-paying job to help my mother out."

Gunna. This student was coded as Hip-Hop artist Gunna. He hailed from Valley Stream, Long Island, New York and was 21-years-old. He just finished his junior year at a private Catholic college in New York. He was a student-athlete, though not on an athletic scholarship. His major was exercise science. When asked what made him choose his major, he stated, "I like

working with athletes. Just like being involved in sports. And I always like medicine, so it just came together." Gunna lived on campus and had a 2.9-grade point average (GPA).

Gunna came from a two-parent household that had instilled the importance of education in him since he was young. His mother completed her bachelor's degree, while his father had his master's degree. His father was also currently pursuing his doctorate. Gunna's younger brother was also currently in college pursuing his bachelor's degree. Gunna said, "College is something that I just have to do. My parents both have their degrees, and I know my little brother is going to get his. I can't be the only one without one so it's definitely happening."

J. Cole. This student was coded as Hip-Hop artist J Cole. He hailed from Brooklyn, New York and was 22-years-old. He just finished his senior year at a public New York City college and graduated with his bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in marketing. When asked what made him choose his major, he stated, "I want to be a musician and a rap artist, so I feel like trying to market is a majority of your job especially now with social media." J. Cole commuted to school and graduated with a 3.4-grade point average (GPA). Regarding his aspirations after school, J. Cole stated he was "… probably leaning toward graduate school but I'm also toward just doing music full-time as well. I feel like now is the time. I feel like I've gotten to the point where I wanted to give that a good shot to see where I'm at and I'll do it full time with no interruption and no excuses no matter what comes out of it."

J. Cole lived in a single-parent household with his mom. He took care of his mom and wanted to finish his degree for her. He said, "I just wanted to get it done." Regarding his perspective on school, he said,

"I don't think that you have to go to school. You don't have to know what you want but I think you just have a dream. Protect your dream and I think your dream will lead you to

places if you need to go to school to follow your dream to go to school if you need to get a job right away to get to your dream work on it and pray on it. Whatever it is, astronaut, firefighter, figure out how you could get there because a lot of things nowadays don't require schools, some stuff still does but I think that just have a dream first."

JahDell. This student was coded as underground Hip-Hop artist JahDell. He hailed from Antigua, West Indies and was 19-years-old. JahDell just finished his freshman year at a public New York state university. His major was business administration with minors in economics and psychology. When asked what made him choose those areas of concentration, he stated,

"Well, what made me choose business was I wanted to be an entrepreneur. I thought that would teach me how to be an entrepreneur, but I guessed to a certain extent it does teach you the fundamentals that you need to know but I don't think it teaches you the entire way. I think entrepreneurs are born that way and they get to live a certain way. The reason I chose my minor is because of the psychology aspect. I need to understand people because I have to understand my customers. If you understand how charisma works you could do anything really and truly because you got to bring the best out of your employees like a coach. I feel like coaches are so relevant due to the fact that a good coach could bring in the best in a player so that is really why I chose psychology. Jay-Z has a saying I can sell water to a well. A man who could do that is untouchable because how do you sell water to a well … So, if you could do that you can sell anything from top to bottom. I chose economics because I'm from a small country named Antigua. At the end of my own journey, my goal was to go back to my country and start more businesses so that I can create a better economy for the country; I can create jobs and put the whole country in a situation that could be better off in the future."

JahDell lived on campus, held a part-time job at the school, and had a 3.8-grade point average (GPA). Jahdell lived in a single-parent household with his mom. For about a year, Jahdell left college in pursuit of a musical career. Influenced by the lack of success during that pursuit along with a nagging mentor in his life, Jahdell returned to college. Jahdell said, "Outside of rapping and college, I don't know what else I would have done that was going to give me the lifestyle that I was dreaming about." His pursuit was to change his life socioeconomically and be an entrepreneur.

Kanye West. This student was coded as native Hip-Hop artist Kanye West. He hailed from Brooklyn, New York and was 22-years-old. For the purposes of this study, in some cases, Kanye West was referred to only as Kanye. He just finished his lower junior semester at a public New York City college. His major was business and technology of fashion. When asked what made him choose his major, he stated,

> "I was always a hands-on kid. I was always into art and design. It is something that I kind of fell into at an early age was drawn to. Making blueprints for things whether floor plans or designs for garments and that kind of transitioned into sewing because I found a sewing machine in my house that was not being used and I took it upon myself to learn how to use it. I started off tailoring and started making custom design pieces and it started going off from there. I remember being a freshman in high school I was selling T-shirts with prints on it and I was pushing that as a clothing line. I was younger but short-lived money management wasn't that great."

Kanye worked part-time at a retail store. He commuted to school and had a 2.9-grade point average (GPA). Kanye lived with both his mother and father. His mother motivated him the most when it came to school. He said, "I've always wanted to go to college because only one

other person in my family enrolled in college. My mother, who took breaks and kept going to school, then went back and eventually graduated college. I'm really close to my mom." Kanye was also pursuing school to learn everything he could about fashion. Furthermore, he was there for networking. He said, "… I feel like although college is great for learning and interacting it's the people you meet that's most important."

Nas. This student was coded as Hip-Hop artist, Nas, and hailed from the island of Jamaica in the Caribbean Sea. He was 22-years-old. He had just finished his sophomore year at a public New York City college. Nas held an associate's degree in business administration with a concentration in marketing from another New York City community college. His current major was business management. When asked what made him choose his major, he stated, "I always wanted to be in business. The managerial level of business is on top, so I always wanted to be at the top level of business on the management chain." Nas commuted to school and had a 3.7-grade point average (GPA). He also had a full-time job working in retail.

Nas lived in a single-parent household with his mother and little sister. Nas was the first person in his family to obtain a college degree after he completed his associate's degree. He would be the first person to obtain a bachelor's degree if he were to persist. Nas was fully motivated to finish college. When asked how he sustained ambition to complete college, he said:

"Honestly my situation, I don't feel privileged at all. I feel that growing up it's always been a struggle. From my childhood, it was a struggle and I don't want my adulthood to mirror the same as my childhood years. This is why I am making sure that I can get an education and try to get a good job, and I want to beat the statistics. Statistics show that African American graduation rates are the lowest; I want to make sure that I beat that statistic. I want to make sure I get a job. I want to make sure that I can take care of my

family. I grew up with one parent taking care of three children. One source of income was tough with just one parent not having the support that you would have with two parents."

Van Zoe. This student was coded as an underground Hip Hop artist Van Zoe. He hailed from the Republic of Haiti and was 21-years-old. Van Zoe just finished his sophomore year at a private New Jersey University. His major was graphic design. When asked what made him choose that area of concentration, he stated,

"I believe I'm a creative person. I know I'm a creative person. My father wanted me to do engineering. I don't see myself doing that. I don't see myself sitting in the office pushing buttons. I'm not somebody that will be able to sit down for a long time. Consistently doing that over and over again, it's going to be tedious, and I'm going to hate the job. I have a creative mind. You have to be creative to be in that field, and that's something that I actually do enjoy. I draw, I edit videos on the computer, I edit photos. I tried to do a clothing line in high school. When I decided I'm going to go to school, graphic design was just there for me."

Van Zoe worked part-time at a retail restaurant. He lived in an apartment off campus alone, commuted to school, and financially took care of himself. He currently lived in his native country of Haiti, and his dad lived in New York. His father and mother were very influential in his life. Regarding school, Van Zoe said:

"I enrolled in college mainly because my parents wanted me to. I felt like I could have succeeded and done other things that I had going. I had vision and ideas. I didn't necessarily believe I needed college to do what I wanted to do. My father insisted that I go to college and have something to fall back on, and I'd have a degree, so if my plans

don't go as expected, then I'll have something to follow on, and I'll be able to get a decent job. I am attending college for a degree that falls along the line I want to be in."

The Weeknd. This student was coded as a native Canadian Hip Hop artist The Weeknd. He hailed from Brooklyn, New York and was 20-years-old. He just finished his junior at a public New York City college. His major was business and technology and fashion. When asked what made him choose his major, he stated, "I like fashion and creating things. In high school, I went to an architect and design school, and they showed us how to do creative things and design things, and that was fun, so I like it." The Weeknd commuted to school and had a 3.0-grade point average (GPA). The Weeknd also worked a part-time job in retail.

The Weeknd lived with both his mom and dad. He was extremely close to this mother. When asked what made him choose the school that he currently attended, he said, "My mom attended there, and she went back a couple of years ago to get her bachelor's degree there, so I went there, too." His mom was most influential in his life. Regarding his pursuit for higher education and persisting in college, The Weeknd proclaimed, "If I drop out, I won't have a home. My mom said I got to go." This condition from his mom is what motivated him to persist.

The Rationale for the Number of Participants

Most scholars argue that the concept of saturation is the most important factor to think about when mulling over sample size decisions in qualitative research (Mason, 2010). The key to this study was to be efficient and prevent redundancy and saturation. According to Dworkin (2012), saturation existed when the data collection process no longer offered any new or relevant data. Guest (2006) stated saturation had become the gold standard by which purposive sample sizes were determined in research.

Dworkin (2012) asserted that sample sizes used in qualitative research methods are often smaller because qualitative research methods are often concerned with garnering an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or are focused on heterogeneities in meaning, whereas the nucleus of the data is on the how and why of a particular issue, process, situation, subculture, scene or set of social interactions. Various aspects are said to be significant, including "the quality of data, the scope of the study, the nature of the topic, the amount of useful information obtained from each participant, the use of shadowed data, and the qualitative method and study designed used" (Morse, 2000, p. 1). Morse (1995) concisely stated that "saturation is the key to excellent qualitative work …" and that, "there are no published guidelines or tests of adequacy for estimating the sample size required to reach saturation" (p.147).

Dworkin (2012) claimed a large number of scholarly articles, book chapters, and books recommended guidance and suggested anywhere from 5 to 50 participants as adequate for research. Bertaux (1981) argued that a minimum of 15 was an acceptable sample size in qualitative research. Morse (1994) recommended at least six participants. Creswell (1998) recommended between five and twenty-five interviews. Kuzel (1992) recommended six to eight interviews for a homogeneous sample and twelve to twenty data sources "when looking for disconfirming evidence or trying to achieve maximum variation" (p. 41). None of these scholars provided critical evidence behind their recommendations.

Therefore, in accordance with scholarly research, the researcher mandated the sample size to be a minimum of 10 participants for the study. After solicitation of participants, the study landed at 13 in regard to sample size. Participants represented at least one college or university, though no college or university had more than two participants representing the same institution.

Validity & Reliability

Essential to this study was the accuracy and correctness of understanding the attitudes of Black male students toward higher education support from their colleges. Schwandt (1997) stated that validity is how accurate the study characterizes the participants' truths of social marvels and is dependable to them. Reid (2019) discussed in his presentation that instances of validity include *descriptive validity:* factual accuracy of the account, *interpretive validity*: accurate meaning attributed to participants' behaviors and words, *theoretical validity*: how well research relates the phenomenon to broader theory, and *evaluative validity:* objectivity of researcher sufficient to report data in an unbiased way (Slide 20).

Huck & Sandler (1979) defined validity threats as a way you might be wrong; other elucidations or understandings; challenging hypotheses. Validity threats also include but are not limited to bias, reactivity, and data distortions. Bias arises from the researcher's own theories and beliefs, and preconceived notions. Reactivity includes the influence the researcher may have on the participants. Though some participants are not current students of this researcher, some are former students. Lastly, data distortion may arise from inferences made based on the researcher's understanding of what was said.

The utilization of various qualitative methods to gather data ensures the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of this study. To safeguard for an objective approach to the exploration of information of this study, many qualitative research methods that provide the participants to share their stories were employed. Operating multiple research methods such as focus groups, surveys, and interviews, allowed the researcher to triangulate and parallel the results to ensure validity amongst one another.

To further demonstrate reliability, quotes from students' one-on-one and focus group

interviews were included in the presentation of this study (Adjapong, 2017). Adding to the trustworthiness of this study, member checking was utilized as an approach to ensure that all participants' interviews were being interpreted within the appropriate context and solely through their experiences, not anyone else's (Shenton, 2004). After each one-on-one interview was executed then transcribed, a follow-up call was made with each participant to review comments made and to offer the opportunity for them to clarify any statements made if needed on their end.

Consent and Ethical Considerations

The interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and video-recorded, during this study, via Zoom. These recorded experiences were used with the intention of producing a complete record of exact behaviors with participants' responses to questions and statements.

This study involved minimal risk. Although some students participating in this study are my former students, they were not given any preferential treatment and/or incentive or compensation before, during, or after the study. Nor will participation in this study impact their grades if they were to take another one of my courses in the future. Students were able to opt-out of participating in this study at any time (Adjapong, 2017).

In video-conference interviews, such as Skype or Zoom, ethical issues are considered the same as in face-to-face interviews. Researchers get informed consent via online email or other forms, and all participants are fully aware of audio or video recordings. Interviews are recorded by a computer-based recording software and then transcribed (Cater, 2011; Fox, Morris, & Rumsey, 2007). The online interviews give participants the right to withdraw from the interview process in uncomfortable situations, just by clicking a button. This technological communication could increase the absentee rate and rescheduling of interviews compared with face-to-face

interviews. However, when research is done in this innovative way, resources from the perspective of time and finances are saved (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013).

Data Collection

The primary data sources for this study included an online survey, one-on-one interviews with each participant, and an online (video conference) focus group. A link to an online survey using google forms was created then emailed to participants for the study. The survey included questions that qualified participants for participation in this study. As previously mentioned, to qualify for this study, participants had to self-identify as male, be born in Africa or have ancestors of African descent and be active full-time students at an undergraduate academic institution in the New York/New Jersey region.

The online one-on-one interviews were audio and video recorded and administered via Zoom. The interviews ranged from approximately 30-45 minutes. These recordings were transcribed in their entirety onto a Microsoft Word doc and subsequently ran through Dedoose qualitative software. This software is designed to capture the essence of data utilizing this methodology. The online focus group was video recorded and transcribed in its entirety onto a Microsoft Word doc. The video recordings for the interviews and focus group provided alternative sources of data, which were used to code and analyze for recurring themes. The focus group was conducted with participants to gather stories of their current experiences in regard to support services that help them persist at their higher education institution.

Table 1

Data Collection Procedure for Research Questions

Research Questions	Data Collection Procedure
1. What resources are instrumental in helping Black males academically persist?	Video recordings, Interviews, Focus Group
2. How do Black male students navigate and make sense of institutional support for their academic persistence?	Video recordings, Interviews, Focus Group
3. In what ways do Black male students perceive the quality of the support services at their institution?	Video recordings, Interviews, Focus Group

Data Analysis

No statistical analysis occurred. Qualitative inductive coding was used, a data analysis process whereby the researcher reads and interprets raw textual data to develop concepts, themes, or a process model through interpretations based on data (Thomas 2006; Boyatzis 1998; Corbin and Strauss 1990). A couple of data analysis strategies were used to efficiently and effectively analyze anticipated data collected during this study, including transcripts from online interviews and a transcript from an online focus group. Transcripts were created during the research from the interviews and focus group conducted, then were coded and used as a guide to identify common themes from the participants. The interviews and focus groups were transcribed in their entirety. Qualitative coding methods include checking and coding for recurring themes produced from this study (Guba & Lincoln 1989; Creswell, 2013). Utilizing a technique by Adjapong (2017), the focus group and the interviews were entered into a Word document for word-by-word coding and initial coding for categories; the data was selected for categories, then entered into the software to organize and combine into recurring themes. The software used was the Dedoose Qualitative Software, a cross-platform application for analyzing qualitative and mixed methods research with text, audio, videos, and spreadsheet data.

Summary of Methodology

In summary, data collection did not begin until the researcher received Seton Hall University's Institutional Review Board approval. After receiving approval, participants were recruited. Participants completed the online demographic survey to qualify for the study. Once determined to be qualified, online interviews were scheduled. Each participant was given a unique code name to ensure confidentiality.

Conversations were guided by an interview protocol consisting of open-ended questions, with follow-up inquiries formulated and asked as necessary when responses to scripted questions did not provide sufficient data (Creswell, 2013; Durdella, 2018).

Finally, the interviews and focus group were audio and video recorded. Both recordings were then transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were analyzed using Dedoose software. Participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis had occurred concomitantly until data permeation. Data saturation occurred when additional data collection and data analysis yielded no new significant information (Creswell, 2013; Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Chapter IV

Results

The purpose of this study was, from the perspective of Black male students, to examine current higher education support services and analyze whether they serve as a barrier or a conduit for the academic persistence of Black male students. To achieve this, online surveys, online interviews, and an online focus group were administered. The researcher was able to gather detailed accounts of the participants' experiences as Black male students at their higher education institutions. The contributors in this qualified to participate as a full-time student attending a college or university in the New York or New Jersey state metropolitan area who identified racially as Black and male in gender.

This chapter gives a brief description and background of each participant. The racial demographics of each participant's school is also described in this chapter. While diversity statistics were described, the names of the college or university each participant attended were left unidentified. Each school was coded by reference to each participant.

Next, this chapter incorporates a presentation of the data collected along with analysis and organization by themes that emerged from the research questions that were addressed. Each theme was subcategorized by the research questions. The research questions guided the entire study. The inquiries throughout the interviews delivered nuanced data into the Black male students' perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes toward support services at their higher education institution. Brosnan (2020) concluded that the objective of the interviews was to develop the benefit of their first-hand experience, knowledge, recollections, thoughts, and judgments. Thus, the same strategy was employed in this study regarding participants' perceptions of whether higher education support services were barriers or conduits to their academic persistence.

Fittingly, the alacritous student participants in this dissertation study offered opulent, liberal, and candid insights, particularly about their own college experience and their genuine concern for the success of Black male students.

Table 2

Schools Attended and Black Male Diversity Programs

School	Participant	Black Male Diversity Program
1.	A Boogie, Future	Yes
2.	Chance the Rapper	Yes
3.	Danny Brown, Kanye West, The Weeknd	Yes
4.	Dave East	n/a
5.	Fabolous	n/a
6.	Gunna	Yes/No*
7.	J. Cole	Yes
8.	JahDell	Yes
9.	Nas	Yes
10.	Van Zoe	n/a

Participant's School Attendance and Diversity Programs

Table 2 shows a total of ten schools that the thirteen participants attended. Of the ten schools attended, two schools had multiple participant attendees, while the other eight schools had only one participant attend. Two participants (A Boogie & Future) attended School 1, while three participants (Danny Brown, Kanye West, & The Weeknd) attended School 3.

Many academic institutions have adopted a focus around underrepresented populations in higher education, including but not limited to the Black male populace. Of the ten schools included in this study, Table 2 shows that seven of the ten schools had a formal program created by the institution with intention to support Black male students, three schools did not have a formal initiative designated to help Black male students (School 4, 5, and 10).

Four schools (School 1, 3, 7, and 9) in this study fell under the same citywide Black male student program. This means that 7 of the 13 participants in this study were entitled to the same program that was intended to support Black male students. According to the program's website, its mission was "to create model student development projects throughout the University that provide direct services to students in a coordinated effort that is intended to increase, encourage, and support the inclusion and educational success of students from groups that are severely underrepresented in higher education, in particular African, African American/Black, Caribbean and Latino/Hispanic males." A Boogie, Future, Danny Brown, Kanye West, The Weeknd, J. Cole, and Nas all were entitled to this program as students of their respective colleges.

School 2 had a Black male diversity program that Chance the Rapper was entitled to as a student of his university. According to the school's website, the program was initiated in 2010, and focused on "… a key at-risk demographic and strive to meet several important university goals. For all participants, the objective was to raise the standard of academic outcomes, performance and achievement through:

- Fostering a brotherhood among all males to support the development of stronger life-long ties to each other and to Alma Mater

- Promoting a spirit of absolute excellence in academic achievement for all male students

- Increasing retention rates of male students of color

- Encouraging and supporting the timely completion of a degree"

School 6 was the most unique school of all the schools in this study in regard to diversity programs for Black male students. School 6 had a multi-male* initiative program that, according to the school's website:

"… was established to improve access, retention, and graduation rates of men of color (African American, Asian, Latino, Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native) by providing academic support, professional development, and mentoring. The program aims to support the college and career success of men of color by utilizing a holistic approach to promote brotherhood and community through cultural awareness and identity development."

While there was no program exclusively intended for Black male students, there was a program intended for all minority male students. Gunna was entitled to this program as a student of his university.

School 8 had a Black male diversity program that JahDell was entitled to as a student. According to the school's website, the program was established in 1998. The purpose of the program was "to help Black males successfully navigate both academic and nonacademic issues in pursuit of their baccalaureate degree."

While seven schools had a formal program to support Black male students, three schools did not have a formal initiative designated to help Black male students (School 4, 5, and 10). This means that neither Dave East, Fabolous, nor Van Zoe had access to an institutional effort to support them as Black male students.

Diversity Statistics of Participants' Schools

This section provides statistical data of the landscape the participants experienced at their respective institutions, which is important to the study because it identifies the circumstances the participants encountered on a daily basis. The relevance of this data illustrates the commitment of diversity and inclusion of each institution. If these participants failed to experience professionals who looked like them, it might hinder their ability to persist and succeed.

School 1

When it came to the racial diversity of undergraduate students at School 1, according to collegefactual.com, 9% were Black or African American compared to 31.7% Asian, 24.9% Hispanic/Latino, 21.6% White, and 11% Non-Resident Alien. This data presented Black undergraduate students as the smallest racial group. In regard to the racial diversity of faculty, according to collegefactual.com, School 1 was 15.1% Black or African American compared to 48.1% White, 14.2% Hispanic/Latino, 14.2% Asian, and 8% Non-Resident Alien. This data presented that there was a greater percentage of White faculty (48.1%) than the total percentage of faculty of the other races combined: Black or African American/Hispanic-Latino/Asian (43.5%). Both A Boogie and Future attended School 1.

School 2

When it came to the racial diversity of undergraduate students at School 2, according to collegefactual.com, 9.8% were Black or African American compared to 48.1% White, 17.4% Hispanic/Latino, 9.9% Asian, and 10% Ethnicity Unknown. This data presented Black undergraduate students as the smallest racial group at School 2. In regard to the racial diversity of faculty, according to collegefactual.com, 11.2% were Black or African American compared to 72.1% White. This data shows that School 2 had more than six times White faculty than Black or African American faculty. Chance the Rapper attended School 2.

School 3

When it came to the racial diversity of undergraduate students at School 3, according to collegefactual.com, 29.7% were Black or African American compared to 33.2% Hispanic/Latino, 19.7% Asian, and 11% White. This data presented Black undergraduate students as the second-highest racial group at School 3. In regard to the racial diversity of faculty

at Danny's college, according to collegefactual.com, 25.8% were Black or African American compared to 42.8% White, 15.4% Hispanic/Latino, and 12.3% Asian. This data determined that the percentage of White faculty (42.8%) was more than the total combined percentage of both Black or African American and Hispanic/Latino faculty (41.2%). Danny Brown, Kanye West, and The Weeknd all attended School 3.

School 4

When it came to the racial diversity of undergraduate students at School 4, according to collegefactual.com, 11.9% were Black or African American compared to 62.8% White and 13.5% Hispanic/Latino. This data presented Black or African American students as the lowest demographic of undergraduates at School 4. In regard to the racial diversity of faculty, according to collegefactual.com, 7.9% were Black or African American compared to 77.3% White. This data determined that there were nearly ten times more White faculty (77.3%) than Black or African American faculty (7.9%) at School 4. Dave East attended School 4.

School 5

When it came to the racial diversity of undergraduate students at School 5, according to collegefactual.com, 10.3% were Black or African American as compared to 70.9% White. This data showed that there are nearly seven times more White undergraduate students than Black or African American students at School 5. In regard to the racial diversity of faculty, according to collegefactual.com, School 5 was made up of 93.4% White faculty and only 2.2% Black or African American faculty. Fabolous attended School 5.

School 6

When it came to the racial diversity of undergraduate students at School 6, according to collegefactual.com, 6% were Black or African American compared to 72.6% White and 12.2%

Hispanic/Latino. This data showed that Black students were the lowest demographic of undergraduates and that there were 12 times more White (72.6%) students than Black (6%) students. Regarding racial diversity of faculty, School 6 was only 2.5% Black compared to 92.5% White. This data indicated that there were 37 times more White faculty than Black faculty at School 6. Gunna attended School 6.

School 7

When it came to the racial diversity of undergraduate students at School 7, according to collegefactual.com, 23.9% were Black or African American compared to 30.3% White, 22% Hispanic/Latino, and 18.7% Asian. This data presented Black undergraduate students as the second-largest student demographic at School 7. Regarding the racial diversity of faculty at School 7, according to collegefactual.com, 21.8% were Black or African American compared to 55.4% White, 10.4% Hispanic/Latino, and 8.8% Asian. This data determined that there was a greater percentage of White faculty (55.4%) than the total percentage of faculty of the other races combined: Black or African American/Hispanic-Latino/Asian (41%) at School 7. J. Cole attended School 7.

School 8

When it came to the racial diversity of undergraduate students at School 8, according to collegefactual.com, 30.9% were Black or African American compared to 47.6% White, 12.9% Hispanic/Latino, and 3.3% Asian. This data presented Black undergraduate students as the second-largest student demographic at School 8. Regarding the racial diversity of faculty, according to collegefactual.com, only 9% were Black or African American compared to 81.9% White. This data determined that there was more than nine times the percentage of White faculty (81.9%) than Black or African American (9%) faculty, at School 8. JahDell attended school 8.

School 9

When it came to the racial diversity of undergraduate students at School 9, according to collegefactual.com, 6.1% were Black or African American compared to 30.7% White, 19.6% Asian, 19.2% Non-resident Alien, and 13.6% Hispanic/Latino. This data presented Black or African Americans as the smallest percentage of undergraduate students at School 9 and five times less than White undergraduate students. In regard to the racial diversity of faculty, according to collegefactual.com, 10.8% were Black or African American compared to 55.8% White, 12.6% Asian, and 11.4% Hispanic/Latino. This data presented White faculty (55.8%) of being more than the total percentage of faculty racially combined Black or African American/Hispanic-Latino/Asian (34.8) at School 9. Nas attended School 9.

School 10

When it came to the racial diversity of undergraduate students at School 10, according to collegefactual.com, 19.3% were Black or African American compared to 35% White, 27.1% Hispanic/Latino, 10.4% Ethnicity Unknown, and 5.4% Asian. This data presented Black or African Americans as the third-largest percentage of undergraduate students. In regard to the racial diversity of faculty at School 10, according to collegefactual.com, 14.3% were Black or African American compared to 61.1% White, 9.4% Hispanic/Latino, and 7.9% Asian. This data presented White faculty (61.1%) as being almost two times more than the total percentage of other racial groups combined: Black or African American/Hispanic-Latino/Asian (31.9%). Van Zoe attended School 10.

Of all participants' schools, there were some trends regarding the diversity of undergraduate students as well as the diversity of faculty. Of all participants' colleges or universities, no school had predominantly Black or African American undergraduate students.

The school with the highest percentage of Black or African American undergraduate students was JahDell's college at 30.9%. The Weeknd, Kanye West, and Danny Brown, who all attended the same school, had the second-highest percentage of Black or African American undergraduate students at 29.7%. Their school was the only school in the study where White undergraduate students were not the predominant racial group; Hispanics/Latinos were (33.2%). Of all the participants' schools, Gunna's (6%) and Nas' (6.1%) schools, respectively, had the lowest percentage of Black or African American undergraduate students.

Of all participants' colleges or universities, no school had predominantly Black or African American faculty. The school with the highest percentage of Black faculty was The Weeknd's, Kanye West's, and Danny Brown's college (25.8%). The school with the lowest percentage of Black faculty was Gunna's college (2.5%). Gunna's college also had the greatest percentile disparity between White (92.5%) and Black (2.5%) faculty, more than 37 times fewer Black faculty than White faculty. Overall, concerning combined Black diversity, undergraduate students and faculty, of all participants' schools, The Weeknd's, Kanye West's, and Danny Brown's college were the most racially diverse while Gunna's school was the least.

Conduit or Barrier

Three research questions shaped the foundation of this study: *What resources are instrumental in helping Black male students academically persist? How do Black male students navigate and make sense of institutional support for their academic persistence? In what ways do Black male students perceive the quality of the support services at their institution?* These aforementioned queries guided the examination of whether higher education institution support services serve as either a conduit or barrier to the academic persistence of Black male students. The subsequent findings were also offered in this chapter.

Themes

Six common themes materialized from the data collected. The participants' replies to experiences and to the semi-structured and open-ended questions in the study setting suggested: (1) tutoring, (2) academic advisement, and (3) one-on-one time with faculty all being essential to the success or academic persistence of Black male students; (4) Black male students lack academic support and/or are unsure of support services offered by their institution; (5) Black male students seeking academic support; (6) How being a Black male molds his outlook toward school and/or education.

This chapter also incorporates each theme along with direct quotations from the information collected. Stavitz (2020) stated doing so presents the data "… as evidence for the findings so the reader can independently confirm them" (p. 27). He also posited that including direct excerpts will support future scholars in evaluating transferability "… by providing a rich description of the data in the participants' own words" (p. 27). This section of the chapter was constructed as such. Table 3 indicates six common themes that emerged during data analysis and the number of transcript excerpts included.

Table 3

Data Analysis Themes

Theme	Number of transcript excerpts included
Theme 1: Support via Tutoring	17
Theme 2: Support via Academic Advisement	12
Theme 3: Support via Faculty	22
Theme 4: Lack of Support or Unsure of Support	25
Theme 5: Seeking Support	12
Theme 6: Importance of Education	33

Q1: Instrumental Resources

Research question 1 asked: *What resources are instrumental in helping Black males academically persist?* Testimonials from the participants indicated the following theme: Black male students need institutional support in the form of quality tutoring, quality academic advisement, and quality one-on-one time with faculty.

Tutoring

There were 17 total transcript excerpts from the participants in regard to support via tutoring. When asked what kinds of services were available at their college/university that assisted them to graduate, all of the participants brought up tutoring. Some participants took advantage of the services and saw it as helpful, while others had an opposing view.

Chance the Rapper had positive views on tutoring services at his school. He stated, "They have tutoring events where you can come to events and they are peer students who specialize in certain areas of study and they help you out with your work. You have the writing center, an outlet that I take advantage of. When I have writer's block and I don't know where to go, I definitely go to the writing center the most."

Van Zoe stated, "One that I actually like that they do is the tutoring … It was helpful because that's an extra 35–45 minutes of being taught how to do something you don't know how to do properly. Even an extra 10 minutes is helpful …" Future agreed as he used "… 101 math tutoring." He was having trouble passing a math class that he needed to pass in order to get into the business program at his school. Future took this same math class three times, and all three times he went to the school's tutoring services. Ultimately Future passed the math course to go to the next level, but not with a high enough grade to get into the business program. Though he used the tutoring, he took complete responsibility for not getting a high enough grade. When

asked if the tutoring was helpful, he stated, "They did their job."

Other participants avowed quite the contrary. They acknowledged the existence of tutoring services at their school but were convinced the services were not helpful. Dave East declared,

"When I need help, I definitely use the tutor, but I don't really know how to use them … I feel like some of them move too fast and personally I'm a slow-paced learner … if you can't work to the speed they're working … then you gotta figure it out on your own … then you just going to get frustrated. Some tutors go at the pace that I'm at but a lot of them are booked up and the other ones I don't even want to go to because they are just doing it just to get their hours and their credits. They don't really care about students doing well."

The Weeknd agreed, stating,

"… they (tutors) don't really help you with your work." He further explained, "I never learned from things like tutoring and stuff, I tried to do it in high school and elementary school and it never worked out because just the way they try to teach me isn't how I learn … They don't adapt to individual people they try to teach everybody the same way. Not everybody learns the same way or gets it at the same pace."

Gunna admitted,

"I would say one-on-one tutoring sessions were not effective at all. I asked the dude simple questions and he couldn't answer any of them. He just showed me how to answer the problem instead of helping me understand how to solve it. I tried to address it with him, but he didn't really understand so after that I said I'm just not going to go back."

Though all participants mentioned tutoring, not all participants saw the value or took

advantage of the services provided at their respective schools. A Boogie mentioned,

"Some (tutoring sessions) have been beneficial, and some have not been beneficial. I'm not too sure how well it is because I don't need it. I study on my own time. I have my own methods and it works really well for me."

In a focus group that included Danny Brown, J. Cole, Future, Kanye West, and The Weeknd, I asked the importance of tutoring. Danny Brown stated,

"I think tutoring is necessary for students because not everyone can learn at a pace where it is just like going to class, going home, and studying. Some people need that extra help because some people might be better at math and other people so that's just an example. Some people might be able to breeze through that class without aid or assistance and another person may not be as good as that so they might need help, so I think tutoring is definitely necessary and important."

Kanye asserted,

"I feel like tutoring is definitely important but what's more important is connecting with the tutor on a personal level. I feel like to get through to some kids you have to connect with them in a particular way. A kid is probably more comfortable with learning from someone in their own community."

Future agreed.

"I will also say tutoring is important … it's better to have a tutor that's more relatable." A Boogie affirmed his stance. "I feel like it is not about knowing the information. That's not enough. If they can't communicate with you in a way in which you can understand it, then it doesn't help you at all."

Overall, participants recognized the importance of tutoring services from their institutions. Some participants acknowledged their own need for tutoring. While some tutoring services were beneficial to some participants, for others it was not. What can be drawn from the data collected is that tutoring services are needed, but the quality thereof must be tailored in a way that supports the success of students on all levels.

Academic Advisement

There were 12 total transcript excerpts from the participants regarding support via academic advice. When asked what kinds of services were available at their college/university that assisted them to graduate, of the 13 participants, 7 of them brought up academic advice.

Chance had a positive experience with his academic advisor. He stated, "My academic advisor personally and religiously sends emails to check up on me." Future echoed the same sentiments. He described his experience, saying,

> "She actually sat down with me and basically told me how I should move forward within my academic career. She started out and said during next semester these are the classes I need to be taken and here are the required credits that have to be taken for me to graduate. She mentioned some of the professors that she knew offhand and recommended that I take them. That helped a lot because looking back at the semester, I know what my purpose was when it comes to finishing to get my bachelor's degree, and I actually owe her that and I thank her for that."

A Boogie recognized that academic advice was available as a service at his school, and after having one bad experience, it left a bad taste in his mouth. He stated,

> "Well, I went to my guidance counselor once and after that, I've never gone back. I went to talk about my schedule and everything it was a good talk and she helped me out with

my schedule and then she gave me her business card and said if I need any more assistance I could email her but after that, I sent her an email and she never responded to me so I thought that was just a waste of my time."

Danny Brown echoes the same bad experience with academic advice at his school as well. He recalled his experience:

"I spoke to an advisor and she gave me a list of classes to take and said these are all good for your major and then it turns out one of those classes didn't even count as credits toward my major. I got an A in that class and it didn't count toward anything. Just things like that are unhelpful. When I met her that night there were like hundreds of students there to meet her, so she was just trying to get students out of there quickly to get her day on. I was in there for like four hours straight waiting."

Overall, some participants recognized that academic advising was essential to their academic persistence. Having a great experience with the advisor was the distinguishing factor that arose from the participants who had positive things to say about academic advisement and those who had negative things to say about academic advisement. Kanye signified,

"To properly advise somebody you got to really know what's going on with them. You got to go deeper sometimes. You need that mental day; sometimes people need to take care of their family, sometimes people don't go into debt to fully formulate your schedule for you. It's like okay you're next in line what you got, what you don't get, we'll put this on your schedule, next. I feel like there is a lack of connection between the advisors and the students for sure. People wait for hours to hold two-minute conversations."

Faculty Support

There were 22 total transcript excerpts from the participants regarding support via one-

on-one time with faculty. When asked what kinds of services were available at their college/university that assisted them to graduate, of the 13 participants, 10 of them brought up one-on-one time with their professor, also known as *office hours*. One factor that was most pronounced amongst 6 of the 10 who saw significance in time with their professors was the need for their professors to care about them. Another factor was clear communication from faculty.

Fabolous stated, "Sometimes we confuse people doing their job and people taking the time to care … only a handful of teachers who truly cared, and yes those people did have an impact on me, they had a major impact on me." The Weeknd gave a more cherished testimony about a faculty member who cared about him and it resonated sincerely with him. He proclaimed:

"There was one Professor that I talked to. He's pretty cool. I spoke to him, I told him my goals to be successful in life. You know he was telling me what I needed to do, oh, what I should focus on and how I should do with my classes to achieve that goal one day hopefully. I'm pretty sure if I didn't say anything to him, I would have finished the class and not spoken to him again. I sought him out because he seemed very young; he presented himself as very professional and successful in his life so far. I figured he can help me achieve that level of success at a young age or even a young age that even he did so I can enjoy it even longer and make even more something."

Danny Brown echoed these same sentiments. He suggested,

"The things that helped me the most is getting to know teachers in the office. Once you get to start to know them then you can ask them questions and they will help you with the situation rather than going to a general staff you are supposed to go to."

Chance agreed:

"Office hours with the professors have been the most effective way to do well in a class

because they really like to help you out. Yes, what is giving you extra points or literally

sitting there if you missed what happened in class, having that one-on-one, they would

literally go over it with you all over again … I've tried to make it my goal before the

coronavirus interrupted everything to at least go to office hours at least twice a week two

or three times a week, sometimes more. During the finals we come because we need to

get that timer. Seeing a professor at that time doesn't establish a relationship between

professor and student so when it comes time to put it in that grade, they think about all he

did come to see me. I know his situation because he came and had that conversation. And

I can't name on how many occasions that has helped me out personally."

While some participants have had great experiences with faculty, others have not. When

it came to the faculty at his school, Gunna stated, "There wasn't a lot of transparency … I'm not

getting clear communication with my faculty." Nas experienced much of the same. He recalled a

situation with a class where he needed some extra support from his professor, and the

communication was stringent. He stated, "He gives a deadline and that's about it. There is no

flexibility with the deadline and he lets us know if you can't manage it just drop the course. It's

pretty intense." Luckily, that one experience did not ruin his overall perspective on faculty

support. Nas noted, "I know that every professor is not the same and I know that some professors

may support you better." Danny Brown agreed with Nas' outlook by saying, "Some teachers care

more than others."

Overall, the information gathered suggested that 77% of the participants were seeking

interaction with faculty. Of those individuals, 60% indicated it was important that faculty show

signs of caring. Furthermore, they depicted the importance of providing clear communication. Faculty interaction, genuine care, and clear communication from faculty can be concluded as desired by a majority of the participants.

Q2: Navigating Institutional Support

Research question 2 asked: *How do Black male students navigate and make sense of institutional support for their academic persistence?* Statements from the participants indicated a shared theme; the Black male students in this study lacked academic support and/or were unsure of support services offered by their institution. Also, Black male students did seek support from their academic institutions.

Lack of Support or Unsure of Support Services

There were 25 total transcript excerpts from the participants regarding the lack of support or unsureness of support services at participants' schools. When asked other than tutoring, academic advisement, and faculty support, what other kinds of services were available at their college/university that assisted them to graduate and what has been unhelpful, of the 13 participants, 11 of them brought up a lack of institutional support or unawareness of services offered.

Fabolous bluntly stated, "I don't know of any other services." Gunna echoed the same sentiment. "Other than that I can't think of much." Nas stated, "That's all I utilized. I'm sure there are other programs but that's all I utilized … I'm not too sure." A Boogie appeared to be looking for something more. "I didn't get much assistance. Internships and jobs, I received no help at that." I asked him if his school had a career services department, he stated, "I'm almost positive they do but I'm not completely sure that they do." Danny Brown asserted, "If I need help with something, I really don't know who to talk to and when I do, I get the 'runaround'."

Not having support or being unaware of support was a theme that resonated loudly amongst 11 of the 13 participants. The researcher went deeper into inquiry and asked the participants if their schools had reached out and/or advertised any support services that were available to them as students. The Weeknd flat out said, "No." Gunna said he at least knew about career services but was clear: "Career services haven't really helped me."

In the focus groups, 6 of the 13 participants discussed the common themes that arose from the one-on-one interviews. The researcher asked if the participants take on a lack of support or unsure of support services was one of the common themes. Danny Brown surmised it quite clearly:

"I feel like the resources or the knowledge isn't really out there. You have to dig and find out on your own; so it's like, some people might not know that we have tutor services at the school or where to go to ask about tutors. When I started finding things out about the school it was because I went to a teacher and he told me where to go. From that point on, whenever I need anything, I would ask him, and he would tell me where to go. It's not easy to find the resources."

Future added, "I actually got emails and flyers in my school, but I would walk past them until I'm in dire need of help." A Boogie resembled the same sentimentality. "I've seen a couple of emails or new letters but those don't do much for everybody applying to those so it's not really helpful at all." In a quasi-positive stance Future also said, "I believe they (his school) gave me all the assistance I needed."

Not knowing of the support services their school offered was rendered a problem from the participants in this study. The researcher further asked them what had and had not been helpful to them. Kanye made a list of things and even cited race as a factor. He stated, "Student-

to-staff ratio; the lack of Black people as educators; reachability problem of the people in charge … Overall, you have to really do things to encourage students to really inspire them. It's really all about inspiration, not even encouragement." In agreement with Kanye, Danny Brown stated, "The reason behind it is because there are a lot of minorities at the school. Sometimes it's hard to get certain resources that should be easy to get like dealing with financial aid."

Seeking Support

There were 12 total transcript excerpts from the participants regarding students proactively seeking support from their institution. Of the 13 total participants, 6 mentioned proactively seeking support. Some claimed to never seek support, others claimed to proactively seek help.

A Boogie opened up: "Honestly, that's the way I've always been as a person. I like to do stuff on my own." Danny Brown asserted, "I feel like I don't really look into all of the stuff that goes on in the school. I look into scholarships and financial aid." Van Zoe declared, "I'm only there to get my degree so I'm just trying to get in and get out. If something piques my interest I would but nothing has."

As mentioned earlier, when it came to tutoring services, a few participants proactively sought support, i.e. Future with math 101 or Chance the Rapper with the writing center. Danny Brown acknowledged proactively seeking support when it came to financial aid and scholarships. The Weeknd also keenly mentioned when he connected with his professor, it was he who sought the professor out. He stated, "I'm pretty sure if I didn't say anything to him, I would have finished the class and not spoken to him again. I sought him out because he seems very young; he presented himself as very professional and successful in his life so far." Even A Boogie admitted to seeking career services. He said, "I attended a career fair but that only went

so far for me." Here is J. Cole's take:

> "I know a lot of times, I don't seek it out because I'm the type of person that would say, I can do it myself. My first instinct is to figure it out myself. If it's a dire need then I would go for help. I think this the way we're brought up. When you're seen asking for help then it's like you're weak. You don't want to look weak in front of people, and you don't want it to look like you're begging or wasting somebody's time. So, you're like oh I'll just do it myself and you wait until the last minute, then sometimes it's just too late, and you be like damn, I should've asked for help."

There were many different views on this topic from the participants. Future mentioned, "I would say pride as to why I wouldn't ask for help. I don't want to feel like I'm bothering anybody." A Boogie brought another angle. "I think a big thing is time. Some people just don't want to take the extra time it takes for someone to get help. Having free time is something that a lot of people value."

> Kanye offered,

> "Sometimes it's a lack of awareness, like do you even need help. Like I'm good, I'm graduating next year or that I'm passing. Sometimes people don't push their limits. They are testing limits again subconsciously because you know you're unaware of these things in the different ways people are representing. Things can help you and it could be a true inspiration to those who encourage you to do this or that it could be two different ways."

> Danny Brown inserted a racial element. He stated, "A lot of Black males have other things going on. A lot of them just want to go to class, then go home. A lot of us don't want to be a part of the school culture. For the most part, people got other things going on."

Q3: Perception of Institutional Support Services

Research question 3 asked: *In what ways do Black male students perceive the quality of the support services at their institution?* One solid theme from the information assembled provided understanding to Black male student behaviors, attitudes, and motivations around their perceptions of institutional support services. Accounts made by the participants indicated a shared theme: being a Black male molded their outlook toward school and education.

Importance of School and Education

There were 33 total transcript excerpts from the participants regarding the importance of school or education. This theme generated the most excerpts from participants. When asked what it was like being a Black male student at their school, of the 13 total participants in this study, 8 of them brought up the importance of school and education as a Black male. Some participants were self-driven and self-motivated. Others were motivated by a second variable such as a parent, or a job, or being Black. Then some were just not sold on it. Nas stated,

> "I'm extremely aware that I have to work hard in school. The minimum won't cut it for me. I have to go 110% if I want to succeed. This is why I am making sure that I can get an education and try to get a good job and want to beat the statistics. Statistics show that African American graduation rates are the lowest I want to make sure that I beat that statistic. I want to make sure I get a job. I want to make sure that I can take care of my family."

When it came down to enrolling in college JahDell stated, "It wasn't really like another option for my future. Because if I didn't go to college, I don't know what else I would have done that was going to give me the lifestyle that I was dreaming about." Future added, "I believe we can learn new things that align with other things in the world. So, if you are educated on a certain

topic you can connect to another topic as well. I believe the more diverse you are within certain topics the better you are as an individual." These guys were self-motivated; others, not so much.

The Weeknd stated, "If I drop out, I won't have a home. My mom said I got to go." Van Zoe was in the same boat. He stated,

"I enrolled in college mainly because my parents wanted me to … I didn't necessarily believe I needed college to do what I wanted to do. My father insisted that I go to college and have something to fall back on and I'd have a degree so if my plans don't go as expected then I'll have something to follow on and I'll be able to get a decent job … I would say it is nice and it's decent. The sense of accomplishment after receiving a test knowing that I worked hard for a test is good."

While in these cases, parents and jobs were motivating factors, other participants believe more in the reformation of education.

Kanye stated, "I feel like although college it's great for learning and interacting it's the people you meet in the things that really get you in two things that set you off different things." J. Cole uttered, "At first I was very like always doesn't mean anything in the grand scheme of things … I realize that maybe school isn't what you learn but it's what you use it for … I don't think that you have to go to school to know what you want." The researcher challenged J. Cole on his position and asked him where this outlook on education derived from. He stated,

"It really starts from when you're born and the communities that you were raised in, and it starts from generations of just being pretty much raised in low-income communities, being raised around projects, being raised around street life games. Even if a lot of people I know in my family that wanted to graduate and literally tried, it felt like every time they got close there'll be something to cut them off, financially or them having to get the job. I

think that low graduation rates is reflecting of not necessarily \how some people in the media put it that black people are lazy, but when you put people in a certain system and in a certain community with all of these things some people can overcome it, some people can't. Some people have better situations than others. Situational things. It's not so black-and-white; it's a lot of gray areas. And it's frustrating, to say the least, but I just think that again, when you're raised in a certain environment that doesn't prioritize education and the priority is survival, you're going to get that."

When the focus group was probed on the theme of the importance of education for Black males, this is what some had to say. The Weeknd stated, "I feel because you're a Black man, they don't expect much from you. You are kind of born with a disadvantage, so we got to work a little harder and extra to get somewhere in life. We don't have an inheritance, we got to work for it. We got to try to make it on our own. Future added, "It's important because you have to show some leadership in the household. Education would be a major accomplishment to achieve." While still not backing down from his educational reform ideology, J. Cole asserted,

"It's important. Formal education is debatable. I think you have to understand that formal education is important, but you can't rely strictly on that. You have to know how to talk to people, and you can learn this outside of school, meeting people, greeting people, being on time, how to have conversions. Little things like that go toward your education. There's education outside of the formal institution, and sometimes Black men feel there are other avenues toward education."

Danny Brown concluded the discussion by proclaiming,

"Being Black makes me want to go to school and finish it more. So that I can set an example for my family and other Black people. Like I have to do it just to prove people

wrong. People are really disrespectful and don't even know it. At my school, a lot of

other races walk around and casually use the n-word. I just feel uncomfortable in a lot of

situations going to school."

Finally, the focus group was asked if there could ever be a situation where, as a student,

he would drop out of college. Four of the five eligible participants (J. Cole most recently

completed his bachelor's degree) were adamant with their "no." A Boogie and Future, in concert

(no pun intended) said, "not a chance." Kanye said, "I came a long way already, I learned so

much, and I'm past the halfway mark." Danny Brown offered a unique proposition. He stated,

"I would definitely drop out under the right circumstances. I've been getting into

investing. Let's say I get a lucky trade and hit the jackpot. I would drop out, give it a few

years, and come back and study something I really want, something abstract. I like

reading and thinking about stuff. I'm in school now because I have to; to get a job and

work somewhere practical."

At the end of Danny's proclamation, Future yelled, "Stay in school."

Summary

This chapter conveyed the findings from interviews with 13 Black male undergraduate

students and a focus group with six of those 13 Black male undergraduate students. They were

all coded with pseudo-names sporting a Hip-Hop theme. A brief description and background

were given of all 13 participants. Then each of the participants' schools was described from the

perspective of their diversity statistics, specifically undergraduate students and faculty, but their

school's name was left unidentified. The findings were portrayed, guided by the three

overarching research questions, then subcategorized under six common themes. The embodiment

of results was styled and narrated by 13 participants' excerpts.

        Chapter V reviews the guided research questions for this study. The findings are discussed, including but not limited to the six themes derived. Recommendations and implications for future research and practice are also provided.

Chapter V

Conclusion

McGee (2011) concluded that in a period in which being a Black male means to be diminished by the larger society and many of its institutions, studies on the stories and experiences of successful Black males is essential. This study was guided by three research questions: *What resources are instrumental in helping Black male students academically persist? How do Black male students navigate and make sense of institutional support for their academic persistence?* And thirdly, *In what ways do Black male students perceive the quality of the support services at their institution?* From the data collected via a qualitative research methodology (interviews and a focus group), surfaced six common themes: (1) tutoring, (2) academic advisement, (3) one-on-one time with faculty all being essential to the success or academic persistence of Black male students; (4) Black male students lack academic support and/or are unsure of support services offered by their institution; (5) Black male students seeking academic support; and (6) how being a Black male molds his outlook toward school and/or education.

In this chapter, the overall findings of this study are recapped. The results from the study are discussed as they relate to the aforementioned research questions and themes. Then, for each theme, recommendations for future practice are advised. Afterward, implications for further research is discussed. And lastly, final thoughts are deliberated.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand Black male students' perceptions of higher education support services as either a barrier or a conduit. Black males continue to crawl behind their White male peers in the areas of college persistence and graduation rates (R. W. Brown,

2011; T. D. Brown, 2007; Pluviose, 2007). Cunningham (2013) stated that college and university leaders have established and employed a range of strategies intended to progress the academic persistence of Black male students. However, it is vital to understand how Black male students perceive these strategies or support services that have been developed. This study examined influences higher education support services had on a sample of Black male undergraduate students' attitudes and perceptions.

Analysis of interview transcripts and the focus group transcript revealed that Black male students in this study need support services from their higher education institutions to assist with their academic persistence. However, the quality of said support services is critical to Black male students' engagement. Nasir (2009) posited that culturally responsive approaches have an effect on student outcomes and student engagement who are often disengaged. Participants in this study revealed and recognized the need for support from their respective institutions. However, they found no quarrel with persisting or endeavoring through college without it. Adapting to an environment in which they perceived a lack of resources/support permeated throughout their lived experiences. This research revealed how important education and graduating college was to this population of Black male students. Moreover, for a variety of reasons, the participants were determined to persist, with or without the support of their higher education institution.

While Black is not a monolith, and there are many dimensions to being a Black male student, there were not many connections between the diversity in a participant's background and the results. Three of the 13 participants were born in the Caribbean (Antigua, Jamaica, and Haiti, respectively), while the remaining participants were from the New York/New Jersey region. While two of three participants hailing from the Caribbean were motivated to complete their degree because of future financial implications, the same motivation was evident among

participants born in the U.S. Five of the 13 participants had both parents living in their household with at least one parent having a degree; parental influence to academically persist was consistent among some single parent households as well. Ironically, two of the 13 participants most recently obtained their bachelor's degree, yet neither one of those students had both parents living in the household. Both participants were without their father, one due to death and the other due to abandonment. From the demographical data collected there was no distinct nor significant connections to the results.

Discussion

Q1: What resources are instrumental in helping Black males academically persist?

Tutoring

This study has found that tutoring services were instrumental in the academic persistence of the Black male undergraduate student participants. Participants took advantage of the tutoring services offered by their schools on a needed basis. Some participants took advantage of the services, some didn't. Some saw it as helpful, while others had an opposing view. While all participants recognized the importance of tutoring services from their institutions, not all participants engaged in the service, even when they needed help. The overall consensus from this study found that all participants engaged in tutoring services at some point during their academic careers. Furthermore, they all posited that tutoring was important. However, 92% of the participants indicated that the tutoring services at their school would greatly benefit from improving the services rendered. Liette (1971) posited that tutoring conducted over a longer period of time produces effective and significant changes.

Academic Advisement

This study found that academic advice was instrumental in the academic persistence of

the Black male undergraduate students who participated in the study. Overall, participants recognized that academic advising was essential to their academic persistence. Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) agreed with this finding. They posited that empirical research on the effects of academic advising was clear and consistent: advising is influential to persistence and graduation. Having a great experience with the advisor was the distinguishing factor that arose from the participants who had positive things to say about academic advisement versus those who had negative things to say about academic advisement. Those with positive views appreciated the hands-on and caring approach they experienced with their academic advisor. Those who had bad experiences with their academic advisor pointed to the lack of hands-on and caring approach they experienced with their academic advisor.

In this study, all participants sought out academic advisement at some point in their college careers. Some did so due to mandatory stipulations of a program they participated in. Others did so, simply seeking help. The frustration in academic advisement, from the perspective of the participants were the lack of time each session and the lack of advisors available to the student body. Some participants expressed, waiting in line for elongated amounts of time only for the session to be a fraction of the time they spent waiting to see the advisor. Though the time spent with the advisor was helpful, participants in this study, expressed needing and wanting more time during their academic advisement sessions.

One-on-one Time with Faculty

This study found that one-on-one time with faculty or faculty office hours was instrumental in the academic persistence of the participants in this study. The common trend that arose from the participants was the need for their professors to care about them. Another necessity from participants was the need for clear communication from faculty. The information

gathered from the one-on-one interviews and the focus group suggested that these participants were seeking faculty members who had high levels of care. Furthermore, they depicted the importance of providing clear communication. Maxwell (2011) stated everything rises and falls on leadership. Daniels (2020) stated leadership rises and falls on communication. The study determined that care and clear communication from faculty was quintessential for the support of these participants' academic persistence.

Some participants in this study claimed that faculty doesn't care about them. A few others mentioned how faculty expressed a concerted interest in their academic success. Both spectrums of attention molded the perceptions of participants toward their faculty. Participants in this study measured the support of their faculty based on faculty's level of engagement in assisting them succeed.

Q2: How do Black male students navigate and make sense of institutional support for their academic persistence?

Lack of Support or Unsure of Support Services

This research established that the Black male students in this study were frustrated when their institution lacked support. Not knowing of the support services their school offered were rendered problematic for the participants in this study. Other experiences were conveyed where participants sought support services when the institution either didn't provide them or the services they did provide lacked sufficiency. Black male students in this study adapted to the conditions of being unsupported. Harper (2012) stated most Black male students believed that schools did not care for Black men, a statement that the results of this study empirically confirmed.

Seeking Support

This research found that the Black male students in this study did not proactively seek support. Gonzalez (2005) found that men underutilize seeking professional help compared to their female counterparts. Most participants in this study were completely disengaged from school culture including, but not limited to, support. Black male students in this study had other responsibilities such as part-time and full-time jobs, as well as collegiate athletic obligations. Other reasons derived from this study included self-sabotaging pride. Vogel (2011) declared for Black men, in general, researchers have implied that communication styles tend to be more expressive compared with other men (D. Sue & Sue, 2008), and so they may view themselves as less negative for disclosing information to another person when seeking help. Many participants have disclosed their lack of seeking support arose from their personal history of having to figure things out on their own.

Q3: In what ways do Black male students perceive the quality of the support services at their institution?

Importance of School and Education

Some participants were self-driven and self-motivated. Others were motivated by a different factor such as a parent or the pride of being a Black man. Only one participant was not sold on the importance of school education. All participants' educational pursuits were either career-driven, vocation oriented, or parental influenced. Participants in this study viewed education as a means to an occupational end. Harper (2012) also found that "… Black men said they cared deeply about education" (p. 117). This study backed that finding and determined that education is greatly important to Black male students. Harper (2012) posited, on the other hand, most believed that schools did not care for Black men, a perspective that is consistent with

previous research (e.g., Howard, 2008). Though that sentiment was not deeply explored in this study, it was echoed a few times by the participants.

Recommendations for Practice

Q1: What resources are instrumental in helping Black males academically persist?

Tutoring

Pedagogical styles, while in tutoring sessions, ought to be tailored to the student in the session. Participants complained about an array of issues with the current tutoring service construct including, but not limited to, the pace tutors instructed students, how in-depth tutors went with students, and the credentials of the appointed tutors, thus questioning their knowledge of the topic. As indicated by one participant, if tutoring services wish to be effective for Black males, tutors should incorporate pathology modalities that are designed to help Black male students learn. Furthermore, tutors should be empowered to go in-depth with the topic if a student is having issues. Broad strokes of suggestions and instruction are not sufficient for Black male students. Lastly, institutions may need to reimagine how tutoring services are executed from the perspective of tutor personnel. Peer students were found not to be effective tutors for Black male students. Certified faculty with a higher degree of scholarship may need to be the bare minimum for Black male students. What was identified by the results of this study was that the participants saw tutoring services to be instrumental in helping them academically persist, but the quality thereof must be tailored in a way that supports the success of students on all academic levels.

Academic Advisement

Hatch & Garcia (2017) suggested that engagement efforts by colleges, including advising, play a reasonably significant part in persistence. Academic advice was crucial to the

persistence of the participants in this study. Higher education institutions must devote more meticulous care to its services. Dulabaum (2016) found that Black male students have the lowest persistence rates of all other racial groups and gender groups, henceforth colleges and universities ought to have a more cautious call to action when handling these students. Bailey and Alfonso (2005) recommended that in practice academic advising should be designed to increase goal commitment. Furthermore, a department devoted solely to these goals is essential. This department would have the responsibility of advising and mentoring Black male students from the time of enrollment until the close of their academic journey. There should be mandatory check-ins and partial accountability placed on these advisors when Black male students are having concerns and/or troubles at school, including but not limited to grades, social culture, faculty relationships, support services navigation, etc. These advisors would be fully trained to meet the needs, specifically to their assigned Black male student. Less of a program that gives the image of Black male intentionality, and more of a results-driven metric where the college or university is holding itself accountable.

This approach has been adopted by Fortune 500 companies across America in the wake of the revived Black Lives Matter movement. Joseph K. West, a partner and the chief diversity and inclusion officer at the law firm Duane Morris, said in a *New York Times* article, "If diversity is like any other business metric, then companies should reward it as such. An example at a tech firm where the leader incentivizes his direct reports by withholding a certain percentage of their annual bonus if they don't meet certain diversity and inclusion goals" (Eavis, 2020).

Support from Faculty

This research found that Black male participants in this study compel their professors to care for them and have clearer communication. Strayhorn (2014) found from his study that

educators can do more to meet the needs of Black male students and help them earn better grades in college. By earning good grades, they are more likely to earn credits necessary for graduation, meet university requirements to maintain academic standing, and persist toward degree completion. Jennings (2010) found that school personnel overwhelmingly ascribed students, their families, and their communities for the minority achievement gap.

Faculty must play a greater role in the success of Black male students. This researcher recommends that faculty who advise Black male students participate in a bi-annual forum. This would provide an opportunity to share best practices on how to optimize the best results for this population. Black males should be provided an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of their advisor/mentorship. The results of this qualitative review should be incorporated into the performance reviews of each professor. Additionally, faculty who demonstrate consistent ineffective and/or insufficient success with Black male students, including but not limited to exhibiting care and expressing clear communication, should receive additional training or be removed from that role.

If institutions do not proactively hold themselves accountable for the dismal graduation rates among Black male students, they may find themselves on the wrong side of societal backlash that has been impacted many institutions and corporations during the most recent Black Lives Matter revolt following the death of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and others.

Q2: How do Black male students navigate and make sense of institutional support for their academic persistence?

Lack of Support or Unsure of Support Services

This research found that Black male students who participated in this study were simply unaware of all the services that were offered to them by their institution. Colleges and universities must increase their marketing when it comes to support services. Secondly, their marketing cannot be tailored to the majority population of the institutions but include target marketing for minorities such as Black students and Black male students.

Seeking Support

The researcher's recommendation is for support services to be more proactive incorporating the culture of the Black male. Of the support services the participants admitted to knowing about, there was only a desire to engage under the conditions of dire need. An increase in cultural sentience along with a genuine, not marketing/image-driven initiative, that accepts and receives Black men for who they are, could help increase support services awareness. Black male students must be encouraged to seek support, and the school must take responsibility for ensuring so.

Q3: In what ways do Black male students perceive the quality of the support services at their institution?

Importance of School and Education

This research found that Black male students who participated in this study cared about education. This finding is inconsistent with Fordham and Obgu's (1986) assertions that those who forecast inequitable returns on educational investments are likely to resist schooling. Harper (2012) found males knew that schools persistently remanufactured inequality. This study backs that claim. Schools must be deliberate in supporting the same Black educational perspective. Schools must immediately and intensely debunk the myth and stereotype, and in essence, racial prejudice, that Black males do not care about education. This attitude, or inherited systemic

outlook, is what may shape some Black male students' attitudes around persisting. Therefore, the school's lack of symbols of encouragement or affirmation wound up being unsupportive for Black male students. Education was important to Black male students in this study, and it must also be important for institutions to ensure Black male students are educated via academic persistence.

General Recommendations

Like Strayhorn (2011), many have attempted to build bridges for others to access higher education. Institutions must be cultural navigators. Strayhorn (2015) explained that cultural navigators in higher education help direct students until they arrive at their academic purpose. Cultural navigators support students feeling as if they belong and recognize that all students matter, including Black males. He posited that cultural navigators also know something about the culture—how it operates, how to get things done, how to be part of it, and feel a sense of belonging. They share that information with students, help them adjust to college life, and make themselves available as trusted go-to resources whenever possible. Institutions must put their optimal care behind the success of Black male students through all services rendered. Institutions must hold themselves accountable for all low performance metrics, including but not limited to Black male graduation rates. This perspective and approach promotes a sense of care and deflates the allegations of systemic racism that many claim has always existed in higher education. The pledge to be more than non-racist, and the promise to be anti-racist is what's needed by academic institutions. That vision, along with innovative missions to accomplish that apparition, can go far with the fight for equality and equity in higher learning.

Delimitations

Bryant (2004) declared the existence of dynamics that precluded this research from

asserting some findings to be true for all people at all times and in all places. This study does not report nor interpret the experiences and perceptions of all Black male students. Three key delimitations were recognized within this study, which were not limited to the following:

1. The limitation of Black male students from the New York and New Jersey metropolitan areas of the U.S.'s Northeast region. If a wider geographical array of Black male students were included, the findings might yield different results.

2. Black male students from both public and private brick-and-mortar institutions. This excluded online students who attended their schooling 100% virtually. Obtaining education 100% online did not preclude one from the contributing factors that affected the underachieving statistics of Black male academic persistence. Thus, the inclusion of Black male online students might modify the outcomes of the study.

3. Black male students primarily at predominantly white institutions (PWIs), Catholic institutions, and/or all of the above. This excluded historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The HBCU was founded in 1837 (Cheyney, University of Pennsylvania) on the credence that every individual deserved access to a college or higher education. It was a designation accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Department of Education. Though HBCUs currently serve students of all races, most are predominantly Black. The assumption, for the solicitation of this study, was that if students from HBCUs were employed, there could be a greater sample. Consequently, the delimitations of this research concluded, of the 107 institutions designated HBCU, zero were located in the states of New York and New Jersey. Therefore, no participant would have experience at an institution created for the intentional goal of educating Black students.

Limitations

This qualitative study cultivated some uncontrollable variables. According to Anderson (2010), general restrictions but not be limited to, concurred with the *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education:*

- Research quality is heavily dependent on the individual skills of the researcher and more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies.

- Rigor is more difficult to maintain, assess, and demonstrate.

- The volume of data makes analysis and interpretation time-consuming.

- It is sometimes not as well understood and accepted as quantitative research within the scientific community. (p. 2)

Specifically, using the methodology, which included an online survey, interviews, and a focus group, each instrument possessed its own limitation.

Limitations for administering online surveys included unexpected technical difficulties. These technical difficulties could have stemmed from surveys being emailed and lost in junk mail without potential respondents ever receiving them. Because of the vast amounts of emails people usually receive, potential participants may not have felt the need or wanted to complete the survey. Hampton (2017) claimed disadvantages are that in online surveys some respondents are less attentive than others to the questionnaire instructions, which may generate insufficient or inaccurate data. Once the online surveys were emailed, there was no way to validate whether or not the intended participant actually filled out the survey, which would threaten the reliability of the study.

Restrictions for the online one-on-one interviews included but were not limited to the duration of time each interview required. Another limitation included the time it took to

assemble the questions asked participants as well as the time to administer the questions to a multiplicity of different participants during varied times. Another limitation of the interviews in this study was the selectivity of participants. To avoid bias and conflicts of interest and influence, each participant selected had no professional and/or intimate relationship with the researcher. Furthermore, because the interviews were administered via video conference, limitations around virtual trust may have arisen. By trust is meant that the focus was on the researcher to first build a relationship with the participant within the virtual interaction.

Limits pertaining to online focus groups included difficulty getting participants to volunteer for the focus group. Another limitation was the difficulty to control and scope the participant's engagement or lack thereof, including but not limited to the participant's verbosity and/or truthfulness. The participant's comfort level of opening up in front of others also could not be gauged, therefore creating more limitations. Finally, the fact that each participant, respectively and as a unit, never represented the entire population of Black male students reeks of limitation.

Another recurring limitation found in this study is the negative outlook by most of the participants. The researcher found participants to be jaded, defined for the purposes of this study as cynical by experience. Because of their negative perception of educational institutions, their viewpoint may have been skewed. One participant stated, "Well, I went to my guidance counselor once and after that, I've never gone back … she said if I need any more assistance, I could email her but after that, I sent her an email and she never responded to me." In this study preconceived notions were verified by their experiences with support services from respective academic institutions. When services such as tutoring or advisement was sought and not rendered, participant views were confirmed. McGee (2011) found challenges correlated with

being a Black male, including but not limited to diurnal occurrences of race-based discriminatory behavior from teachers, peers, and educational institutions.

If participant viewpoints were more positive, one can argue that the support services offered at their academic institutions could have been optimized. More enlightened perceptions into how Black male students navigate unsupportive spaces are needed. The prevailing influence of peers on college student outcomes has been well documented in the higher education literature (Astin, 1993; Bensimon, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) as supportive to positive educational experience of black male students. Discussions of what Black male students do to positively affect persistence among their peers and other students of color are lacking in the literature.

In her study of Black males in a mentoring support service program, Jackson (2011) found the program contributed a much-needed discourse that recognizes the significance of relationship-building among Black male students in education. "The participants in the study demonstrated reciprocal love; that is, they openly expressed love and care for their mentor and each other, and in turn, were being loved and appreciated." The data indicated several ways in which an ethos of care contributed to how the participants viewed support, the education at their school, and their mentoring experiences. Griffin (2013) found that Black students had positive support service experiences and increased the term "othermothering." The definition of academic "othermothering" is comprehensive academic and student support (Guiffrida, 2005). Patton (2006) studied the perception of Black students on a diversity support program. Black males perceived the program as "home." Patton (2006) concluded the human aspects of support represent Black culture, people, and history and provide positive interactions for those who participate. These factors provide a context for students to learn about themselves and feel

appreciated and supported at PWIs. One participant agreed by opining, "Everybody was just nice. So that was a nice experience" (p. 636). Studies in literature where Black male students perceived support services as beneficial for their persistence are scarce. Still, the small amount of research found indicated that support services was imperative to Black male students.

Implications for Future Research

Higher education institutions have conscientiously looked toward support services, including but not limited to tutoring, academic advisement, and faculty office hours to provide the opportunities, situations, and materials for helping underachieving students. Specifically, for the participants in this study, a call for a customized approach in assistance was insisted. The participants in this studied pleaded for greater quality of assistance. They wanted longer sessions with faculty and advisors if needed. Participants asked for subject-matter experts to serve as tutors who can provide more insight and transfer a greater level of knowledge for the participant's comprehension. Overall, this approach can be developments but consistently checking the pulse of this segment of students. A fluid action plan can be formulated to ensure that support services are tailored to an institution's Black male population. An evaluation of the implemented plan should be assessed every semester in accordance with Black male student feedback and Black male student persistence rates.

This study provides a few poignant implications for future research on whether higher education support services are barriers or conduits to the academic persistence of Black male students. First is the increase in diversity in colleges and universities; therefore, schools must reimagine how their services are rendered. Cunningham (2013) stated, "The student body composition at colleges and universities is becoming increasingly diverse … colleges will have to develop specific programs and services to meet the needs of Black male students" (p. 133).

Second, as the country continues to have nationwide civil unrest sparked by police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement, whereas policy and corporate reform is being mandated by the public, a policy change, like those derived from the Civil Rights march, Rosa Parks, and the Birmingham Bus Boycott, is likely. Third, this kickstarts future research specific to understanding the voices of prospective Black male students who elect not to persist to obtain their bachelor's degree.

Overall, the foremost recommendation for further research is to analyze whether higher education support services are conduits or barriers to the academic persistence of Black male students from the perspective of faculty, administrators, and staff who are charged to provide these services. That research should be compared and contrasted to this research so that an actionable agenda with both perspectives included can be developed to help fight the pandemic of poor graduate rates of Black male students.

This study was essential for education stakeholders including, but not limited to, academic administrators — those who lead the charge on the development of education policies, educators, and academicians. For education stakeholders (policymakers and academic administrators), this study offers a foundation for enhancing and reimaging staffing and the formation of innovative programs that can effectively increase efficiency in schools and the education system. For educators (instructors), this study gives an insight into tactics that can aid the improvement of Black male college graduation rates. This study advocates for a deepened relationship between Black male students and colleges/universities. For academicians, this study unseals a capacity of exploration that needs to be searched to find improved results to the low graduation rates of Black male students in institutions of higher learning. Finally, this study gives

evidence as well as the theories as to what the root of the problem is. On both fronts, added research is needed to gain understanding and discover solutions to the issue.

Final Thoughts

The purpose of this study was to explore whether higher education support services were barriers or conduits to the academic persistence of Black male students. As a Black male, and further, a Black male educator, this researcher felt a passion for studying the reasons behind the low academic persistence and college graduation rates for Black male students. The researcher was encouraged to conduct the research study using the qualitative approach from the exploratory method and perceived an authentic honesty and candidness in the stories told by the participants. This research study gave a platform to the voices of 13 Black male undergraduate students.

As a proud Black male who has watched the decline of degreed Black male students, the researcher believes this issue must be attended to. It must be of high alert. The lives of Black male students and the generations they produce are affected by this result of disparities. Lewis (2015) stated, "This problem is one that affects us economically, culturally, and most importantly, academically" (p. 104). Some know the value of education by having it. Others know its value by not having it. For far too long Black men have been the others.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Higher Education Support Service for Black Male Students Dissertation Study

LaQuan Dyce

Background and Academic Experiences

1. How long have you been attending college?
2. How would you describe yourself as a student?
3. What is it like as a Black male student at your college/university?

Interview 1 Topics

- On a daily basis, you make many decisions navigating through your academics as a student at your college/university.

- Can you walk me through a typical day at school and talk about some experiences?

- What kinds of services are available at your college/university that assists you to graduate?

  o Are these services helpful?

- What has been unhelpful for your academic persistence, and why?

Appendix B

Recruitment of Introductory

Dear Mr. Participant,

My name is LaQuan Dyce and I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership & Management Policy program at Seton Hall University. I am conducting a dissertation study about Black male students' understandings and perceptions of support services at their academic institutions. If you are willing to participate in my study, I hope to talk with you about your understandings and perceptions of support services at your college/university that supports your academic persistence. I am especially interested in the following research questions are:

1. What resources are instrumental in helping Black males academically persist?

2. How do Black male students navigate and make sense of institutional support for

their academic persistence?

3. In what ways do Black male students perceive the quality of the support services at

their institution.

If you choose to participate in this study, I would first email you a survey to qualify you for the study. If you meet the criteria to participate in the study, I will want to interview you individually via video conference for approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Furthermore, there may be a follow-up whereas I would ask you to participate in a focus group along with other participants via a Zoom video conference. This video focus group would run for approximately 60 minutes. These video recordings will be stored on a USB drive and locked in a security safe.

Your input and experience as a Black male student would make an invaluable contribution to my study. During the process of the study and thereafter, your identity will remain anonymous. The data that you provide will be coded with a pseudo name, known only to me, the researcher.

If you are willing to participate or have any questions about the study, please get in touch with me via email (dycelaqu@shu.edu) or by phone (███████████). I am looking forward to addressing any questions or concerns you may have. Thank you for your time to consider participating in my study!

Sincerely,

LaQuan Dyce
Doctoral Candidate, Seton Hall University

Appendix C

Informed Consent

Informed Consent Letter

Dear Research Participant,

LaQuan Dyce is a student in the Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy in the College of Education and Human Services at Seton Hall University.

This study investigates whether higher education support services acts as a barrier or conduit for the academic persistence of Black male students. This study will be conducted between May of 2020 and July of 2020.

The research participant will complete one online survey, via Google forms, to qualify for the study. If the research participant meets the criteria for the study, then they will partake in a 45-60-minute virtual interview, via Zoom. Lastly, the research participant may be asked to participant in a virtual focus group, via Zoom, which will take approximately 45-60 minutes.

The survey, titled (1) "Research Recruit Study" will ask the following questions: "Are you a full-time student at an accredited college or university?", "Are you at least 18 years of age?", "Are you willing to participate in a study that involves volunteering your perception of higher education support or lack thereof while persisting through college?", "Do you self-identify as Black in race?", and "How do you self-identify in gender?". Sample interview questions include: "How long have you been attending college?", "How would you describe yourself as a student?", and "What is it like as a Black male student at your college/university?". The focus group queries will be drawn from themes derived from the interviews.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and the participant may withdraw his or her consent to participate at any time. Refusal to participate or discontinuing participation at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled.

The privacy of the research participant and his/her school will be protected throughout the entire research study. All surveys, interviews, and focus groups, and the results thereof will be kept strictly confidential. The research participant will be identified only by a pseudonym. Results from this study may be used in reports, publications or presentations, but will not include the names of the participants or their associated school in any work.

All information (including a key associating name with pseudonyms) will be kept in a locked security safe in the researchers' home office. All surveys, interviews, and focus group and electronic data will be kept on a USB drive and locked in the same security safe.

Only the researcher will have access to the collected data.

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There are no foreseeable risks to participating in the study and there is no penalty for refusing to participate.

Participants receive no direct benefits by participating in this research. However, potential benefits include the potential to contribute to a better understanding of how Black male students spend their time and how college and universities can better support Black male students.

If the research participant needs further information about this study, please contact LaQuan Dyce via email dycelaqu@shu.edu or by phone 646-901-1400. If the participant has questions or concerns about his or her rights as a research participant he or she may contact Dr. LaFountaine in the Seton Hall University IRB office by calling (973) 313-6314 or emailing Michael.lafountaine@shu.edu.

By signing below the research participant voluntarily agree to be video/audio recorded. On all video/audio recordings the research participant will be identified only by pseudonym. Only the researcher will have access to and listen to the video/audio-recordings. All video/audio-recordings will be stored on a USB drive and locked in the researchers' security safe for up to five years. The researcher will transcribe all video/audio-recordings.

The participant will be provided a signed and dated copy of this informed consent form.

By signing this form, I voluntarily agree to participate in this study as described above.

_____
(Signature)

_____   _____
(Printed Name)   (Date)

Appendix D

IRB Approval Letter

June 5, 2020

Re: Study ID# 2020-080

Dear Mr. Dyce,

The Research Ethics Committee of the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your research proposal entitled "A Barrier or a Conduit? Analyzing the Impact of Support Services in Higher Education on the Academic Persistence of Black Male Students" as resubmitted. This memo serves as official notice of the aforementioned study's approval as exempt. Enclosed for your records are the stamped original Consent Form and recruitment flyer. You can make copies of these forms for your use.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol, informed consent form or study team must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

You will receive a communication from the Institutional Review Board at least 1 month prior to your expiration date requesting that you submit an Annual Progress Report to keep the study active, or a Final Review of Human Subjects Research form to close the study. In all future correspondence with the Institutional Review Board, please reference the ID# listed above.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mara Podvey

Mara C. Podvey, PhD, OTR
Associate Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

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