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Black Male Initiatives' Effect on Black Male Persistence and Graduation

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Walden University

2024

Abstract

Black Male Initiatives' Effect on Black Male Persistence and Graduation

by

Eric DeVon Johnson

MBA, LeTourneau University, 2011

BSBA, Texas College, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

May 2024

Abstract

With a decade-long stagnant 34% Black male college graduation rate, there was little understanding of how and why Black male initiatives, designed to improve Black male persistence and graduation in 4-year colleges, affected retention and graduation-related behaviors, as understood by the Black male participants in such initiatives. This interpretive description study explored Black male initiatives' influence on Black male persistence and graduation at an East Texas historically Black college. For continued accreditation, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges required management for each college to identify and address academic needs that improved student persistence and graduation. Cultural capital, social capital, and narratives were three essential critical race theory concepts that grounded this study. The questions guiding this research study solicited Black men's experiences, the emerged meanings, and how Black male college students perceived the initiative's effectiveness in improving their persistence and graduation at these East Texas historically Black colleges. Using a purposive sample, eight full-time Black male college students participated in interviews to explore the Black male students' experiences, meaning-making, and perceptions of effectiveness as they engaged in Black male initiatives. The experiential interview narratives showed how the initiatives' brotherhood and supportive community positively affected the Black men's current collegiate persistence and graduation prospects and had transformative lifetime implications, which may influence social change and promote entrepreneurial innovation, management opportunities, and strategic initiatives to support better Black men at colleges and universities nationwide.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research project to the 66% of Black men who started college and did not finish. I know the insecurity well because I was one of you until December 2008, when I walked across the stage at Texas College in Tyler, TX. I also dedicate this research project to the 34% of Black men who persist and graduate from 4-year U.S. colleges. There is no more incredible feeling than celebrating such a significant milestone and life accomplishment, such as a college degree. A college degree increases the chances for more significant wealth, personal growth, and development, and opens the door to many other substantial life opportunities. I salute your tenacity to defy the odds in pursuit of something greater.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background of the Study	2
Problem Statement	4
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Research Questions	6
Conceptual Framework	6
Nature of the Study.....	7
Definitions.....	9
Assumptions.....	10
Scope and Delimitations	11
Limitations	12
Significance of the Study.....	14
Significance to Practice.....	14
Significance to Theory	15
Significance to Social Change	16
Summary and Transition	16
Chapter 2: Literature Review	18
Literature Search Strategy.....	18
Conceptual Framework	20

Storytelling and Narratives	22
Cultural Capital	22
Social Capital	23
Literature Review.....	24
Black Male College Struggles-Black Male Narratives- Black Male Initiatives.....	25
In Theory and In Practice.....	26
Black Men, <i>WE</i> Have a Problem	27
A Side Note.....	28
A Peripheral View: The Internal and External Forces	29
View From Black Male Narratives	31
Summary and Conclusions	34
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	36
Research Design and Rationale.....	36
Role of the Researcher	39
Methodology.....	41
Participant Selection Logic	41
Instrumentation	44
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection	47
Data Analysis Plan	54
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	61
Credibility	61

Transferability	62
Dependability	63
Confirmability	64
Ethical Procedures	64
Summary	66
Chapter 4: Results	67
Research Setting	67
Demographics	70
Data Collection	72
Campus 1	72
Campus 2	76
Data Analysis	79
Member Checks	80
Hand Analysis	80
NVIVO Software	81
Themes Generated and Data Analysis Reflection	82
Overarching Themes	84
Personal Assumptions	84
Evidence of Trustworthiness	87
Credibility	88
Transferability	89
Dependability	89

Confirmability	90
Study Results	90
Theme #1: Brotherhood	91
Theme #2: Supportive Community	95
Theme #3: Lifetime Benefit	100
Theme #4: Leader-ING.....	106
Noteworthy Supplementary Topics	110
Summary	118
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	120
Introduction.....	120
Black Men’s Persistence Struggle and Graduation Problem	122
The Need for Persistence Strategies, Namely Black Male Initiatives	123
Culturally Sensitive, Relevant, and Responsive	125
Effort and Engagement Mandate	126
Transformative Opportunity	127
Limitations of the Study.....	129
Recommendations.....	131
Implications.....	134
Academic & Social Implications	135
Economic & Social Implications	136
Transformative Cross-Sector Implications	137
Theory and Practice	139

Conclusions139

References141

Appendix A: Interview Protocols158

Appendix B: Reflexive Journal Protocols167

Appendix C: Campus Approvals177

Appendix D: NVivo: Initial Codes to Emerging Categories181

Appendix E: Emerging Categories, Themes, and Overarching Themes183

List of Tables

Table 1. One-on-One Interview Overview	70
Table 2. Participant’s Specified Initiatives	72
Table 3. One-on-One Interview Overview	79
Table 4. Initial Codes List.....	81
Table 5. Theme #1: Brotherhood Codes Frequency Table	92
Table 6. Theme #2: Supportive Community Codes Frequency Table	96
Table 7. Theme #3: Lifetime Benefit Codes Frequency Table.....	101
Table 8. Theme #4: Leader-ING Codes Frequency Table.....	106
Table 9. Supplementary Codes: Time Management Frequency Table	113

List of Figures

Figure 1. A Model of Community Cultural Wealth.....	23
Figure 2. Constant Comparison Analysis	59
Figure 3. Study Flyer	73
Figure 4. Percentage of Occurrences Related to Micro-Community Theme.....	83

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Graduating from college with a degree aids in advancing an individual's career and economic prospects and positively affects society. Over the last decade, the Black male graduation rate at 4-year colleges in the United States remained stagnant at 34% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Harper, 2012). The startling reality was that two out of every three Black men in the United States who entered a 4-year U.S. college would not graduate. This low Black male graduation rate alarmingly persisted during an information revolution and a global technology boom. Why, rhetorically speaking, had no one cracked the code to increase Black men's persistence, retention, and graduation rate at 4-year U.S. colleges?

This reality was not an anomaly. A representative review of relevant literature revealed two primary areas that potentially accounted for Black men's persistence and graduation struggles at the 4-year college level. Notably, some Black men entered 4-year colleges less prepared for collegiate rigors due to *de facto* segregation and the community-wide economic struggles that did not adequately identify and deliver the interventions, rigor, and agency necessary to acquire the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities, that would thereby influence their K-12 preparation (Lemonik & Mariel, 2019). The literature also revealed that many Black men struggled to acclimate on college campuses, find community, and acquire the cultural and political relevance advantageous to persistence and graduation (Harper & Newman, 2016).

Over the last 3 decades, historically Black and predominantly White higher learning institutions implemented mentoring programs, Divine 9 fraternities, and other

similar programs designated as persistence and retention initiatives to help create community and confront the challenges Black men encountered at the collegiate level (Brooms & Davis, 2017; Elliott et al., 2019; Zook, 1994). The noted points highlighted the problem and the purpose for continued exploration. Limited scholarship demonstrated the value of implementing Black male initiatives, as perceived by those the program would serve and benefit, and how and why they affected Black male behaviors that led to more remarkable persistence and graduation (Brooms & Davis, 2017).

Throughout Chapter 1, I highlight the background, the research gap, and the study's significance and need. I then provide the purpose statement and discuss the significance of the study, leading to the specification of three specific research questions. I define several specific and recurring terms throughout the dissertation, lay out the research design, and identify the study's assumptions, delimitations, and limitations. A plan for the remaining sections of the study concludes Chapter 1.

Background of the Study

With virtually two-thirds of Black men attempting but not graduating from a U.S. college or university (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), the statistics suggested that a problem existed. The literature selected related to Black male initiatives' effect on Black male persistence and graduation at various U.S. colleges and universities, tenets of critical race theory, and a review of the interpretive description research design. The list was not exhaustive; nonetheless, it represented the many facets of this study. The keyword searches for the study included historically Black colleges and universities, Black male initiatives, higher education, 4-year colleges, mentoring, critical race theory,

Black male persistence at 4-year colleges, Black male success at 4-year colleges, interpretive description, and socio-cultural capital from Education Source, ERIC, SAGE Journals, and a Thoreau multi-database search.

While probing the literature about Black men's retention and graduation trends, Harper (2012) provided a statistical evaluation of enrollment, retention, and graduation trends for Black men at 4-year colleges and various postsecondary institutions. Harper's (2006, 2009, 2012) literature offered critical and much-needed insight with intricate details regarding the graduation successes and disparities for Black men at 4-year colleges and universities. Brooms's (2018) research was just as essential as he proposed the knowledge gap and the need for further research regarding Black male initiatives effect on Black male persistence and graduation at more unique institution types, locations, and populations such as historically Black colleges.

Anderson (1988) situated the familiar historical education disparities of Black men and the Black community, which I presumed was common knowledge for this research study. Elliott et al. (2019) added historical context that situated historically Black community colleges and Black colleges and universities as integral to matriculation in the Black community and the United States' social, political, and academic structure. Kram (1983) furthered insight into the conceptual framing of mentoring and other academic and social accommodations as a pathway to Black male initiatives. Zook (1994) then spotlighted further exemplary implications of Black male initiatives in the overall scheme of Black male persistence and graduation.

Yosso (2005) then defined critical race theory, its history in critical theory and law, and clarified the tenets and meanings that give epistemological clarifications to aid this study's conceptual framework. Yosso's literature also supplied context, terminology, and insight that situated the concepts I used to guide this research study. Lastly, Thorne (2016) and Thorne et al. (1997, 2004) offered crucial insights into the foundation and fundamentals of interpretive description, which I used as the methodological framework for this study.

Problem Statement

The general problem was that over the last decade, the graduation rate for Black men at 4-year U.S. colleges remained virtually unchanged at 34% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Harper, 2012). Lemonik and Mariel (2019) highlighted residential and income-based segregation, also known as *de facto* segregation, as partly the cause of Black male persistence and graduation struggles at 4-year U.S. colleges. Two independent college achievement studies emphasized the disparities and, while suggesting targeted initiatives, revealed that Black men entered college unprepared for collegiate rigors due to endemic academic and cultural barriers that undermined achievement, influenced persistence, and enhanced graduation struggles (Harper, 2012; Harper & Newman, 2016).

Such low persistence and graduation trends adversely affected the economic and social health of Black families, Black communities, and American communities overall (Harper, 2021). Brooms (2018), Elliott et al. (2019), and Hastings and Sunderman (2019) proposed Black male initiatives as beneficial collegiate academic and social

accommodations to aid Black male persistence and increase graduation trends. While designed to improve retention and graduation-related behaviors, the specific problem was that there was little understanding of how and why Black male initiatives influenced persistence and graduation, as understood by Black male participants (Brooms & Davis, 2017). Understanding how and why Black male initiatives did or did not affect Black male college students' persistence and graduation rates could assist educational management teams, as well as management teams across diverse industry sectors, with strategic institutional planning and decision-making.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive description study was to contribute to the limited literature available on how and why Black male initiatives positively affect Black male persistence and graduation (Brooms & Davis, 2017) by exploring student narratives that expressed real experiences and their meanings at an East Texas historically Black colleges. While each of the East Texas historically Black colleges showed increased enrollment over the last decade (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (2019) noted that continued accreditation required each institution's management teams to identify and address student needs that improved persistence and graduation rates. Data from this study offer needed insights into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Black male initiatives that will aid the educational management team's strategic planning and decision-making and influence local graduation trends. The student narratives from this study produced valuable insights regarding the knowledge

gap and exposed systemic cross-sector societal needs that can assist managers, policymakers, and researchers alike to understand better Black male initiatives' effect on Black men in general. Additionally, positive implications from student narratives and the study's revelations potentially prompt social change nationwide that advances the Black economy and the Black experience.

Research Questions

This study's principal purpose and objective were to explore the student experiential narratives regarding how and why Black male initiatives did or did not affect Black male college students' persistence and graduation prospects. Three primary questions guided the research to accomplish that principal goal.

1. What were Black male college student experiences with Black male initiatives at three East Texas historically Black colleges?
2. What meanings did Black male college students make of their experiences with Black male initiatives at three East Texas historically Black colleges?
3. How did Black male college students perceive the Black male initiatives' effectiveness to improve their persistence and graduation at three East Texas historically Black colleges?

Conceptual Framework

This qualitative interpretive description study explored the effectiveness of Black male initiatives on Black male persistence and graduation at East Texas historically Black colleges. Black male initiatives were accommodations that encouraged social adaptation, personal development, persistence, and graduation for Black men at 4-year colleges

(Brooms, 2018). Black male initiatives were essential to combating Black men's high dropout rates at U.S. colleges and universities (Elliott et al., 2019).

To explore better Black male initiatives' effect, three essential concepts of critical race theory grounded this research study: namely, cultural capital, social capital, and narratives. These three concepts informed the epistemological shift from deficit thinking to focus on and learning from the treasure of cultural capital Black male students bring to 4-year colleges (Yosso, 2005). Brooms (2018) characterized cultural capital as a lifetime accumulation of valued cultural understanding, experience, and expertise. Yosso (2005) distinguished social capital as the network of individual and societal resources that provide contributory and emotional support to navigate society. Narratives were the stories and accounts that gave voice and validation to the truths in the experiences of Black male students (Hiraldo, 2019). Each concept was critical to help answer the main research question and informed inquiry design, data collection, and data analysis.

Nature of the Study

Brooms (2018) critically but precisely highlighted the increased necessity for more research chronicling Black male college students' perspectives and experiences with Black male initiatives, and this project followed that tradition. This qualitative interpretive description study followed a descriptive, applied, problem-based research methodology, as Thorne (2016) proposed, to better explore Black male students' narratives of their experiences and perceived meanings about Black male initiatives' actual effects on persistence and graduation prospects. A descriptive, not inferential, qualitative approach was suitable for an in-depth, holistic, and thorough exploration into

the purposive sample of Black male students' perceived and lived socio-cultural world as they navigated Black male initiatives' real-life effects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Harwati, 2019). An applied, problem-based exploration exposed the insights necessary for management to understand better Black male initiatives' real effects and provided a more straightforward pathway to supporting Black male students (Thorne et al., 1997). An inferential, theory-based approach was not appropriate for this study because I did not seek to construct or verify a specific theory, and an inferential approach would broaden the targeted sample population and change the intended research scope.

Given the descriptive, problem-based research focus, a purposive sample of eight full-time Black male students who were at least 18 years old and actively participating in at least one Black male initiative at an East Texas historically Black college was appropriate to produce comprehensive interview narratives depicting students' real-life experiences and meaning-making (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006), pending qualitative analysis saturation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Querying Black male initiative program directors and institutional faculty and staff aided student recruitment, and then formal invitations followed to lay out the study's guidelines, informed consent, and confirmed participation. Conducting the 75 to 90-minute, semistructured, one-on-one participant interviews produced a wealth of narrative data that illustrated the research's scope and answered the primary research questions. I used a comparative qualitative design and frequently examined the data for the multilayered context of student narratives from notes, journals, and recordings to identify pertinent themes and determine trends for

meaning and meaning-making (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldana, 2016).

Definitions

I defined the terms below for operational use throughout this study.

Black male initiatives: A Black male initiative is a strategic initiative that incorporates academic, cultural, and developmental supports and opportunities for Black men on college campuses (Brooms et al., 2015).

Culture: Culture is a set of values, behaviors, experiences learned, and shared among a group of people (Yosso, 2005).

Cultural capital: Cultural capital is the accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities (Brooms, 2018).

De facto segregation: De facto segregation is residential and income-based segregation (Lemonik & Mariel, 2019).

Deficit thinking: Deficit-thinking is theorizing and thinking from data and research that omits the voices, experiences, and reality of people of color (Yosso, 2005).

Divine 9 and National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC): The NPHC, affectionately known as the Divine 9, is the umbrella organization for the nine historically Black Greek letter fraternities and sororities that operate primarily on historically Black college campuses.

Generativity: Generativity is a conceptual idea that considers that the mentor, in the mentor-mentee relationship, wants to leave some legacy, so the mentor is willing to

take steps to guide and tutor another individual to aid their growth and success (Hastings & Sunderman, 2019).

Social capital: Social capital is a person's social networks and connections (Brooms, 2018). Social capital is also the network of individual and societal resources that provide contributory and emotional support to navigate society (Yosso, 2005).

Socio-cultural capital: Socio-cultural capital is the combination of social and cultural capital and the central framework that conceptualizes a Black male initiative's role in Black men's college experience (Brooms, 2018).

Soft skills: Soft skills refer to the wide range of personal and interpersonal skills that help tune the personality of students (Sharma & Sharma, 2010).

Assumptions

During this study's development, I noted three principal assumptions regarding the sample population, the research sites, and Black male initiatives. One assumption was that each student participating in this study was sufficiently aware of the Black male initiatives currently active and available at each research site. Participant awareness and use spoke to student *effort* and was significant as the study's focal point was the initiative's effects on Black male persistence and graduation (Brooms, 2018).

Next, because of Divine 9's heritage and tradition at historically Black colleges and in Black culture, the assumption was that each Divine 9 organization operates legally, actively, and effectively under a graduate chapter's guidance and mentorship. Garcia and Duran (2020) characterized graduate chapter guidance and mentorship as pivotal to the Divine 9's Black male initiatives' net positive effects on Black men. The

lack of such guidance and mentorship did not disqualify the site, participants, or initiatives from the study, as the student narratives could still offer essential insights regarding the initiatives' role and authentic effects.

A final assumption was that the Black male initiative program directors served the participants from a generativity space. Generativity conveys that program directors serve as mentors in the mentor-mentee relationship, choosing to leave a legacy and willingly guide and mentor, aiding the mentee's personal growth and development (Hastings & Sunderman, 2019). This assumption came from a transformational leadership ideology that program managers led and championed overall Black male student wellness, persistence, graduation, and success throughout life and career. Now, program managers not operating from such an innate space would not disqualify the Black male initiative from the study, as holding or not holding such a worldview would not limit Black male student narratives regarding their experiences and meanings.

Scope and Delimitations

Acknowledging the stagnant Black male college graduation trends over the last decade, plus the truth that unemployment and underemployment in Black communities were higher than the national average (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020), was critical when determining any management steps necessary to universally influence Black men, Black families, and American communities positively. I explicitly delimited this study to eight Black men who were at least 18 years old and enrolled full-time in an East Texas historically Black college actively involved and engaged with Black male initiatives. Little literature focused exclusively on initiatives that target Black men's

persistence and graduation at East Texas historically Black colleges, which characterized this study as necessary and unique.

The narratives and storytelling from student interviews substantiated the social and cultural capital aspects imminent to a Black man's persistence and graduation, and they simultaneously contributed to possible program implementation and sustainability insights. Such substantiating narratives helped answer the three main research questions and further enlightened Black male initiatives' effect on Black male persistence and graduation. While Black male initiative program implementation and enrichment may be a significant standalone study and an offspring of this research project, I exclusively explored the effects of such initiatives on Black male persistence and graduation while not examining Black male initiatives conceptually or structurally. Time constraints, a lack of resources, and the COVID-19 pandemic further delimited this study's bounds to the experiences and meanings Black men made from engaging in Black male initiatives.

Limitations

This study's sample size and focused target population were by design and not a methodological flaw. The impetus and reliability pursued in this qualitative interpretive descriptive design used multiple data collection means to triangulate and optimize empirical knowledge development for "interpretive understandings and meanings" via a small purposive participant sample to reach data redundancy that helped validate findings and reduce criticism (Kolltveit et al., 2016, p. 2). I, however, recommend a larger sample size with more explicit restrictions for future studies to generalize the findings to a larger Black male college student population (Ali & Yusof, 2011).

Brooms (2018) highlighted the importance of a college-aged Black man's effort to access and embrace Black male initiatives when building academic, sociocultural, and socio-political micro-communities that complemented their persistence and graduation. I, too, considered effort pivotal when building the vital supportive structures that complemented persistence and graduation, and thereby noted participant effort as a limitation for this study because it was an internal and intrinsic mechanism not controlled externally. Black male initiatives aim to support and complement student effort, commitment, and success; when an initiative fails that fundamental test, therein lies that initiative's effect on that Black man but does not unilaterally define the overall effectiveness of all or any initiative on all or any Black male student. More precisely, the specified narratives and experiences delineated this research study's purpose, yet I was not naive to think that diverse persons would share the same experience and outcomes. However, I was optimistic that managers would extrapolate and implement reforms based on positive and negative experiences.

Last, I expected college-aged Black men to possess the insight and emotional intelligence necessary to cogently and reflectively present narratives that expressed Black male initiatives' real effects. Although language limitations existed for some, I shared in the same cultural, political, and linguistic community. Therefore, within my interviewer's role, I skillfully phrased and posed open-ended interview questions that went to the heart of the research purpose yet elicited actual experiences that exposed and revealed true meanings that show a Black male initiatives' effect on Black male persistence and

graduation. Equally critical were rapport-building, follow-up questions, and rephrasing questions that produced transparent and reflective narratives.

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged rapport building and the in-person interview processes. While rapport building did not restrict methodology nor affect data outcomes or data validity, an approval and recruitment challenge existed and altered dates, times, and settings. For instance, social distancing and a campus's hybrid learning protocols required conducting semi-structured one-on-one interviews entirely at a six-foot distance between the interviewer and interviewee with the option to use the Microsoft TEAMS video chat program. As the interviewer, I still built a connection that ensured an interviewee's comfort level, prompting each participant to share honestly and openly during each interview. Last, each school had a hybrid learning approach that limited some in-person activities and altered some one-on-one student interviews. I expected challenges, yet I remained responsible for adapting, adjusting, and modifying dates and times to ensure successful student recruitment and student interviews that moved the study forward without fail.

Significance of the Study

Significance to Practice

This study's significance to practice was straightforward and provided a couple of unique avenues of significance to practice. First, Bentley-Edwards and Chapman-Hilliard (2015) highlighted that there was limited literature differentiating Black male college students' informative behaviors and attitudes, which inadvertently suggested how marginalized and underemphasized Black male voices were in research practice. This

study presented those unique perspectives for practical application and decision-making. Because of their unique nature, the Black male student narratives depicting lived experiences with Black male initiatives at 4-year East Texas historically Black colleges were a central feature.

Then, both historically Black colleges are in the heart of East Texas, which offers a unique location and institution-type perspective to research practice. Bentley-Edwards and Chapman-Hilliard (2015) emphasized that Black students were likelier to participate in campus community initiatives at historically Black colleges, despite Keels (2013) highlighting the prevalence of Black students attending predominantly White institutions than those attending historically Black colleges. Therefore, this interpretive description study's target location offered unique insights into practice, strategic planning, and decision-making based on the under-tapped location and institution type.

Findings from this study speak directly to the social and economic health of Black men, Black families, Black communities, and many American communities. If Black male initiatives positively affect Black male student persistence and graduation outcomes, the insights potentially prompt innovation, unique management opportunities, and other cross-sector strategic initiatives benefiting the Black economy and the overall American economy.

Significance to Theory

This study's significance to theory was equally forthright. Exploring the unique and under-researched institution type, location, and target population, as Brooms (2018) noted, may also advance management theory. Management teams often rely on data and

trends for strategic initiatives and institutional decision-making that advance organizational vision and missions, and the data from this study offers valuable insights.

Significance to Social Change

The social change implications of this research project were, therefore, straightforward. Promising outcomes of Black male initiatives may improve overall Black male graduation trends. Encouraging Black male initiatives outcomes to Black male persistence and graduation may positively affect national academic data for Black men and the economic and social health of Black families and American communities. Encouraging outcomes will then trickle down to influence more positive K-12 Black male student outcomes as more Black male college graduates will socially and academically influence their younger cohorts.

Summary and Transition

In summary, the 21st century's digital revolution mandated education and degree completion as essential (Jackson & Moore, 2006), and a Georgetown University study showed that individuals with a bachelor's degree could expect 84% more earning power over their lifetime than those with only a high school diploma (Ezarik, 2011). Black men were roughly 6% of the approximate 328M U.S. citizens (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019), and greater earnings positively influenced the Black and American economies. A college degree's economic and societal influence merited this study and its significance to management theory, practice, and social change. Not considering Black men who did not graduate high school or who finished high school but did not go to college, two of every

three Black men who attempted college did not graduate (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Harper, 2012).

The remaining chapters of this study are as follows: Chapter 2 is the literature review, which provides a representative review of relevant literature on this research topic. Chapter 3 summarizes the research methodology, including the research design, population, data collection steps, and data analysis processes. In Chapter 4: Data Collection and Analysis, I discuss the data results and present the research findings. Lastly, in Chapter 5, I end with an overall discussion of the research problem, make conclusions about the findings, and make future research recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Two out of every three Black men who began a 4-year U.S. college over the last decade did not graduate (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). For Black men, their families and communities, management professionals, policymakers, and researchers alike, this fact exposed a 21st-century knowledge and opportunity gap mandating further exploration to identify and address critical social and academic change aspects that would improve Black male student persistence and graduation rates at 4-year U.S. colleges. Many scholars suggested academic and social reforms, and Brooms (2018), Elliott et al. (2019), and Hastings and Sunderman (2019) each endorsed Black male initiatives as a beneficial accommodation to Black male persistence and graduation. The specific problem was the knowledge and literature gap and that we knew little about the effects of Black male initiatives on Black male persistence and graduation (Brooms & Davis, 2017). Throughout Chapter 2, I lay out the literature research strategy, the theoretical and conceptual foundation, and the study's conceptual framework. I conclude Chapter 2 with a literature review highlighting the leading scholars on Black male initiatives and their effects. I analyze and synthesize the empirical literature germane to the central themes, practices, and assumptions about Black male initiatives' effects.

Literature Search Strategy

For this study, I reviewed narrative-rich literature directly relevant to Black male initiatives' effect on Black male persistence and graduation at various 4-year U.S. colleges and universities. Narrative-rich literature was essential as it exposed Black men's academic and socio-cultural experiences, revealed thought nuance and diversity,

and highlighted germane scholarship related to Black male initiatives' real implications on Black men at 4-year U.S. colleges. Much of the influential qualitative narrative-rich literature originated from Brooms (2018), Elliot et al. (2019), Harper (2012), and Harris et al. (2020), several of the foremost scholars on how Black male initiatives' effected Black male persistence and graduation.

I accessed a plurality of the sources through EBSCO host, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), Education Source, ProQuest, SAGE database and journals, and Thoreau multi-database searches. The ERIC database was a critical resource to access the full text of copious research studies. ProQuest was a pivotal resource for accessing dissertations that helped clarify ambiguous and unclear dissertation components.

The primary keyword searches for the topic were *Black male initiatives*, *Black men*, *critical race theory*, *four-year colleges*, *HBCUs*, *historically Black colleges and universities*, *higher education*, *mentoring*, and *socio-cultural capital*. Entering these keywords helped tackle the topic more appropriately. Singularly entering these keywords provided an incredible wealth of historical and empirical scholarship that thoroughly explored Black men and their higher education struggles in all their nuanced proportions. To narrow and center the research to this study's germane literature, I entered several of the terms in combination. For instance, entering Black men combined with 4-year colleges, Black men and HBCUs, or Black male initiatives combined with 4-year colleges helped narrow, focus, and better structure the literature review.

Conceptual Framework

This research study's conceptual framework lies in critical race theory's tenets. From a broad perspective, critical race theory was jurisprudence that accounted for racism in history and, at present, worked towards its ultimate systematic elimination (Matsuda, 1991). While it originated from critical legal studies, the jurisprudence extended across disciplines to management and education. The theory acted to analytically and methodologically expose and contest masked institutional inequities by steering policy and practice conversations to include race as a critical theoretical insight that leveled the learning playing field (Hiraldo, 2010; Patton, 2016; Sleeter, 2012). Legal scholars recognized the work of Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda, Charles Lawrence, and Patricia Williams for critical race theory's historical and theoretical founding while overwhelmingly praising Harvard Law professor Derrick Bell and theorist Alan Freeman's ideas as most influential and pivotal to expanding the theory's achievement across disciplines (Hiraldo, 2010; Hughes et al., 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Tate, 1997).

Critical race theory posited a value continuum essential to management theory, practice, and scholarly discourse, thereby creating the conceptual framework for this qualitative interpretive description study. First, critical race theory centered on race and racism in its historical and interdisciplinary context and had indispensable social and academic analysis components. Critical race theory also challenged dominant-negative cultural assumptions through storytelling that centralized people of color's experiential knowledge (Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Solórzano, 1998; Yosso, 2005).

Lastly, through critical race theory's principal racial and social justice aim, management professionals and decision-makers could equitably disperse access, opportunity, and success (Hiraldo, 2010; Solórzano, 1998; Yosso, 2005). If management at 4-year U.S. colleges recognized and appreciated cultural and generational diversities through critical race theory's value continuum and then implemented supportive initiatives that met legitimate needs, Black men could likely enjoy greater satisfaction by integrating, persisting, and graduating from these 4-year institutions as was the hope of this research.

As Bell, Delgado, and Matsuda disclosed that minority scholarship was invisible during a colloquy regarding minority scholars, Professor Kennedy quibbled that maybe minority scholarship "was not good enough to rise to attention on its own" (Ball, 1990, p. 1856); thus, the conundrum for theory, practice, and discourse mandated respecting Black voice and considering Black male experiences as significant and relevant. This research study used critical race theory tenets, storytelling, social capital, and cultural capital. It posited Black male stories as legitimate and necessary to inform the social and cultural capital world that influences Black male persistence and graduation at 4-year U.S. colleges. I used these three tenets to conceptualize the persistence and graduation effects of engaging Black male initiatives at 4-year colleges. Storytelling exposed Black male students' experiential knowledge and evinced their multifarious experiences (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). The three concepts strategically positioned this study to prompt an epistemological shift in the management decision matrix and strategic planning at 4-year U.S. colleges and disciplines to reposition knowledge acquisition institutionally, practically, and scholarly (Yosso, 2005). Lastly, these three concepts were vital to

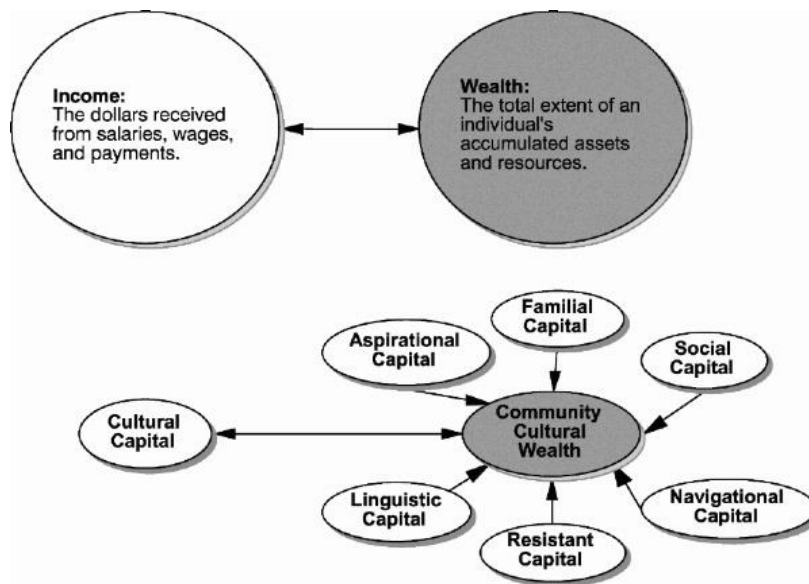
answering the study's main research questions and informing inquiry, design, data collection, and data analysis.

Storytelling and Narratives

Storytelling and narratives were the often forgotten and overlooked shared experiences and knowledge of Black men that communicated their reality and lived understandings (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Storytelling and narratives were central jurisprudence in law and interdisciplinary methodology that empirically construct, instruct, incite, and inspire theory, practice, and policy (Russell, 1992). Storytelling and narratives gave voice and validation to the truths in marginalized groups' experiences and committed Black men's experiences as academically, theoretically, and socially legitimate (Hiraldo, 2019; Solorzano, 1998; Yosso, 2005).

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital was the lifetime accumulation of valued cultural understanding, experiences, and expertise that empowered and shaped Black men's value system and worldview (Brooms, 2018). Oliver and Shapiro (2006) distinguished capital, wealth, and income by designating capital and wealth as a form of what people own, not necessarily used to purchase the necessities of life but to create opportunities, ascertain stature, and pass along to future generations. Figure 1 illustrates capital, wealth, and income that embraces cultural capital as a collection of community cultural wealth and incorporates aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005).

Figure 1*A Model of Community Cultural Wealth*

A model of community cultural wealth. Adapted by Yosso (2005) from: Oliver & Shapiro, 1995.

Social Capital

Social capital, distinct from cultural capital, was the network of individuals and community assets that provided contributory and emotional support to navigate society (Yosso, 2005). Bourdieu (1986) classified social capital as a collective of actual and potential established relationships, acquaintances, and recognized group memberships and resources. Pierson (2013) stated, "every child needs a champion" and stressed the necessity and value of building socially related capital. Darling-Hammond (1994) emphasized that social capital is a teacher or coach's value in student success dynamic. Each explanation of social capital was distinct yet essential and added the necessary layers to understand Black men's social capital network's full scope in the aggregate.

Critical race theory, in summary, analytically and methodologically assesses structures, practices, and discourse. Critical race theory also posited storytelling and social and cultural capital as a conceptual framework to explore better Black male initiatives' effects on Black male persistence and graduation at 4-year U.S. colleges (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Yosso, 2005). Storytelling revealed how Black men universally encountered education structures and epistemologically validated their real-life experiences and social and cultural capital to influence structures positively to bring social change (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). With race and culture centralized, management cannot remain colorblind in decision-making, theory and practice, and Black men's overall 4-year U.S. college outcomes (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Sleeter, 2012; Solorzano, 1998). Suppose management understood these ethnic and social dimensions and their role in disseminating critical academic, social, and economic outcomes (Solorzano, 1998) and implemented supportive programs and practices; then black male students could enjoy greater satisfaction by integrating and persisting and graduating from 4-year U.S. institutions.

Literature Review

Black male initiative programs are not a recent phenomenon in theory and derive from academic and social support programs that inspire and cajole Black men to college, pursue professional careers, and graduate while simultaneously intervening against opposing street forces (Zook, 1994). Much of the contemporary, influential, and relevant empirical qualitative literature used emanated from scholars like Broome (2018), Elliot et al. (2019), Harper (2012), Harris et al. (2020), Palmer and Maramba (2012), and Palmer

et al. (2013). These authors used Black men's narratives to express how Black male initiatives influenced Black male persistence and graduation. Over the following several pages, I highlighted the contemporary literature of current scholars who conceptually and practically engaged in Black male initiatives and their effects on Black male persistence and graduation. This representative review of relevant literature analyzed, synthesized, and discussed notable and seminal works that identified the main ideas, methodologies, and conclusions related to Black male initiatives while situating similarities and differences that provided context and showed relationships between previous studies and this research project.

Black Male College Struggles-Black Male Narratives- Black Male Initiatives

The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2022), providing current National Center for Education Statistics academic data, noted that Black men had a 39.3% graduation rate at private, not-for-profit institutions and a 36.4% rate at all 4-year institutions total, indicating that Black men's persistence and graduation plight remained prevalent. As the contemporary education landscape became ever more diverse, it summoned inclusivity and cultural awareness that called on management, policymakers, and researchers alike to confront Black men's struggles with equitable quality program access that influenced broader and more significant strides forward. This literature review posited several representative themes and insights that elucidate, identify, and situate Black male initiatives as noteworthy predictors of Black male persistence and graduation at 4-year U.S. colleges. To meet this goal, I defined Black male initiatives in theory and practice, highlighted prominent themes and discourse from seminal scholarly works, and

let Black men's narratives specify and clarify Black male initiatives' most authentic meanings.

In Theory and In Practice

In theory, Black male initiatives were management and leadership tools that encouraged social adaptation, personal development, persistence, and graduation of Black men at 4-year colleges (Brooms, 2018). Brooms (2018) added that Black male initiatives offer transformative opportunities to speak directly to Black male college students' holistic and developmental needs and core constructs. Fullard (2019) characterized them as supportive and inclusive Afrocentric initiatives to increase Black male persistence and degree completion. Black male initiatives, in summary, were a collective of innovative programs and approaches to serve the essential higher education needs, combat the high dropout rates at U.S. colleges, establish and guide the next generation's development to produce socially responsible Black male leaders, and produce positive social change (Brooms, 2018; Elliott et al., 2019; Fullard, 2019; Hastings & Sunderman, 2019).

Practically, Black male initiatives emphasized academic and social virtues such as good citizenship, good judgment, personal responsibility, educational value, persistence, and graduation (Zook, 1994). Some authors characterized Black male initiatives in the abstract as retention initiatives, peer support, and social reinforcement programs (Harper, 2006; Ottley & Ellis, 2019). Others referred to Black male initiatives as peer and familial support systems that encourage, reinforce, advise, and inspire achievement and persistence (Palmer et al., 2011). Palmer and Maramba (2012) highlighted how Black male initiatives were culturally sensitive and culturally relevant campus programs that

helped create an environment where Black men matter academically. A first personally noted Black male initiative was Du Bois' Talented Tenth, where Du Bois (1903) proposed formal higher education for the top ten percent of Blacks. The educated tenth would then train and mentor the rest of the population in academics, finance, and artisanry (Du Bois, 1903). Some local-level Black male initiatives included mentoring alliances such as Male Initiative on Leadership and Excellence (Palmer et al., 2013), Big Brother organizations, boys-to-men programs, bible clubs, Divine Nine Black fraternities, and a host of other programs and initiatives that fell under the umbrella and characterization of Black male initiatives.

Black Men, *WE* Have a Problem

Much of the research on the decade-long stagnant college graduation rate and the academic plight of Black men in 4-year U.S. colleges and much of the diverse streams of thought and practice on the subject offered a peripheral conglomeration of relevant work describing various aspects of the internal and external forces affecting Black men's college experience. Little research directly addressed Black male initiatives' effects on Black male persistence and graduation at historically Black 4-year colleges (Brooms & Davis, 2017), the research focal point, and what made this project unique and necessary. This review section summarized the relevant literature discussing the internal and external forces that influenced Black men's persistence and graduation before and during college and the narratives that delineated Black men's perspectives and intelligence regarding Black male initiatives. While this review condensed relevant literature into two parts, the review was merely representative, not exhaustive, and not meant to convey the

issues as binary or mutually exclusive. The review offered a historical and empirical view of the collegiate persistence and graduation struggles of Black men and Black male initiatives conjunctively. Lastly, this review uniquely situated Black men's narratives at the forefront of the Black male initiatives discussion and presented their vital yet often marginalized perspective.

A Side Note

Parenthetically, two competing views required exposition. First, Pajares (2006) stated that a child's self-efficacy and capacity for success were foundational motivators and incentives for personal growth, individual accomplishments, and life productivity. Pajares used self-efficacy as an idea relaying persistence and foundational as a keyword to indicate a child's initial and fundamental life lessons. In theory and literature, the paradox was that those foundational directives, systems, and life examples assigned significances and meanings that then modeled what became the child's worldview and self-efficacy/persistence paradigm. Advisedly, though, since each person experiences life and learning uniquely, the idea of a uniform reference point, rubric, or metric for persistence, success, and achievement was unrealistic and unrealized and perfectly positioned the age-old axiom of equity and equality in education where equality and not equity became the practiced standard.

Next, proliferating the misconception that Black men began at a deficit or "one-down" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1999) ignored that some behaviors originated from a pure yet learned place, others were a coping response to historic provocations, and many represented a non-monolithic celebrated cultural demonstration

(Harper, 2009; Kinloch et al., 2017; McGee, 2013). Considering that point, it was not counterintuitive to, on the one hand, theoretically accept the realities of a troubled history (i.e., slavery, segregation, and decades of underfunded neighborhoods and schools) (Anderson, 1988; Lemonik & Mariel, 2019), and then, on the other hand, deny the notions of deficit thinking as it related to Black men socially and cognitively. Traditional arguments may consider the two ideas mutually exclusive, but reality, lived experiences, and the literature touted decades of progress toward equity and equality that require consideration (Jenkins, 2006). Though some equity ideas remain unrealized, various literature posited cultural and communal in-sensitivity and un-awareness as prevailing culprits of many unrealized educational notions (Harper, 2009; Kinloch et al., 2017; McGee, 2013).

A Peripheral View: The Internal and External Forces

A representative portion of prevailing literature highlighted the internal and external forces influencing Black men's persistence and graduation at 4-year U.S. colleges. Bentley-Edwards and Chapman-Hilliard (2015) advocated examining Black men's social, political, and economic experiences to explore fully, understand, and appreciate fully their persistence or resilience and graduation struggles. The internal forces referred to those that originated in the home and among a Black man's immediate community of family and friends, who were the persons and environments that modeled social, political, and economic behaviors, expectations, and examples (Pajares, 2006; Yosso, 2005). The external forces were the short-term and long-term systems, structures, individuals, and interactions outside a Black man's immediate environment, such as

schools, churches, law enforcement, and other similar institutions and associations (Pajares, 2006; Yosso, 2005). These associations corroborated, contradicted, invalidated, added to, and eliminated those internal systems, structures, and thought paradigms (Pajares, 2006; Yosso, 2005). These internal and external capital sources collectively constructed and instructed cognitive and behavioral paradigms that imparted to a Black man what was and was not noteworthy and necessary for life, persistence, graduation, and success. These capital associations and structures then turn into what enhanced or stifled persistence and resilience before and during their college years (Bentley-Edwards & Chapman-Hilliard, 2015).

Considerable research statistically compared Black men to their White, Latino, and even their Black female counterparts, while much literature mimicked those statistical data points and helped derive the current research analysis of Black male graduation rates (Harper, 2012; Paschall et al., 2018; Peterson, 2016; Vejar, 2019). Some emergent descriptive research themes describing Black men's neighborhoods and schools (i.e., internal and external environments) included majority-Black, welfare, poverty-stricken, and urban (Keels, 2013; Kinloch et al., 2017; Lemonik & Mariel, 2019; McGee, 2013; Paschall et al., 2018). Other descriptive themes speaking to the internal and external forces influencing a Black man's persistence and graduation rates included elevated levels of unemployment, public schooling in contrast to private education, income and residential-based de facto segregation, low socioeconomic status, and persistent achievement gaps (Keels, 2013; Kinloch et al., 2017; Lemonik & Mariel, 2019; McGee, 2013; Paschall et al., 2018). The literature, in a sense, used these descriptive

themes and their implicit baggage to convey the internal and external forces influencing a Black male's persistence and graduation, and McGee (2013) accurately highlighted these as the environments that fail to meet the "nurturing, supportive, and loving disciplinary needs" of Black men (p. 450).

Other supplementary research added significant scholarly viewpoints to the narratives regarding Black men's stagnant graduation trends. Harper (2012) and McGee (2013) emphasized how highly underserved Black men were in the K-12 US education system because of their imbalanced representation in low-track classes, their disproportionate lack of representation in AP and Pre-AP classes, and uneven representation on the athletic field. Paschall et al. (2018), Reardon et al. (2016), and Vejar (2019) cited Black men's structural deficits due to classism, urbanized school districts, and their socioeconomic status. McGee underscored hyper-masculinity, a learned social Black male stereotype defined by "verbal and physical aggression, overt sexuality, and risk-taking enjoyment" (p. 452). In his literature, Harper (2009) unmasked niggering, a systematic descriptive that confined Black men to an impoverished, at-risk, low-track, drug-infested single story. Lastly, Fong and Krause (2013) tackled underachievement, the "discrepancy between potential and actual performance," and its resulting "loss of societal contributions" (p. 249-250) as a persistent miscalculation that exploited Black men's social and psychological vulnerabilities.

View From Black Male Narratives

Historical and empirical literature statistically and descriptively summarized the research and added probative value to management theory and practice. As Black men's

graduation rates remained static over the last decade, other research presented unconventional yet objective discussion points that directly delineated additional factors influencing Black men's persistence and graduation trends (Jackson & Allen-Handy, 2018). As leading voices on the subject, Brooms (2018), Brooms et al. (2015), Harper (2006, 2009, 2012), Harper and Newman (2016), Kinloch et al. (2017), McGee (2013), and Ottley and Ellis (2019) each uniquely supplemented Black men's narratives to describe more precisely the social, academic, and political experiences influencing their persistence and graduation at various US colleges and universities.

Exploring Black men's narratives unmasked and illuminated unique trends and themes that more accurately depicted additional contributing factors to Black men's persistence and graduation struggles (Bentley-Edwards & Chapman-Hilliard, 2015). Akin to Tinto's interactionist theory's structural and normative dimensions, Black men's narratives articulated "inherent beliefs, values, norms, and truths" they used to impute and label formal and informal social, academic, and political interactions and institutions (Braxton et al., 2004, p. 8). This section emphasized the psychosocial (i.e., psychological and social) and supportive needs derived from Black men's narratives. These two overarching themes exposed critical information influencing Black men's persistence and graduation as they encapsulated lived experiences and imparted essential data to scholarly discussion and management theory and practice.

Psychosocial Needs

The need to connect ethnically, culturally, fit in, and feel relevant was a consistent psychosocial theme unveiled by Black men's narratives (Brooms, 2018, 2019; Harper,

2006, 2012; Harris et al., 2019; Palmer et al., 2013). Black men characterized a sense of belonging and feeling connected socially as a significant and motivating element to their persistence and graduation at 4-year U.S. colleges (Brooms, 2018, 2019; Brooms et al., 2015; Ottley & Ellis, 2019). While the need to connect was universal and not unique to Black men because it corresponded directly to Maslow's (1943) psychological needs matrix, Black men's narratives revealed a lack of diversity and, similarly, a lack of social integration prospects at some institutions (Brooms & Davis, 2017). Tinto indicated how an individual's psychosocial dimensions and an institution's social and academic cultures and subcultures necessitated congruence and concluded that the greater the level of psychosocial integration, the greater the level of student persistence (Braxton et al., 2004). The unique challenge and opportunity for management teams and policymakers may reside in strategically positioning Black male initiatives to increase Black male persistence and graduation rates.

Diversity in Supportive Structures

Black men's narratives also summarily revealed how critically influential diverse, ethnic and social programs and people-supportive structures at 4-year U.S. institutions (Braxton et al., 2004; Brooms & Davis, 2017). The keyword was diverse because race and culture were relevant to people-institution cohesion (Bentley-Edwards & Chapman-Hilliard, 2015). Culturally and ethnically diverse supportive social and people structures offered encouragement, reinforcement, advice, and inspiration to a Black man's persistence and graduation (Palmer et al., 2011). Authentic and caring familial, peer, faculty, and staff support, inside and outside the classroom setting, were also critical as

they imparted and promoted rigor and helped establish high personal and academic expectations for Black men (Brooms, 2019; Brooms & Davis, 2017; Brooms et al., 2015; Harper, 2006; Palmer et al., 2011; Palmer & Maramba, 2012). Bluntly put, Black men's narratives encouraged people and system diversity at 4-year U.S. colleges.

Black men's narratives summarized and presented these prevailing themes as essential to their persistence and graduation. The two themes revealed implicit factors not necessarily observed by descriptive and statistical data, yet they added value to Black men's persistence and graduation literature. Brooms (2018, 2019), Harris et al. (2019), and Palmer et al. (2013) each positioned Black male initiatives as an essential supportive and social structure that aided Black male persistence and graduation, which affirmed Zook's (1994) similar sentiment regarding Black male initiatives from the late 20th century.

Summary and Conclusions

The noted studies exposed the literature gap, promoted the need for further research, provided a wealth of knowledge and insight regarding Black men's persistence and graduation struggles, and enlightened Black male initiatives' literature. While their research used mixed methods to explore the subject from both historically Black institutions and predominantly White institutions across different sections of the country, this research study qualitatively explored the topic from two southern historically Black colleges, which added locality nuance and championed Black men's narratives to capture the effect of Black male initiatives on Black male persistence and graduation.

This study complemented current literature and slightly shifted the narrative by using Black men's experiences to express better Black male initiatives' real-life effect on Black men's persistence and graduation. Brooms (2018) advocated further study on how Black male initiatives influence student persistence across various institutional venues and at different stages of their college career. Brooms and Davis (2017) supported further research that focused directly on Black men's response to the strategic initiatives aimed at their academic and individual success. Elliot et al. (2019) recommended further exploration into the institutional and public policy opportunities that influence minority student development, success, and degree attainment in historically Black community colleges and historically Black college settings. These studies exposed the literature gap and supported the aim of my research study, which was to explore the real effects of Black male initiatives on Black male persistence and graduation at 4-year U.S. colleges. The knowledge gained from further research will help policymakers with funding allocations, help educational leaders with decision-making that solves practical problems, and provide a keener understanding of researchers' educational issues. Palmer and Maramba (2012) indicated the positive influence historically Black colleges have on Black men, and this study will aid policy implementation and strategic planning.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Nearly two-thirds of Black men who began a U.S. 4-year college over the last decade did not graduate (Harper, 2012; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). This qualitative interpretive description study explored Black men's experiences with Black male initiatives at three East Texas historically Black colleges to determine their effects on Black male persistence and graduation. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (2019) required the management of each East Texas historically Black college to identify and target academic needs that improved student persistence and graduation. Insights gained from the one-on-one student interview narratives add to scholarly literature and may help managers, policymakers, and researchers better understand the effect of Black male initiatives' on Black male persistence and graduation. Chapter 3 covers the research methodology. This chapter's main sections include the study's design and rationale, participant recruitment and participation, data collection and analysis procedures, and data trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

Three key research questions guided this qualitative interpretive description study.

1. What were Black male students' experiences with Black male initiatives at three East Texas historically Black colleges?
2. What meanings did Black male students make of their experiences with Black male initiatives at three East Texas historically Black colleges?

3. How did Black male college students perceive the Black male initiatives' effectiveness to improve their persistence and graduation at three East Texas historically Black colleges?

I chose the qualitative interpretive description approach as it explored better and revealed in context the complex social, academic, and cultural dynamics between Black men and Black male initiatives (Staller, 2010; Thorne, 2016; Thorne et al., 1997). A qualitative interpretive description approach allows the exploration of rich and complex how and why type questions and effectively "optimizes qualitatively derived knowledge development" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Kolltveit et al., 2016, p. 2). Thorne et al. (2016) posited that qualitative interpretive description was essential to developing direct knowledge that management teams could apply expressly in problem-solving, decision-making, and program development. The qualitative interpretive description approach fused participant narratives to accurately interpret Black male student experiences with Black male initiatives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

In contrast, a quantitative approach would merely assign a correlation coefficient and miss the "rich descriptions of the social world" with the wealth of knowledge and real-life benefit offered through Black men's narratives and experiences while engaging Black male initiatives on college campuses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 16). Other qualitative traditions like ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory would not meet this study's purpose as those traditions would seek to understand other epistemological aspects such as an individual's human nature or culture or a perceived interactive reality that exists within fundamental structures or to substantiate a theory,

respectively (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). On the other hand, a narrative analysis or case study approach comes close in scope; however, each would redirect the study's principal intent and emphasis. Narrative analysis would centralize student narratives but then miss a specific mark because its primary focus is analyzing narratives in various ways to explore and expose distinct identities (Butina, 2015; Butler-Kisber, 2018). A case study would comprehensively explore and offer a summary presentation of the participant experiences apart from interpretive filters (Yin, 2013), yet ignore cogent and integral points mingled in context, situation, intent, and practical application critical for theory and applied practice (Gray, 2020). Thus, a qualitative interpretive description more accurately and appropriately underscored case-specific Black male participant experiences in their real-life context drawing out direct, practical, and applied "interpretive understanding and meaning" (Kolltveit et al., 2016, p. 2).

The interpretive description approach had a game-changing "organizing logic that generates a meaningful scholarly product with application and knowledge translation built-in from the outset to meet the specific needs of applied fields" (Thorne, 2016, p. 37). Thus, interpretive description strengthened this research project in specific ways. Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 33) advised choosing a "strategy of inquiry that more appropriately answers the research questions," and more notably, interpretive description went directly toward answering the research questions, according to Thorne (2016), without compromising the credibility of the research results to acquiesce to "rigid methodological traditions" (p. 33). The interpretive description approach then holistically and emphatically centered the Black male student narratives in their complex social,

academic, and cultural context in an applied manner that answered perplexing management questions and directly aligned with the conceptual framework of this study (Gray, 2020; Thorne, 2016; Thorne et al., 1997). The narratives and experiences directly apply to decision-making and program implementation. Therefore, presenting the unfiltered narratives more accurately informed Black male initiatives' effect on Black male persistence and graduation trends at 4-year U.S. colleges.

Lastly, the interpretive description approach bolstered a more focused exploration that produced applied knowledge for management teams with no interpretive filters and uncompromised "methodological purity" (Thorne, 2016, p. 33). The interpretive description approach, therefore, strengthened this research project and championed a presentation of the participant experiences in a manner that allows the Black male narratives to communicate direct knowledge (Thorne et al., 2004). In summary, an interpretive description approach was appropriate as it smoothed the methodological pathway, which helped better understand Black men's perceptions and meanings of Black male initiatives and directly spoke to the pragmatic implications of theory and practice when designing and managing Black male initiatives and similar programs.

Role of the Researcher

From a child, Black educators like Woodson, Washington, Du Bois, and historically Black college culture fascinated me. Over the last decade as a Black male secondary education instructor and while matriculating, Black men's academic and graduation struggles in Grades 6-12 aroused my interest and fueled my research into Black men's persistence and graduation at 4-year U.S. colleges. More directly, reviewing

Jenkins's (2006) research revealed that Black men's literacy rate only improved by 13% over the last 100 years, which led me to Harper's (2012) study, which then revealed that Black men's 4-year college graduation rates remained stagnant at 34% over this last decade.

Jenkins' (2006) and Harper's (2012) research collectively led me to search for causes and solutions to Black men's academic and graduation plight at 4-year U.S. colleges. While researching, I found an abundance of literature highlighting the Black-White college achievement gap, ethnic and gender-specific college graduation disparities, and Black men's under-preparedness entering college, yet the academic and graduation rate disparities remained unchanged (Harper, 2012; Harper & Newman, 2016; Lemonik & Mariel, 2019). I also found limited literature containing Black male narratives, and those narratives contained the spark that added significant value and insights while simultaneously supplying validity and reliability to a qualitative interpretive description study such as this (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

During the semistructured interviews and any subsequent follow-up interviews memorialized by audio recordings and reflexive journaling, my role as the researcher was to listen and understand the barriers that influenced Black men's persistence and graduation, and two, the effect of Black male initiatives on their persistence and graduation. Although I shared no personal relationships with any potential participants nor anticipated any biases, my culture and gender uniquely positioned me to grasp Black men's narratives and add potential revelatory value and wisdom to this research project (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). I also directly appreciated the Black men's persistence and

graduation phenomenon and demographically fit the targeted participant population (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) as I currently matriculate. My phenomenological understanding, perspective, beliefs, feelings, and positioning also brought illumination and enlightenment since I could differentiate and escalate the pure participant experiences and narratives that exposed truths that increased Black male graduation trends nationally (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Thorne et al. (2004) recognized how, consequentially, the researcher "drives interpretation" (p. 11). While my participant parallels were front of mind for interpretive purposes, my role as provocateur and facilitator was to ensure an excellent interview process that drew out participant thoughts and ideas and capitalized on essential questioning and follow-up. When confronting such bias, Thorne et al. (1997) promoted, and I committed to journaling made available in research reports to guide the reader with documented reflections and reactions. Such journaling helped verify and validate grounded data analysis and analytical reasoning (Thorne et al., 1997).

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

This study's participants included 8 Black men who were at least 18 years old, enrolled full-time at an East Texas historically Black college, and actively involved in a school-sanctioned Black male initiative. I queried and enlisted Black male initiative program directors at each college as initial contact points for participant recommendations, student selection, and recruitment. I then formally invited the recommended Black male students who met the criteria to complete a signed consent

form. The signed consent form included the study's purpose, privacy, confidentiality, and safety disclosures. Then, it asked the participants to show a schedule, unofficial transcript, or student identification, following all FERPA guidelines, validating their East Texas historically Black college or university enrollment. The form also required a consenting signature prior to the semistructured one-on-one interview. See the Instrumentation section for a more in-depth explanation of the signed consent.

I considered other qualification factors such as GPA, classification, and years enrolled. I concluded that such quantitative requirements would alter and reduce the study's qualitative intent and emphasis and unnecessarily burden the researcher and the participants. Instead, the schedule, student ID, or unofficial transcript inferred characteristics that helped establish study eligibility and served as potential interview points and a strategic approach to establish rapport, dialogue, and trustworthiness during the one-on-one interview. Pragmatically, not requiring classification, GPA, and years enrolled/student classification as determinative qualifications did not diminish their usefulness for the analysis and discussion sections of Chapters 4 and 5. 0

The sample size for this study consisted of a small purposive sample of eight Black male students who were at least 18 years old, with four participants from both East Texas historically Black colleges. Four participants purposively selected from each school, eight in total, were appropriate for this study considering the three data collection opportunities I proposed and the projected time window for each collection opportunity. The wealth of data gained from the one-on-one interviews produced a wide range of

critical and meaningful data regarding the effect of Black male initiatives on Black male persistence and graduation.

This qualitative interpretive description study relied on information-rich cases where participants cogently communicated their genuine meaning-making experiences; therefore, I did not randomly choose participants because of the probability of selecting a "quiet, uncooperative, and inarticulate" participant (Shenton, 2004, p. 65). Salkind (2012) inferred a binary choice between probability and nonprobability sampling, where probability sampling followed a random selection approach, and nonprobability sampling followed a non-random method. A non-random/non-probability purposive sampling logically and powerfully positioned "information-rich cases... yielded insights and in-depth understanding... from which one could learn much about this issue" (Patton, 2002, p. 230).

Thorne et al. (1997) suggested individuals with lived expert experience as the best sources for an interpretive description purposive sample. Thorne et al. (2015) then advised that researchers possessed intimate participant-specific case knowledge to recognize new data advancement angles and possibilities for theory and practice and identify the point at which the research reaches data saturation. Patton (2002), Suen et al. (2014), and Tuckett (2004) each agreed that a small purposive sample of information-rich cases was, therefore, appropriate, invaluable, and not interchangeable to increasing the study's depth, credibility, and helping reach the desired data redundancy/saturation and producing pure and authentic narratives at the heart of this Black male initiatives' inquiry.

Instrumentation

The study's data collection instrumentation protocols consisted of signed consent, semistructured one-on-one interviews (see Appendix A), and a reflexive journal (see Appendix B). I recorded the audio using a recording and transcribing application during each data collection step. The researcher-created consent form underscored participant demographic information to ensure each student met the study qualifications. The one-on-one semistructured interviews helped me understand each Black male initiative and gather empirical insights on the initiative and participants' interchangeable roles. The interviews also allowed the participants to provide narratives about their experiences with Black male initiatives while offering a singular perspective on how they made meaning of those experiences. I used a reflexive journal to jot and record thoughts, questions, feelings, and other essential, valued notes. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) associated qualitative research with quilting by a quilt maker, and their thought validated that each method used was an essential data collection instrument helping provide vital insights and knowledge essential to Black male initiatives' effect on Black male persistence and graduation.

Signed Consent

I verbally and visually verified participant qualifications before covering the researcher-created signed consent form. The consent portion was the first step in the eligibility and data collection process and served a dual purpose. It established and validated participant qualifications for the study and simultaneously aided in gathering participant information toward purposive sampling and use during the one-on-one

interview. It also helped the analysis and discussion portions of Chapters 4 and 5. I required the completed and signed consent form and all necessary permissions before each interview.

The signed consent included the following: the study's qualifications, background, purpose, procedures, and a few sample research questions. Then, the consent form advised on the voluntary nature of the study, the study's potential risks and benefits, and covered Walden University IRB's required contact information, legal rules, guidelines, and privacy attestations and disclosures. Last, the consent form advised that there were no available financial incentives for participating in the study.

A student-provided school identification, class schedule, or unofficial transcript, meeting FERPA guidelines, helped visually identify the student's enrollment status for eligibility purposes and partly attested to the student's ability to fully engage in the study and make meaning from their experiences. I visually attested to gender and race and verified age during the informed consent reading. Since all documents were school documents, I needed no further confirmation or verification. Upon receipt of each document, I assigned student pseudonyms to provide and protect participants' privacy and confidentiality. Then, I safely stored and secured personal and private information in a locked personal laptop and a locked personal file cabinet.

Semi-Structured Interviews (Appendix A)

A semi-structured one-on-one interview was a critical tool for assembling participant narratives regarding their experiences and the meanings concerning the effect of Black male initiatives. I recorded each interview's audio and laid out the recording,

transcription, analysis, and coding metrics in the Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection sections. Throughout the proposed 75 to 90-minute semi-structured one-on-one interview, I used open-ended questions to elicit narratives and probe for meaning. Open-ended questions allowed me to elicit rich, in-depth participant narratives and enabled the participants to answer each question thoroughly (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Staller, 2010). Weiss (1994) advised that hearing a stranger's objective opinion, specifically the Black male college students in this case, gave access to the participants' actual thoughts and explanations.

Reflexive Journal (Appendix B)

A reflexive journal was a data collection instrument in that I documented memos and jotted down thoughts, questions, and other notes during interviews and throughout the research process. The jottings and memorandums provided researcher transparency, making my thoughts and decision paradigms apparent to the reader (Ortlipp, 2008). The reflexive journal also helped preserve the empirical value in the qualitative research process (Ortlipp, 2008; Staller, 2010).

Audio Recording

I used a personal Apple iPad recording tool to capture the audio from each interview session. I earmarked an exclusive Microsoft TEAMS collaborative account tool for any potential non-in-person interviews. Recording the audio of each interview preserved the record for transcription, analysis, credibility, confirmability, and further scholarly discussion and reflection. Parenthetically, I routinely use Microsoft TEAMS in my career to record audio of class lessons for online student instruction and tutorials and

all for meetings where student success teams discuss sensitive FERPA and HIPPA student information. The Microsoft TEAMS collaborative tool also allows secure storage of each recording in my laptop's secure, password-protected Microsoft TEAMS application. Using the Apple iPad and the availability of the Microsoft TEAMS tool eliminated proximity and communication barriers due to COVID-19 protocols requiring social distance or interview scheduling conflicts. The primary goal was to conduct interviews and gather data as securely and feasibly as possible, and each technique listed met that goal.

Safety and Security

Securing a safe, on-campus, readily available space free from distraction was an interview priority. A safe space was essential because safety and security ensure privacy, protect participant confidentiality, and provide compulsory care for mental, emotional, and physical harm. An on-campus space helped avert potential financial strain and travel conflicts for participants and the researcher. Then, safety and security helped produce a positive and effective comfort level for the researcher and the participants.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment

Based on the study's purpose and student qualifications, I purposefully recruited eight participants equally across the East Texas historically Black colleges. The study's premier recruitment opportunity came from the National Pan-Hellenic Council's approved and sanctioned Black male fraternities. Based on initial queries, Black male fraternities were popular Black male initiatives on each East Texas historically Black

college campus. Another campus recruitment space was the Student Government Association. While student government is an all-inclusive organization and not a Black male initiative per se, such programs operate in a de facto mentoring and supportive manner to guide and support Black male student leaders. I also intended to recruit directly from other campus programs patterned like mentoring and leadership programs and service organizations like bible clubs, debate groups, chess clubs, and study groups whose core goals supported Black male student persistence and graduation academically and socially. Tinto's interactionalist theory advised that these normative, structural, and socially dimensional programs influence student integration and persistence and are integral to student success and this study's purpose and intent (Braxton et al., 2004). I foresaw school-wide buy-in for the study primarily because the three sites were unique to scholarly research and discourse, each school's potential to influence management theory and practice strategically, and the potential to affect and further each school's academic standing and accreditation.

I briefly attended one East Texas Historically Black college and received a bachelor's degree from one institution. Consequently, I had community ties as an alumni and interpersonal faculty and staff relations on some level at each of the three schools. The alumni, interpersonal, and community connections did not create a bias; each provided social capital that aided in a more purposeful participant selection and partnership for a successful and influential study. Such capital also helped with study approval and cooperation across the campuses. Such capital also allowed me to impose upon and query campus associations and program directors while engendering goodwill

in participant recruitment and building rapport and support for the study's ultimate success.

Black male initiative program directors recommended candidates who met the essential qualifications and those they believed possessed the sagacity to provide rich narrative and meaning-making insights. The program director subsequently served as an initial point of contact for potential student participants, and each received a copy of the introductory flyer for mass distribution. The introductory flyer included a study summary, inclusion criteria, and a brief researcher bio containing the researcher's phone and email contact information (see Figure 3). I built a potential participant list based on the program director's participant recommendations. I made phone calls and sent texts to set up interview times to cover the official signed consent and begin the data collection process.

Journaling and data collection began with an informal phone call, text, or email. That informal contact queried and confirmed student interest, informed of the study's intent and purpose, and answered questions and concerns. Once I verbally/visually confirmed participant interest and their basic qualifications, I set up the informed consent and inquired about availability to set interview times.

Participation

Official participation in this study began after verifying participant eligibility and receiving a signed consent form. The student's contribution to the study included meeting and verifying all required and requested inclusion criteria, signing the consent form, participating in the audio-recorded one-on-one interview, and member checks via a

subsequent email of the interview transcript with a follow-up opportunity to provide additional reflections and corrections to interview transcripts. Student experiential narratives were the heart of the study; thus, accurate interview transcripts pushed participation to extend with the member checks after the interviews, where participants had an open channel to communicate until data saturation when the study officially ended. I also preserved all verbal and email communications to uphold the study's validity, reliability, and trustworthiness.

Data Collection

Once approved by each institution, data collection followed all ethical and consent requirements from Walden's institutional review board (IRB) and each of East Texas historically Black colleges. The data collection process followed a logical progression to determine the effect of Black male initiatives on Black male persistence and graduation. It officially began once the participant signed the consent form. Accordingly, the signed consent process officially validated that each participant met the study's qualifications and produced the relevant non-visible demographic information for use during the one-on-one interviews as outlined in the Instrumentation section. The final aspect of data collection involved providing the interview transcript to each participant for member checks, which allowed written corrections and additional reflection.

Once participants scheduled an interview, data collection comprised four intentional phases: Phase 1, the signed consent; Phase 2, the one-on-one interviews; Phase 3, member checks; and Phase 4, the reflexive journal. Each phase aimed to amass accurate and critical data and insights that informed the influence of Black male

initiatives on Black male persistence and graduation at 4-year U.S. colleges. The following sections describe the data collection steps more precisely.

Phase 1: Signed Consent. As I noted in the Instrumentation section, once face-to-face, either in person or via video with participants, the signed consent process required participants to share a student-provided class schedule, student ID, or unofficial transcript (following FERPA guidelines) and submit their signed consent form. The consent form was vital because it displayed the participant's written consent to join the study; without it, I could collect no data. The class schedule, student ID, or unofficial transcript confirmed the participants' enrollment status at an East Texas historically Black college and a variation of their current classification, academic standing, and present level of course rigor. This data type was essential for verification purposes, was relevant to the study (Yin, 2013), and built participant demographics that helped shape individual characteristics functional for rapport building during the one-on-one interviews and Chapters 4 and 5 discussions. Upon receipt of each document, I assigned a unique participant pseudonym as a combination of their Black male initiative and other unique characteristics, began a participant profile in the reflexive journal, and secured their personal information.

Phase 2: One-on-One Semistructured Interviews. The one-on-one semistructured interview was the second data collection instrument, proposed to last at most 75-90 minutes and occur at an approved, predetermined, private, safe, and secure location on the participants' respective East Texas historically Black college campus. Upon arrival at their respective interviews and once they completed their signed consent, I covered the

study's purpose and overview with the participants. I also covered the interview time parameters, opt-out options, and confidentiality. I used Hancock and Algozzine's (2006) planning structure and conducted an open-ended, semi-structured qualitative semi-structured interview with researcher-created and expert-panel-reviewed interview questions. I then conducted the interview, capturing all audio data via a personal iPad with the Microsoft TEAMS collaborative recording tool available for virtual interviews.

Phase 3: Member Checks. Once completed, I exported the interview recording from the iPad to the iRecord transcribing app to produce a written interview transcript. Once I reviewed the transcript comparatively against the recording for accuracy, I emailed the transcriptions, giving the participants 72 hours for member checks to ensure accuracy and add further reflection. The one-on-one interview was the data collection highpoint and the prime opportunity to glean direct participant narratives on the effects of Black male initiatives and how they influenced persistence and graduation efforts. If the member checks provided corrections, clarification, or even more reflections, the proceeding email captures those corrections, clarifications, and reflections and becomes a part of the data collected for analysis. Once the member check confirmed and clarified the interview transcriptions, I began data analysis and inductively coded the data to develop themes that voiced participant narratives.

Phase 4: Reflexive Journaling. Merriam and Tisdale (2016) advised that field note protocols typically included settings, people and activity descriptions, direct quotes and summarizations from participant statements, and observer/researcher comments in margins or the running narrative. The primary objective was to exit each interview with

an in-depth understanding and a mental model of the participant-initiative dynamic with answers to several specific questions. First, what was the Black male initiative's academic and social function and goal? Next, was that function and goal shared in the feedback loop between the initiative's program director, faculty mentor, and student participant? Then, were each party's roles clearly defined within the participant-initiative dynamic? Lastly, what takeaways or outcomes would the participants grasp that translated academically and socially to fully explore the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and reflect on what the analysis revealed about the initiative, the participant, and their corresponding roles? The answers to these questions provided a structural and peripheral description of the initiative and the participant that aided mental models for the researcher and the reader and influenced the study's transferability.

Expert Panel Review. I used an expert panel of four professional colleagues to review the research questions and interview protocols to make recommendations about their clarity and alignment with the research purpose (see Appendix A). The credentials of the four professional colleagues include one with a Ph.D. in African American Studies, one with a doctorate in education, and two with master's degrees in education. I collected no data from these four experts; the panel merely reviewed the research and interview questions and provided their expert feedback on appropriateness and clarity to remove ambiguity, minimize errors, and ultimately strengthen the quality of the research instrument. The experts studied the literature review and research methodology to aid authentication. I tweaked and adjusted the questions to validate the authenticity of the data collection instrument based on the feedback.

Data Saturation. I juxtaposed data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to assess and suppose the data saturation/redundancy point. As I noted the four data collection phases, I anticipated collecting thick and rich data, as the goal was such thick and rich data. Fusch and Ness (2015, p. 1409) advised on the importance of thick data, quantity, rich data, quality, and “many-layered, detailed, and nuanced data” to aid and support saturation. Collecting and analyzing data in tandem kept me apprised of and informed me of the point where there was no new data and no new themes and, thus, data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I duplicated recruiting, interviewing, and collecting data from additional participants, as necessary, to ensure I reached the desired data saturation point.

Data Analysis Plan

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested collecting and analyzing data in conjunction. They also characterized data analysis as "the process of making sense of the data" and "the process used to answer research questions" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 202). The analysis process for this study began immediately upon receipt of the first pieces of collected data. I used an iterative, inductive, comparative, and constant analysis method that followed a narrative and thematic approach within a researcher-created digital codebook and was consistent with interpretive description (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Thorne, 2014).

The process was iterative and inductive. I read and reread the transcriptions, letting the participant experiences establish categories, subcategories, concepts, and themes rather than relying on a predetermined set of initial deductive codes (Azungah,

2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thorne et al. (1997) and Thorne (2014) highlighted how inductive analysis encouraged the researcher to keep an open mind to new ways of seeing and understanding the data (Thorne et al., 1997; Thorne, 2014). They also promoted acquiring maximal variation on the emerging themes. The narrative approach gave preeminence to the participants' meaning, depicting life experiences that produced infinite themes without filters or intermediary interpretation (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008; Thorne et al., 1997). A narrative approach also prompted appreciation for participants' how and why for meaning discovery (Andrade & Anderson, 2020) and aided in answering the research questions, highlighting critical program developments and improvements, and offering a lens for applied action steps and program needs (Thorne, 2014).

Last, the thematic approach helped organize and focus on meaning patterns across data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thorne (2014) indicated how a thematic approach offers the researcher numerous crafting and display opportunities for the data findings and helps the researcher present a more relevant and credible data display. The analytical goal was to develop rich and thick data that aids in reaching data saturation, and each of the noted analysis methods bolstered this interpretive description study, stayed true to the data's logic and context, and worked in tandem to reach the study's intended and applied goal (Thorne, 2014).

Pseudonyms

Precise planning was critical for adequate and accurate data analysis (Yin, 2013). Accordingly, I used an intentional and straightforward analysis process. Once I received

the signed consent, I established a pseudonym for each participant and began building participant profiles in the reflexive journal and researcher-created digital codebook. The pseudonym followed a permutation of the participants' Black male initiative and an innovative amalgamation of one or some participant characteristics following a hashtag. For instance, in a mentoring initiative, participant Wayne could have a pseudonym like #MenteeJayWay, or participant Williams in Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated could be #AlphaAWills. The rationale for this pseudonym was to deliver confidentiality for the participants, provide the researcher with participant-initiative reference points, and highlight and align the specific initiative distinctions for the reader. I used the additional gleaned information and essential characteristics such as current enrollment status, classification, academic standing, and course rigor to establish some base participant demographics.

Interviews

Upon entering each interview with a base participant and initiative profile, my facilitating role involved perpetuating a reflexive and reciprocal interview to develop richer, thicker, and more focused data that captured meaning central to the study and supported triangulation and data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Galletta & Cross, 2013). The interview questions remained uniform even as the participant profiles and experiences varied not to have a moving target but to remain focused on answering the research questions and supporting deeper understanding and data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Reflexivity and reciprocity were based on an analysis of responses during the interview to ascertain when further inquiry was appropriate for deeper understanding

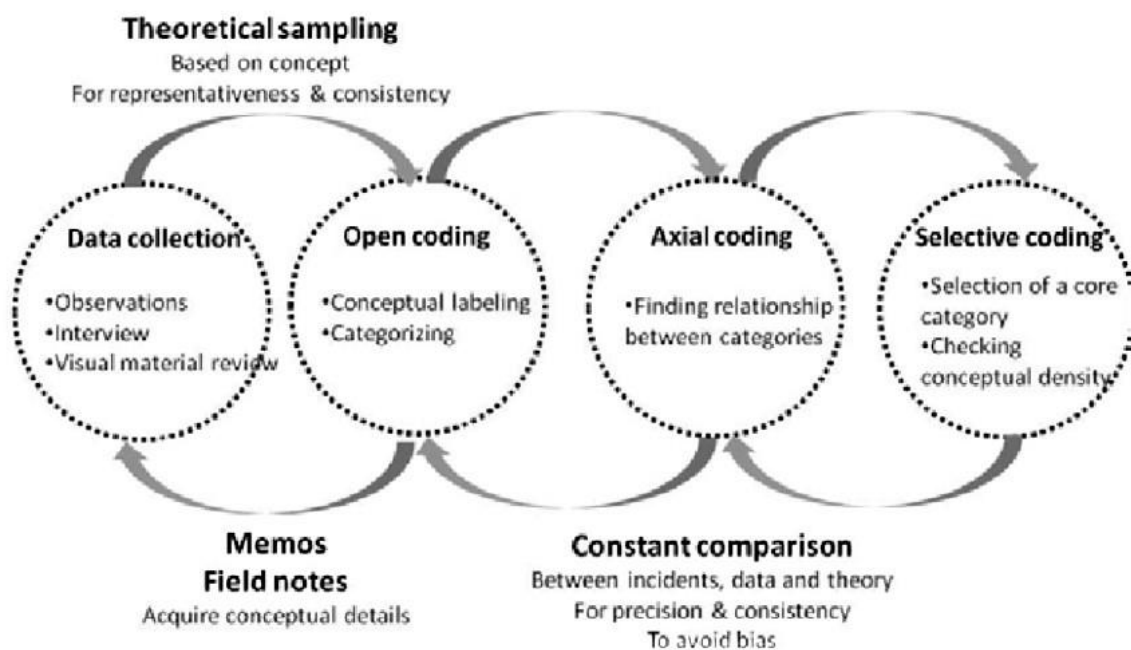
and meaning and to ensure a focused yet mutual and continual interviewer-interviewee exchange. Reflexive journaling was valuable during the interview because it guided and documented data deciphering and countered biases during the reactive process (Thorne et al., 1997). Thorne et al. (1997) also added that reflexive journaling informs the targeted audience during their reasoning processes and helps bolster the fact that the findings were grounded in the data.

Coding

Data analysis involved reading and reviewing the member-checked transcripts to familiarize myself with the data and generate the initial codes. As Thorne et al. (1997) advised, “repeated immersion in the data prior to coding, classifying, or creating linkages” (p. 175). Once I generated some preliminary or initial codes, I continuously analyzed, scrutinized, and compared the narratives in a multilayered manner by hand and commenced inductively searching for themes among the codes (Cho & Lee, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As themes emerged, I continuously reviewed, named, and defined the themes I ultimately characterized for the final report.

Figure 2 symbolizes the coding continuum from open to axial coding and then to selective coding, illustrating the continuous process flow. Open coding involves segmenting, labeling, and categorizing the initial codes to acquire issues and ideas (Cho & Lee, 2014; Koltveit et al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Axial coding was where I searched for themes and discovered relationships and groupings among the codes (Cho & Lee, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I grouped initial and axial codes within divisions during selective or descriptive coding to reveal core categories that reflected and

conceptualized meaning (Cho & Lee, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This process was iterative, inductive, continuous, constant, multilayered, and ongoing after receiving the first dataset and between data sets and participant narratives until I reached data redundancy/saturation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). I concurred and adopted Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) advice to revisit noted and understood biases during the axial and selective coding process to clear the research of any personal projections.

Figure 2*Constant Comparison Analysis*

37

Constant comparison analysis and coding procedure (Cho & Lee, 2014).

Data Reduction

Most but not all data was relevant to the study at hand or assisted in answering the research questions. Hence, reducing data helped establish a more manageable dataset, and collapsing data helped better inform more manageable data relationships (Azungah, 2018). Coded “categories should be responsive to the purpose of the research” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 212), conveying that purpose was paramount. Once I iteratively and inductively established selective codes and core categories and derived themes that described Black men’s experiences and revealed meanings through the coding process, I then used constant comparison analysis and cross-tabulation to reduce data sequentially

by collapsing and integrating similar categories into higher-order groupings (Azungah, 2018).

Discrepant Cases

Black male participant narratives iteratively and inductively drove this research study. Their narratives also simultaneously answered the research questions. As the researcher, I resolved to carry no biases into interviews intentionally. I analyzed by hand and repeatedly immersed myself in each participant narrative (Thorne et al., 1997) when establishing codes and themes to discover and lay bare Black male initiatives' effects on Black male persistence and graduation. Considering the varying campus climates and structures, I proposed that the data reveal cultural, linguistic, and experiential variances. These variances did not diminish the value of the Black men's experiences or meanings, and any narrative portion that detracted from derived codes and themes had an equal value to the study's findings. These discrepant cases required further scrutiny and clarification from the participants and then demanded their own set of initial, axial, and selective codes in the overall study findings and discussion (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

Synthesis and Connection to Practice

Data synthesis and connection to practice were straightforward because of the epistemological and practical design of the interpretive description approach. Thorne (2014) boasted that interpretive description was an "interpretive turn" from theoretical and philosophical traditions and followed a unique applied and practical approach. The inductive and thematic tendencies of interpretive description explicitly positioned the

research scholar to discern distinct conditions and contexts of the research and the coherent decisional model necessary for application and practice (Thorne, 2014; Thorne et al., 1997). Last, with its unique structures, the method helped deliver a wealth of lived experience and general knowledge with interpretive meaning and understanding for use in applied clinical fields (Kolltveit et al., 2016; Thorne, 2014; Thorne et al., 1997).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in a qualitative study relied on establishing confidence that the findings were valid, applicable, consistent, and free of bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Maxwell (1992) recognized trustworthiness as a notion of internal and external validity. He concluded that a valid study referred to the data and conclusions reached using specific methods in a particular context for a study's purpose (Maxwell, 1992). Utilizing multiple data collection sources, precisely semistructured one-on-one interviews, and a reflexive journal allowed me to employ member checks, triangulation, reflexivity, and thick, rich descriptions to establish and safeguard standards of trustworthiness (Creswell, 2009). These multiple collection sources also helped ensure that the findings reflected the participants' experiences, thoughts, and meanings. The rest of this section addresses credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical considerations.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the truthfulness or trustworthiness of the study's findings (Seale, 2002). A credible study ensured that data collection, analysis, and interpretation were rigorous, ethical, and appropriate so that the findings and conclusions accurately represented the world studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Oliver, 2012; Thorne et al.,

1997). I used member checks, triangulation, reflexivity, and thick, rich descriptions to establish the credibility of the interview data. Member checking means I sent each participant a copy of their interview transcript for review to ensure that the thick, rich descriptions in the transcriptions reflected their true and accurate experiences and meanings. Triangulating involved taking the data from the multiple collection techniques and then cross-checking and analyzing responses, ensuring there were no undetected errors or incomplete analyses; this process thus validated and aided the credibility of the study's findings and conclusions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008; Olajide & Lawal, 2020; Thorne et al., 1997). Using a reflexive journal throughout the study for jottings, notes, thoughts, biases, and feelings (Ortlipp, 2008) allowed self-reflection that "creates an open and honest narrative that resonates with the reader" and thus served as a credibility tool (Creswell, 2009, p. 178). Each of these action steps helped ensure this study's credibility and better decision-making and strategic planning throughout the study. It also helped ensure that the trusted results were relevant "to professionals in applied fields because practitioners intervene in people's lives" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 237).

Transferability

Transferability related to whether the study's findings, upon duplication, apply in other situations with other contributors (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seale, 2002), and more specifically, whether what we learned from this study could transfer to similar subsequent situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To facilitate transferability, I used, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) called "sufficient descriptive data... that reflect situation-specific

conditions...” (p. 254) and “rich, thick descriptions” (p. 256) to describe research design, research findings, and give insider accounts as they engaged Black male initiatives at 4-year East Texas historically Black colleges. The detailed, in-depth, and sufficient documentation of all the study’s aspects and findings ensured transferability to other disciplines, situations, and participants. It ensured readers had the proper information to judge whether this study was transferable for subsequent research studies.

Dependability

A study's dependability refers to the data's consistency given the same or similar participants in the same or similar settings (Seale, 2002). In other words, would the findings be consistent if other scholars replicated this study? Merriam and Tisdell (2016) advised that given the essence of qualitative inquiry and the fluid nature of human behavior and human experiences, study replication would only sometimes yield exact results; however, the general question was whether the findings were consistent. I used a few methods specifically to ensure dependability/consistency in the study's findings. During collection, I followed consistent interview protocols using constant questions that focused the interviewer and interviewee and ensured accurate recording to safeguard truthful interpretation and analysis. In addition, member checks helped safeguard the accuracy of the participants' thick, rich descriptive thoughts and meanings. Triangulation helped in cross-checking and analyzing participant interviews and journal jottings. Each measure helped to confirm the data's accuracy and safeguarded the study's dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability signifies the neutral nature of the findings and ensures that participant narratives result from no biases, self-interest, or researcher's perspectives (Seale, 2002). Throughout the project, I used a reflexive journal to note, challenge, and remedy any biased reactions and emotions. I took steps and methods to counter bias, remain objective, and maintain neutrality (Ortlipp, 2008). I shared no personal relationships with any participants nor anticipated any biases. I remained objective throughout the process, even though my culture, gender, and the fact that I am currently an educator, and a college student uniquely positioned me to grasp the phenomenon and add revelatory value to this research project (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). My interest in the subject matter also uniquely positioned me and imposed upon me to maintain a neutral and objective stance while seeking a thick, rich narrative to aid decision-making and strategic planning at 4-year U.S. colleges. Each of these steps helped maintain the study's confirmability and objectivity.

Ethical Procedures

This study explored the effect of Black male initiatives on Black male persistence and graduation. To accurately explore the topic and influence social change, the study looked directly at the target population, Black men who were at least 18 years old and attend East Texas historically Black colleges. I acknowledged that race was a sensitive topic, and I carefully monitored that sensitivity. However, for this study, race was related to a visible physical feature and was not parallel to a person's ethnicity or cultural expressions. The participants and I shared the same race and gender, as I am a Black male

educator and college student. I foresaw no personal ethical issues or biases because I shared no personal relationships with any potential participants and committed to maintaining objectivity. Otherwise, this study's ethical procedures were straightforward. They fell within four core categories: seeking and securing all necessary approvals and permissions, examining and adhering to all professional association and ethical standards, protecting institutions and people by safeguarding institutional and participant data, unpublished instruments, and all proprietary materials, and accurately representing data giving appropriate authorship and publication credit.

I carried out no research for this study until the full review and approval of my Research Proposal from the Walden University IRB. As my proposal review and approval were pending, I examined, for compliance, all professional association and ethical standards for each East Texas Historically Black college and familiarized myself with all required approvals and permissions for local campus and student participant access, interview locations, and use of any unpublished instruments and proprietary material. I also familiarized myself with faculty, staff, and program directors, the potential gatekeepers that would assist with approvals, permissions, recruitment, and potentially be each institution's liaison for the project. Lastly, I reviewed and familiarized myself with all authorship requirements to ensure the final publication credited materials and individuals suitably. Each action step was essential to ensure that I covered and complied with all ethical procedures and requirements for each institution and the study.

I committed to meeting all professional, ethical, and research standards and requirements to ensure this research project's credibility, transferability, confirmability,

dependability, and ultimate success. I committed to participant and data confidentiality, safety and security, informed consent, and accurate data representation. Confidentiality meant that once data collection began, I would assign participants pseudonyms, store all audio data in a password-protected laptop computer, and all paper documents in a locked file cabinet in my home. Participant and data safety and security meant ensuring participant safety during the interviews and journal jottings to safeguard participant identities, interview data, and all sensitive documentation provided during the study. Informed consent meant participation in the study started once I received the signed consent form, which also noted that a participant could drop out of the study without any negative consequences. Lastly, I am committed to ensuring the integrity of data analysis and rigorously and ethically representing data findings. At this point, there were no financial incentives or other ethical issues to disclose.

Summary

This chapter detailed the research methodology, which covered the strategic layout and justification for this research study and included the research population rationale, sampling method, and recruitment steps. This chapter also contained the data collection and data analysis processes in detail. Lastly, this chapter conveyed the steps taken to ensure data trustworthiness and reliability, including the steps taken to ensure the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures. Following the data collection, Chapter 4 covers the data collected and discusses the results.

Chapter 4: Results

This qualitative study's aim in engaging Black men at three East Texas historically Black colleges and universities was to capture interpretive and descriptive narratives of their experiences with Black male initiatives in hopes of revealing the initiatives' real effects on persistence and graduation. In summary, the three guiding research questions included: 1) What were Black male students' experiences with Black male initiatives at East Texas historically Black colleges? 2) What meanings did Black male students make of those experiences, and 3) How did Black male students perceive the effectiveness of the initiatives to improve their persistence and graduation at the institutions? Throughout this chapter, I disclose key demographic aspects of the participants and the broad range of their initiatives, which will reveal the non-monolithic nature of the participants and initiatives. I also highlight several essential narratives that lay bare Black men's experiences and their sincere meanings without any interpretive filters. Lastly, I disclose the mechanics of data collection and analysis, the key findings from their experiences and narratives, and conclude with a layout of the trustworthiness of those findings.

Research Setting

Outreach to the three East Texas historically Black colleges staff and admin about the research project began as early as August 2021 with little to no success due to the college campus modifications caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Persistent outreach about the study triggered a phone interview, and Campus 1's IRB processed my application and issued subsequent approval for recruitment and interviews on September

28, 2021. Though Campus 1's IRB approved recruitment access, actual participant recruitment expressly began only following Walden IRB approval on August 30, 2022 (approval #08-30-22-06699). Recruitment began between September and December 2022, as regular campus activities resumed at Campus 1, where I sent the recruitment flyer (see Figure 3 below) to post to campus message boards and social media sites, hoping for emails or phone calls from potential participants. I made several phone calls and visited Campus 1 after their approval, and finally received a November 21, 2022, date where I met a group of 12 Black men, introduced the study, recruited four, got signed informed consent from each, and completed one-on-one interviews.

While completing recruitment and interviews at Campus 1, outreach to staff and admin at the other two East Texas historically Black college campuses continued. I leveraged my experiences at Campus 1 for approval success at the other two campuses. I ultimately arranged a December 6, 2022, visit to Campus 2. I received verbal approval from the VP of Academic Affairs and a list of potential interview participants from the Dean of Student Outreach. I began outreach based on the provided list via phone calls and texts and set interviews. A subsequent visit to Campus 2 on December 8, 2022, yielded an in-person approval letter, not on campus letterhead, as the meeting was not in the VP's office. The signed letter from the VP freed me to recruit and interview participants. I then met with a couple of students and completed two one-on-one interviews. Thankfully, before leaving campus, the Academic Affairs vice president secretary provided a letter using the same language on campus letterhead. I continued

participant outreach and a couple more interviews at Campus 2 during the week of December 6-9, 2022.

Summarily, while the COVID-19 pandemic previously caused modified campus conditions at the three research sites, with regular ongoings resumed by the 2022 fall semester, there were no adverse personal or organizational conditions negatively influencing participants or their experiences during the participant interviews, as voiced by several campus point persons and student participants who unprompted acknowledged appreciation for the restored campus normalcy. Therefore, Campus 1 and Campus 2 administration provided:

1. Verbal and written approval to recruit and conduct interviews,
2. A slate of potential participants to recruit and interview, and
3. Private space to conduct interviews.

Hence, I completed participant recruitment and interviews during the 2022 fall semester, and more precisely, four interviews on November 21, 2022, at Campus 1 and two on December 8 and 9, 2022, four total at Campus 2. Table 1 provides an average of the participant interview times, including the pre-conference portion, which included addressing a group of Black men about the research project, confirming Black male initiative participation and age, and getting verbal and signed informed consent from each participant. The post-conference portion included confirming the participant's continued consent and securing an email address to send the transcribed interview for member checks and to add any additional thoughts or reflections. Additionally, the third East Texas historically Black college never approved recruiting and interviewing despite

continued outreach to staff and admin from July 2021 through May 2023. Thus, I used a purposive sampling approach for this study to recruit and collect data through semi-structured one-on-one interviews from eight Black men, who were at least 18 years old and actively participating in a Black male initiative at an East Texas historically Black college.

Table 1

One-on-One Interview Overview

Participants	Consent	Interview	Total time	Pages
#D_Ace	20	08:47	0:28:47	4
#J_Duece	20	14:14	0:34:14	4
#D_Trey	20	09:22	0:29:22	4
#D_Quad	20	11:06	0:31:06	4
#Mr_Move	20	08:14	0:28:14	4
#Mr_NBA	20	09:32	0:29:32	5
#Mr_President	20	09:06	0:29:06	4
#Mr_UNCF	20	13:06	0:33:06	5
Average	20	10:17	0:30:30	4.5

Note: participant's name represents the assigned pseudonyms.

Demographics

Two institutions approved access for student recruitment and provided campus space for interviews. While the third institution did not approve access to recruit and interview, eight Black men, who were at least 18 years old, enrolled full-time in East Texas historically Black colleges and participating in a broad range of school-sanctioned Black male initiatives sat for one-on-one interviews and shared their experiences. The

participant demography, as it pertains to age, race, and gender, was the study's impetus, and I visually verified each participant as a Black male, which met that most basic requirement. Additionally, before the start of each interview, each Black man, wielding a campus ID, verbally acknowledged being who were at least 18 years old and enrolled full-time in their respective colleges. In summary, all eight participants were Black, male, at least 18 years old, enrolled full-time in an East Texas historically Black college, and participating in at least one Black male initiative.

In this instance, a pertinent and exciting demographic aspect included this specific set of Black men moving to East Texas from different regions of the country to attend an East Texas historically Black college. Once in East Texas, these men constructed, managed, and immersed themselves in college campus micro-communities known as Black male initiatives. As scholars dubbed it, this type of contemporary demographics extended beyond the traditional study of populations and their other statistical aspects but rather focuses on relationships and the interchange within relative populations and Black male initiatives communities within the East Texas historically Black college ecosystem (Britannica, 2023). Table 2 displays pertinent demographics and specify each participant's initiative number and name and their broad range of engaged initiatives. Including two that expressed memberships in a 'Divine 9' fraternity, five in team sports, four a part of Men of Valor and Excellence (MOVE), a mentoring, leadership, and accountability initiative, one in the gospel choir, one a part of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) Royal Court, two in the Student Government Association (SGA), one in

the National Honor Society (NHS), and one as the Parliamentarian of the campus Pre-Alumni Council (PAC).

Table 2

Participant's Specified Initiatives

Participants	Initiatives	Total
#D_Ace	NHS, Sports Team	2
#J_Duece	SGA, Sports Team	2
#D_Trey	Sports Team	1
#D_Quad	Sports Team	1
#Mr_Move	MOVE	1
#Mr_NBA	MOVE, Sports Team	2
#Mr_President	Choir, Fraternity, MOVE, SGA	4
#Mr_UNCF	Fraternity, MOVE, PAC, UNCF	4

Note: participants names represent the assigned pseudonyms.

Data Collection

The data collection aim for the study was to recruit and interview Black men evenly across three historically Black colleges in East Texas. Assuming each college would grant student access, I aimed to interview at least four Black men from each campus. As only two campuses granted access to recruit and interview, after receiving IRB approval on August 30, 2022, I collected data from eight Black men from those two East Texas historically Black institutions from November 21 to December 9, 2022.

Campus 1

I visited Campus 1 twice, post-approval, to meet the Vice-President of Academic Affairs to get clear campus instructions and expectations and then to meet a few campus

program leaders who could aid student recruitment and disburse the study's researcher-created recruitment flyer (see Figure 3) on campus message boards and social media pages. After very little recruitment progress, I contacted the Vice-President of Academic Affairs again and advised her of my progress. She then assigned a campus liaison to aid in student recruitment and setting interviews. Once assigned, the campus liaison expeditiously organized a group of potential participants and provided a private campus location for the one-on-one semi-structured interviews. When I met with the group, the campus was closed for the Thanksgiving break, and the only Black men available and on campus were a part of the school's athletic program. I gladly accepted the opening and drove to the site to meet the men and conduct the interviews.

Figure 3

Study Flyer



"Black male initiatives' effect on Black male persistence and graduation"

This *Walden University dissertation* study is designed to help college management teams better understand the effect fraternities, mentoring, leadership programs, and other similar initiatives have on **Black male** persistence and graduation at 4-year colleges.

I invite you to talk about your experiences with fraternities or similar initiatives.

Study Flyer

If interested contact Eric Johnson at ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ or call ~~XXXXXXXX~~
Currently accepting participants!!

The study

- Is completely confidential
- Assigns pseudonyms to protect privacy
- Asks to participate in a 75-90 min one-on-one interview

Eligibility requirements

- Black, male, age 18+
- enrolled full-time at an East TX HBCU
- Active in a school-sanctioned Black male initiative such as a fraternity, mentoring or leadership program, or other similar initiatives

Introductory Session

Upon arrival, I joined the liaison and approximately 12 Black men in the campus's empty student union/cafeteria area. The liaison briefly introduced me, advised the group, and left the student union/cafeteria area. Then, for approximately 15 to 20 minutes, I introduced myself to the group of Black men, presented the impetus behind the study and its purposes and proposed benefits, and answered several questions from the group. Six of the twelve men initially agreed to sit for interviews, as others had time constraints and other obligations and departed the area. However, after completing a couple of interviews, the six dwindled to four as two others indicated their limited time constraints and respectfully exited the space.

I initially proposed 75-90 minutes per interview, considering pre- and post-interview aspects and time to establish a rapport that facilitated good, rich dialogue during the recorded interview portion. Notably, though, during the informal introductions, I offered a summary explanation of the study, addressed questions and concerns from the group, perceptibly established race and gender qualifications, and verified college enrollment via campus-required student badges.

Handling so much on the front end and expediting most of the necessary eligibility aspects first freed me to move directly into informed consent once I was one-on-one with each participant, resulting in each recorded interview lasting 11 minutes and 12 seconds on average. Additionally, the group of Black men's acumen and ability to adapt and deliberately and profoundly articulate and interpret meaning from their narrated experiences with Black male initiatives also helped cut into that 75-90 proposed

interview timeframe, making the average interview timeframe in total on average 31 minutes for each participant.

Consent

I then relocated the first participant and myself to a remote area of the vast space to speak privately and confidentially while the group was out of sight. I sectioned the consent form, which allowed me to cover the form section by section. At each section, I read and verbally confirmed the participant's understanding and acquiescence, including facilitating verbal acknowledgment of the participant's age and full-time enrollment status during their respective sections of the form. Each participant also named their Black male initiatives, which I journaled and wrote on their consent form. Lastly, each participant verbalized and signed the consent form during the first five minutes of the one-on-one interview.

Interview

After signing the consent, I recorded each interview on my personal iPad. Once I completed the interview, I moved the interviews into the iRecord app, which produced a line-by-line interview transcript. Each interview transcript required a small amount of cleanup, and the cleanup process was straightforward, as I ensured the transcript matched the recording word-for-word. I then emailed each participant their transcript for member checks based on the email provided with the consent form and watched for additional clarification and reflection. While neither participant added additional reflection, one participant thanked me for the opportunity.

The first interview lasted longer than the others because I began the questioning verbatim. I soon realized I could overlap each interview question's social and academic dynamics. For instance, the first question virtually asked the participant about the academic purpose and, afterward, the social purpose of Black male initiatives on their campus. The same question but with a focus on the academic aspect first, then the social aspect next. However, I compounded the question in subsequent interviews by asking the participant to explain the academic and social purpose of Black male initiatives in a single question. Facilitating this slight change promoted a more accessible, unrestricted flow in the participant's narratives and prevented me from interjecting and prohibiting the unrestrained flow of information. The change also reduced the average interview time by a few minutes, as I wanted to retain the remaining interview opportunities due to participant time constraints.

Campus 2

During the COVID-19 year, I made numerous attempts with little to no success for recruitment approvals. With the knowledge I gained from my experiences at Campus 1, I contacted a professor familiar with me and my study. I was then directed to a more appropriate individual on campus to get approval to recruit students. I then spoke directly with the gentleman over the phone, and he immediately set a meeting and invited me to the campus. When I got to his office for the meeting, the VPs of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and the Student Outreach Director, who advised the MOVE mentoring and accountability campus initiative, were assembled. I introduced myself to the three of them and provided a copy of the study's details, including a copy of the research approval

letter from Campus 1. They immediately gave verbal permission to recruit and interview students. The Student Outreach Director, who became the campus liaison, then typed the permission letter that the Academic Affairs VP immediately signed.

Upon arriving at his office in the back area of the student union/cafeteria building, I noticed a group of students prepping toys and gift bags for a community Christmas giveaway, as it was the week before leaving for Christmas break. The student outreach director explained the activities and introduced me to two Black male students, one the student president of MOVE and the other the dean for a campus-sanctioned Divine 9 organization. I then presented my study to the two Black men and offered them an opportunity to share their experiences with me, and both enthusiastically accepted. Once the student outreach director and others in the group had packed and left the area to deliver the toys and gift bags, the student outreach director's office, a work-study student office space, and the waiting area became available to complete both one-on-one interviews one after the other. Once completed, and as I prepared to leave, the student outreach director returned and provided a list of four additional Black men to reach out to and recruit for the study. Within two days, I set interview times with two additional Black men. I returned to the almost empty campus in the same space at the student outreach director's office for one-on-one semi-structured interviews.

I followed similar procedures at Campus 2 as with Campus 1, with just a single variation. At Campus 2, I took the time before each interview to review the study with each participant, answer questions and concerns, confirm their interest in sharing their experiences, and establish eligibility. Similarly, once informed and each participant

signed consent, I recorded each interview on my iPad. I then moved each interview audio into the iRecord app, producing a line-by-line transcript. Each interview transcript required a small amount of straightforward cleanup to ensure the transcript matched the recordings perfectly. I emailed each participant their transcript for member checks based on the email provided during the informed consent.

Summarily, Table 3 summarizes the introduction and interview process times in totality. As Campus 1's group introductions proved effective and efficient, I closely mimicked similar processes at Campus 2. More precisely, as the introductions at Campus 1 lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes and aided in expediting portions of the eligibility verifications and answering questions and concerns, I felt it appropriate to take similar steps at Campus 2. On average, introductions, question-answers time, and informed consent took about 15 to 20 minutes, with the recorded one-on-one interviews ranging from approximately 10 to 12 minutes. After the recorded interview portion, I summarized with a brief recap of informed consent, advised on the member checks, and thanked each participant for participating in the study. On average, the entire process at both campuses was approximately 30 minutes, which was 30-45 minutes shorter than I projected in Chapter 3's Proposal.

Table 3*One-on-One Interview Overview*

Participants	Consent	Interview	Total time	Pages
#D_Ace	20	08:47	0:28:47	4
#J_Duece	20	14:14	0:34:14	4
#D_Trey	20	09:22	0:29:22	4
#D_Quad	20	11:06	0:31:06	4
#Mr_Move	20	08:14	0:28:14	4
#Mr_NBA	20	09:32	0:29:32	5
#Mr_President	20	09:06	0:29:06	4
#Mr_UNCF	20	13:06	0:33:06	5
Average	20	10:17	0:30:30	4.5

Note: participants names represent the assigned pseudonyms.

Data Analysis

The interviews produced a wealth of illuminating data for analysis for this qualitative interpretive description study. Data collection and analysis were simultaneous in that I made reflective jottings and notations during each participant interview, drawing on Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) guidance of collecting and analyzing data collaboratively. The reflective jottings in the researcher-created journal consisted of descriptive inductive pre-codes and possible categories and themes I noted during the participant interviews while considering the research questions about the effects of Black male initiatives on Black male persistence and graduation. The jottings captured my thoughts, perceptions, potential biases, and conclusive codes regarding the interview, the interviewee, and their experiences (see Appendix B). After each set of interviews, I

transcribed each audio recording using the iRecord app and then commenced a hand-comparison of the transcripts against the audio recordings for accuracy. This analysis portion allowed me to immerse myself in the data further and affirm some initial codes and potential categories and themes from the journal jottings.

Member Checks

After the initial transcript cleanup, I emailed the verified transcripts to their respective participant for member checks, soliciting corrections/clarifications and further feedback and reflections. While neither participant offered any written corrections, further feedback, or additional reflections after 30 days, had either participant provided anything further, I consider each as essential and equally as valuable as the recorded interviews and transcripts. One participant followed up with me via a text message, though, only to check on the status of the study and offer his appreciation. His text was not added to the data analysis because it was unrelated to the research study.

Hand Analysis

Thorne et al. (2004) noted that the researcher "drives interpretation" (p. 11), so during this initial analysis phase, I constructed a list of eight codes encompassing three categories derived from the interview journal jottings and transcript reviews (see Table 4). The three categories included campus-wide micro-communities (Brooms, 2018), on-campus supportive structures, and communication, each hoping to ensure that the research definitively answered the three principal research questions. Of these three categories, the eight initial codes included the following:

1. Micro-communities – brothers, brotherhood, family, and community

2. Supportive structures – Faculty, Staff, HBCU, and leadership
3. Communication – calls, check-ins, conversation, and encouragement.

Table 4*Initial Codes List*

Initial codes	Category	Files	References
Brothers/Brotherhood, Family, Community	Micro-communities	15	43
Calls, Check-ins, conversation, encouragement	Communication	0	0
Faculty, Staff, HBCU, Leadership	Supportive Structure	0	0
Total		15	43

Note. NVIVO generated report.

NVIVO Software

I completed each interview personally, used a reflexive journal, and reviewed and cleaned up transcripts by hand, which forced further immersion in the data and aided the data analysis process. These imperative data analysis steps, more specifically (a) one-on-one interviews that enlightened and offered a vicarious journey with the participants as they recalled, reimagined, and revisited emotions associated with their firsthand experiences, (b) journal jottings that co-opted interpretive knowledge production that answered the main research questions, and (c) iteratively and inductively reviewing the data all for interpretive knowledge production (Thorne et al., 2004). While that personal touch had benefits and gifted me with further data familiarization, NVIVO, a qualitative data analysis software, proved invaluable in exploring the relationship among the data more thoroughly. Once I purchased the software, I procured a basic familiarization, created a project name, and input my initial codes and the interview transcripts. The NVIVO software quickly organized and analyzed the interview data and made critical

connections to the data. I then formatted the NVIVO initial code, emerging categories, and themes table (see Appendix D).

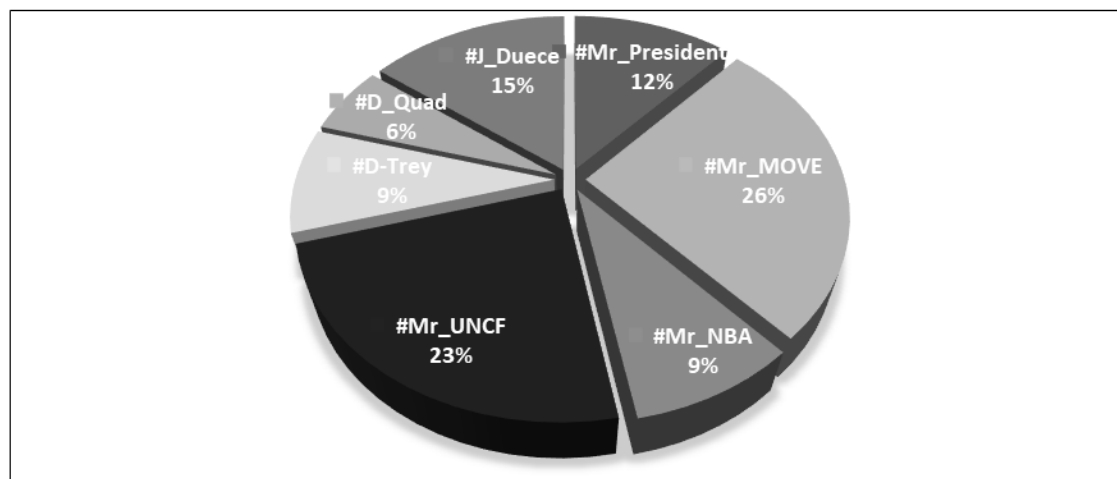
Themes Generated and Data Analysis Reflection

After reviewing the NVivo software generated codes and emerging categories report, I determined, based on the data, that the bulk of the Black male participants' experiences and interaction meanings with Black male initiatives centered around the significant categories of brotherhood, brothers, family, and team, strictly based on the weight of the files and reference columns from the report (see Appendix D). The NVivo software essentially confirmed in data reports and tables codes and themes I instinctively captured during the participant interviews, as each Black man expressed their respective initiatives' overarching values matrix and meanings.

More precisely, the themes captured in the micro-community category centered around the five main ideas of brotherhood, brothers, community, family, and team. Figure 4 offers an individual participant percentage of occurrence surrounding this distinct theme. For instance, pivotal moments such as watching #Mr_UNCF grimace, remembering "life on my own since 13... and throughout high school," yet beaming while invoking his symbiotic role and fortune reversals since, as he stated, "coming to an HBCU... and seeing other people [young, Black, men] and the inspiration from them." Through the narratives' context clues, I inductively noticed and concluded that the HBCUs' Black faculty and student population and the initiatives' similar population of advisors and student types, in this instance, had not merely an academic and social influence but a positive life-enhancing and transformative effect.

Figure 4

Percentage of Occurrences Related to Micro-Community Theme



Similarly, I observed the timidity of #Mr_NBA as he shared, "I did not grow up with a father... I grew up with my grandfather, but he was old," then, his hubris, as he recalled, "MOVE is teaching me how to be a man... Basketball also taught me to be a man and take responsibility." In this instance, the participant inductively intimates that he missed some life lessons due to relevant parenting deficiencies. Nevertheless, he attained their advantage while participating in a Black male initiative. These two examples, therefore, validate how firsthand observation proved indispensable as they facilitated and produced essential knowledge with their interpretive meanings and brought me to inductively conclude that Black male initiatives affect Black men beyond the academic and social supports I initially proposed. While the principal goal of this research study was to answer the initiatives' effect on the persistence and graduation of Black men, these two examples go to the efficacy of my direct participation in data collection and analysis,

in conjunction with the NVivo software that all then compliments the iterative inductive analysis process.

Overarching Themes

As I further analyzed the data findings, recalling the overarching theme of brothers, a brotherhood, a family, and a team espoused by the interview participants, it was clear that they continuously and collectively assigned specific value to each initiative as a close-knit, supportive community of brothers and a brotherhood with all its benefits and detriments. Therefore, to capture and frame their experiences and the subsequent meanings thoroughly and accurately, I and the NVIVO software assigned the following overarching category of themes: First, with each initiative acting as a close-knit, supportive community, the participants valued both the horizontal and vertical accountability measures with high academic and social expectations amongst all the brothers within their initiatives. Then, the program directors and faculty and staff advisors for each initiative and at each historically Black college equally, extending those exact academic and social expectations with nuances such as seeing themselves in others in authority and their acting from a generativity space in their close-knit community brotherhood. Last was the never-ending, lifelong connection, brotherhood, and benefit of those within the community and those in oversight. I will discuss these themes in detail later in the Results section.

Personal Assumptions

An assumption I noted going into this study was that Black male initiative program directors, as mentors in the mentor-mentee feedback circuit, would operate with

an eye on the mentee's personal growth and development (Hastings & Sunderman, 2019). From that reference point, I presumed that the mentors would work toward and almost guarantee positive academic and social outcomes within their interactions, regardless of their complexities. I also understood that despite assumptions, the experiential narratives would drive interpretation and the ultimate results and recommendations inductively. I then determined that personal participation in data collection and transcript cleanup might prove most valuable to the iterative, inductive analysis process and thereby dictate the codes and themes of the results.

In contrast, I did not foresee how Black male initiatives possibly had a transformational effect on Black men. From the firsthand interview observations and iteratively reviewing interview narratives, I induced and cognitively moved this Black male initiatives' conversation out of the presumed and abstract into a more meaningful understanding of the effects of Black male initiatives on Black men at East Texas historically Black colleges. The iterative, inductive analysis process expanded my consciousness to infer whether these Black men's experiences with Black male initiatives proved to have an effect beyond the academic and the social. I will discuss this potentially nuanced perspective further in the Results section of this chapter.

While constructing the researcher-created, expert-panel-reviewed interview questions, I thought it prudent to consider both the positive and negative or adverse facets of Black male initiative experiences, supposing that such a complex matrix of interactions would yield a wealth of fruitful and insightful narratives and further compel inductive analysis. As I anticipated such complexities, the iterative, inductive process

unveiled what I categorized as adverse incidents or experiences versus discrepant cases. For instance, as #Mr_President and #Mr_UNCF, respectively, expressed participation in multiple initiatives, each offered the importance of resilience and time management skills while emphasizing how "...being a part of a lot of different things is overwhelming..." and "...I be so tired and missed a lot of [fun] things because I'm handling [initiative] business... and I got school...." This narrative established the adverse component of Black male initiatives, and again, I built this aspect into the interview protocol to capture the good, bad, and ugly effects of the complex web of interactions with Black male initiatives euphemistically.

A primary goal of this study was to elicit Black men's experiential narratives from participating in Black male initiatives at East Texas historically Black colleges that exposed their "interpretive understandings and meanings" (Kolltveit et al., 2016, p. 2) regarding the social, academic, and potentially cultural complexities related to the deployed initiatives aimed at affecting their persistence and graduation. While the findings from this small purposive sample of Black men offer an eye into their perceptions and meanings related to this specific study topic, I did not generalize the findings quantifiably, as such requires a larger population of participants (Ali & Yusof, 2011). Suffice it to say, exploring these rich and complex experiential narratives that answered how and why type questions helped "optimize knowledge development" specifically regarding Black male initiatives' effects on Black men at East Texas historically Black colleges (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Kolltveit et al., 2016, p. 2).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of collected data for this qualitative interpretive description study relied almost solely on instituting steps that engendered confidence that the collected data and its reached conclusions are internally and externally valid, contextually pertinent to the research at hand, consistent throughout, and not skewed by bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 1992). Accomplishing such vital characteristics in the research requires planning and follow-through. I deployed several principal actions throughout the study to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis. I expressly set forth the following: 1) I used a purposive sample of participants from multiple sites. 2) I established participant demographics, initiative eligibility, and consent before each interview. 3) I ensured a safe, secure, and private interview space and established a reassuring and trustworthy rapport where participants were free to express honest, rich, and thick experiential narratives. 4) I used a consistent interview protocol where each participant answered identical questions. 5) I recorded audio and transcribed each interview and then presented the transcriptions to the participants for member checks, allowing each participant to review for corrections and additional reflection. 6) I used a reflexive journal to make notes and jot down thoughts, ideas, points, and other observations throughout the research process as a means of transparency and self-reflection and to preserve the empirical data. Each measure worked to triangulate the study's findings and to ensure fundamentally the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility is the truthfulness metric regarding the study's data collection and findings (Seale, 2002), and the credibility steps taken for this study were straightforward and concise. I relied, specifically, on thick, rich experiential narratives from participants at multiple sites, member checks, reflexivity, and triangulation to ensure credibility. In conjunction with a safe and secure environment free from bias and judgment, I first used a researcher-created, expert panel-reviewed, consistent interview protocol. The consistent interview questions empowered and encouraged free and open engagement that promoted space for the thick, rich experiential narratives necessary for qualitative data collection and analysis. The free-flowing dialogue prompted feedback that clarified points made, asked for follow-up when needed, acknowledged the participants' emotions and meanings, and affirmed their narratives as relevant, pertinent, and insightful. I emailed the transcribed interviews to the participants for member checks, providing the opportunity for clarification and further reflection where needed. I journaled important notes and personal thoughts, interesting observations regarding the participant's behaviors and narratives during and after each interview, aha moments, adverse events, and points of any potential bias in my thinking. The reflective journal proved cathartic as I captured vital analytical thoughts and insightful aspects of observed data. While each of these actions was a significant piece in establishing credibility, together, each helped triangulate the findings through cross-checking for undetected errors and incomplete analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008).

Transferability

The question of transferability came down to how I used rich, thick descriptive data when describing the research design, the findings, and the participants' experiential narratives. Readers and scholars could use the descriptive data to duplicate the study's findings in other disciplines and with other participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seale, 2002). While the liaison at Campus 1 presented an in-person group of potential participants, in contrast, the liaison at Campus 2 offered a potential participant list; this was the only slight recruitment variance across the sites. I, otherwise, forthrightly detailed the duplicatable aspects of this study, thus delivering a trustworthy and duplicatable research project.

Dependability

The dependability aspect concerned whether the data was consistent given other participants and setting semblances (Seale, 2002). While qualitative research into human experiences is complex, I established a rapport and presented a rigorous interview protocol with identical questions before each participant. Establishing participant rapport aided the free-flowing dialogue where participant narratives were front and center while allowing follow-up questions for points of clarification as needed to ensure clear and concise, thick and rich experiential participant narratives. Additionally, I recorded each interview to preserve the data and presented written transcripts to the participants for member checks. I duplicated each step with all participants at multiple sites, and the data appeared consistent. Therefore, the data would stay consistent if other researchers replicated this study.

Confirmability

Confirmability assesses the neutrality of the findings, ensuring they were purely a function of the participant's experiences and not influenced by bias or the researcher's self-interest or perspective (Seale, 2002). The interview protocol, where the participants answered identical questions regarding their experiences, and the reflexive journal, where I made empirical jottings and notes to counter any bias, advanced the neutrality of the data findings. This study aimed to understand the actual effects of Black male initiatives. I established protocols to enlist rich, thick participant narratives to accomplish that purpose and answer the guiding research questions.

Study Results

This study addressed a gap in the current literature. It identified and highlighted several themes related to the effect of Black male initiatives at East Texas historically Black college campuses on Black men's persistence and graduation trends. Thus, this qualitative interpretive description study purposefully explored Black men's lived experiences and their expressed meanings as they engaged in various campus-sanctioned Black male initiatives. The three questions that guided the research were: 1) what were Black male college student experiences with Black male initiatives at East Texas historically Black colleges? 2) What meanings did Black male college students make of their experiences with Black male initiatives at East Texas historically Black colleges? 3) How did Black male college students perceive the Black male initiatives' effectiveness in improving their persistence and graduation at East Texas historically Black colleges?

Reaching answers to these questions required no special interpretative tricks because this interpretive description study allowed the participants' narratives to speak without filters.

Upon a thorough analysis of the eight participants' narratives, the data consistently and unanimously esteemed each initiative as a brotherhood and a supportive community, assigning descriptive terms such as brothers, a brotherhood, a community, a family, friends, and a home with all the associated benefits and detriments at each level of the participant-initiative structure (see Table 5). Additionally, and unexplored at the outset of this study, most participants' narratives also touted some level of learned and strengthened leadership characteristic while participating in their respective Black male initiatives. Adverse events were an intentional aspect of the interview protocol, and the narratives inductively captured a couple of nuanced adverse characteristics within the complex participant-initiative interactions. In this section, I used the participants' narratives to address the *brotherhood*, *supportive community*, *lifetime benefit*, and *leadership* main themes, along with their inductive codes, while addressing the adverse events and using the narratives to answer the three guiding research questions.

Theme #1: Brotherhood

The first emergent theme apparent while iteratively reviewing the participant narratives was how these Black men valued the *brotherhood* their Black male initiative experiences produced. The eight participants collectively mentioned *brother*, *brotherhood*, *family*, *friend*, *friendship*, and *home* approximately 76 times to communicate how they perceived and valued their initiatives' close-knit *brotherhood* to impact their persistence and graduation prospects (see Table 5). As the participants

evoked the terms *brother* and *brotherhood* from a hierarchal position superior to that of a friend and friendship or a mere acquaintance, their narratives suggested and demonstrated initiative experiences with strengthening elements and ideals that went to the heart of their persistence and graduation prospects.

Table 5

Theme #1: Brotherhood Codes Frequency Table

Codes	Frequency	Percent
brothers/brotherhood	51	49.0%
community	9	08.7%
family	14	13.5%
Friend/friendship	19	18.2%
home	11	10.6%
Total	104	100%

Note. NVIVO generated report.

For instance, #D_Trey emphatically declared, "I feel like it's a brotherhood... it's a brotherhood." #Mr_MOVE similarly expressed in more detail that,

It's a *brotherhood* for people, and it just gives you the bond that you need, especially when you come into college... and... for a lot of people, it's their first time being away from home, and you might have that lonely feeling... so, having that *brotherhood* and knowing that you're not in this alone, and that there's other people that's going through that same journey as you. It just *helps* you. And then also... on that academic level... he's *my brother*... I won't let my *brother* fail. So, I'm gone always reach back and *help my brother* whatever he needs. And that's really how it is. And that's how when people say they want to join our [male initiative] program, that's what I tell them. It's that *brotherhood*... he gone always

be *my brother*... So, whatever you need, whether it be academic, financial, if it's anything that we can do, then we'll get it done for you.

#J_Duece similarly shared that,

For [sports team], I have many, many good experiences with my brothers. Everybody on the team I look at as my brother. When I'm at them down moments, I can look to one of *my brothers* on the [sports] team, and they're gonna help me. They see me sometime walking through the hallway with a frown on my face... aye what's up with ya man... you good, you alright... Same thang I do with them. ...to keep everybody positive... everybody motivated, doing the right thing... Same thing with SGA... I got the [student] of the SGA... ...any time I see him on campus, he... aye how you doing Man? You doing good? He asked me how I am *personally*. As a person... just knowing that fact and seeing that he actually cares about how I'm feeling as a person, it helps me push through the day. And whenever you're positive, it helps you do everything that you need to do. Such as graduate.

#Mr_UNCF, a senior and considered a big brother on campus with positions as the Parliamentarian of PAC, a fraternity member, and part of the UNCF Royal Court, presented a similar narrative and conveyed the brotherhood from a unique vantage point and stated:

...being in the leadership role... we have to be at every event. We have to be involved... We have to tell them [*brothers*] to put on some clothes... go to class... they see me as a *bigger brother*... like somebody care... because I talk to them in

a sense... like I care... like... come on... get it together... You know what we're here for... we're not here to joke around... we're here to get it done.

#D_Ace similarly added,

Yeah, I can say like... last year when we had to face a lot of adversity, but we had that connectedness where it didn't really deter us and make us go down. So, like, we stayed together, so, it meant that was a character builder for me and just the whole *team*.

#Mr_President stated,

So, for [fraternity name], you really just be brothers and those are really your brothers. What you go through and what you learn together. It's really your family after that. ...building friendships... friendships and *family*. A lot of people come from broken homes, and then I'm fortunate to have big groups of family and friends. So, when you come to college and get involved in these different organizations, it gives you an opportunity to meet new people and be a part of something... So, when it's... the academics come easy, plus your friends and your new *family* help you with your work and stuff. You have different study halls and all different things like that...

These narrative sections straightforwardly depict, reveal, and construct a visual paradigm regarding how these Black men positioned and valued their initiative's *brotherhood* and *family*-oriented connections and their role in their persistence and ultimate graduation. The most apparent and obvious thing throughout their experiential narratives was that their experiences produced a positive impact as their conveyed

meanings demonstrated. During the interviews and analysis, the narratives transported me back to the closeness of the brotherhood I forged during college. I related innately to the straightforward meanings presented through their narratives.

A few summary points extracted from these narratives worth briefly mentioning and that I will explore further in Chapter 5's discussion section were the commitment of each to the other's well-being and success, the inherent and familial obligation at every hierarchical level within the brotherhood that sets forth a reciprocal accountability and higher expectations rubric, and last, the value each brother placed on embracing and then reciprocating that integral value system garnered throughout the brotherhood they noted as influential to their continued persistence toward ultimate degree completion. #D_Trey, #Mr_MOVE, #J_Duece, #Mr_UNCF, #Mr_President, and #D_Ace each, despite the various initiatives represented by each participant, highlighted the proverbial flaw that while being a part of their brotherhood aided their persistence and the adverse that not adopting Black male initiatives could not aid persistence, which ultimately translates to an undergraduate degree and is thus the objective of this research study.

Theme #2: Supportive Community

The second theme emergent in the participant narratives was how they valued their *supportive community* based on prevailing codes such as community, call, check-on, check-in, help, and support (see Table 6). The frequency of these codes, while a fraction of those from Theme #1, added an archetype that pointed out the value and importance of an initiative *community* that *supports* persistence and degree attainment at every hierarchal level of the initiatives. Also, the noted codes demonstrated an initiative in

action, not just in name only, and one operating as such at every level. Upon consideration of the codes, their emergent *supportive community* theme, and the individual narratives, the African proverb "it takes a village to raise a child" came to mind because each participant, in one form or another, expressed how important the initiatives' community was to their continued diligence/persistence toward degree attainment.

Table 6

Theme #2: Supportive Community Codes Frequency Table

Codes	Frequency	Percent
Call	7	17.0%
Check	3	07.0%
Help	29	69.0%
Support	3	07.0%
Total	42	100%

Note. NVIVO generated report.

Front of mind was a portion of #Mr_NBA's narrative. As a part of MOVE and a student assistant coach to one of the college's sports teams, his narrative directly cited the *supportive community* theme. Though #Mr_NBA's confidence and bravado were apparent upon entering the interview space, as he confronted the interview questions, he became more reflective and humbled throughout the interview. #Mr_NBA initially expressed when asked about the initiative's purpose, "You're not in the organization or the team just for yourself. You're playing for guys. You're playing for a college. I'm doing MOVE because it can *help*. It is *helping* me. It also can *help* someone else." Acknowledging his general response, I requested a more specific response. He then became more transparent and directly touted the initiatives' effect on him. He stated:

To be a man! I really didn't grow up with a father. I grew up with my grandfather, but he was kind of old. Certain things he couldn't teach me, and MOVE is teaching me how to be a man. Basketball also taught me how to be a man. Taught me how to take responsibility. I got to have a certain GPA. Got to have respect for certain people, like the coach... teammates... I got to just be mindful.

#Mr_NBA further lauded the *supportive community's* role as he stated:

[MOVE Advisor name] took a big role... kind of like a mentor to me. He sits down and talks to me every day about different things, and I listen and take heed of everything he is telling me. Different things I can do. Things I could do to be better. He tells me about his experiences, and it really moves me. My coach does a lot for me. He took a big role letting me be a student assistant. He didn't have to do that. He could have sent me home for a semester or sat me out, but he let me shadow him. ...and you gotta do this-to do this. He gave me opportunities.

This narrative portion exhibited how *#Mr_NBA* valued this *supportive community* for his growth and development and implied how the same *supportive community* was there to also *help* others.

#Mr_UNCF stated,

Honestly, I can say how much they care. Cause, it's so different. Like, I've never thought that I would get to college and the professors... they're going to call you and text you... I haven't seen you... what's going on? They actually care. They are so involved, and that makes a much more difference. So, okay, now I want to go to class, because I know she mess with me [notices me], so I gotta go. I'm

going to go. I'mma go for her. It just makes it more worth it. And then you get to class, you actually like it. Like, I actually like it.

#Mr_President stated,

The academics come easy, plus your friends and new family *help* you with your work and stuff. You have study halls and different things like that. In [fraternity name], we have study sessions like every Wednesday, where all the [fraternity] brothers *come together*, and we do homework just to make sure that we stay on top of our grades.

#D_Quad added, "being part [sports] team, academically it *motivates* me to do good because you have to have a certain GPA to play. That *motivates* me to maintain at least a 3.0 [GPA]."

#D_Trey highlighted the importance of the *supportive community* from a distinct perspective. He stated, "...after our homecoming event, we had a shooting. It kind of scared us a bit because we didn't expect that. After that, we came together as a team. We were able to open up and ask how each felt." Further in the narrative, *#D_Trey* expressed:

Say, for instance, you down a little bit about school and ball, you have teammates. Like [student name], he is a perfect example. He is the type of person; he is like, *don't give up*. You'll have somebody on the team that will try to *uplift you* to stay in it. You also have others if they see that it's not really going well. But I feel like, *don't give up*. If you start something, *don't give up*. Yeah, things might get hard, but that doesn't mean you just give up on it.

#Mr_MOVE pledged, "he is my *brother*. I won't let my *brother* fail. I'm gone always reach back and *help*." #J_Duece echoed, "academically, we *push* each other. Seeing [student name] with a 4.0, it makes you wanna get up there with him. When I was slacking on my work, he said let's do this work together. Let's study together."

#J_Duece's narrative portrayed that same shared commitment within this *supportive community*. He added: "When I'm at them down moments, I can look to my brothers on the [sports] team, and they are gonna *help* me, and I do the same thing, to keep everybody positive, motivated, and doing the right thing." Promoting that positive disposition, he later summed up that "whenever you are positive, it *helps* you do everything that you need to do... such as graduate." These statements from the narratives translated to the commitment the *supportive community* had in *supporting* each member's persistence toward their degree attainment goal.

#Mr_UNCF's narrative added to the wealth of knowledge and understanding gleaned but captured and revealed an accountability characteristic within the initiative's *supportive community's family* dynamic. I have a younger brother, so statements such as "come on... get it together... you know what we're here for... we're not here to joke around... we're here to get it done..." indicated several specific yet vital points.

Last, #D_Ace added,

Yeah, once last year we had to face a lot of adversity, but we had that connectedness where it didn't really deter us and make us go down. We stayed together. So, it meant that was a character builder for me and just the whole team. Yeah, with Covid and stuff last year, it was kind of a struggle, but we fought

through. Just being around the team, it *helped* a lot... If I wasn't on the [sports] team... I think being on the [sports] team *helped* me more. So, I can say, it *helps* a lot.

The participants' experiential narratives ascribed ideas such as *helping*, *motivating*, *uplifting*, and *coming together*, all indicative of a *community* of brothers and advisors providing influential support within their Black male initiatives. As previously alluded to, these narratives affirmed the African Proverb "it takes a village to raise a child" as these men admitted the complexities of college and exposed some of their day-to-day struggles of persisting; however, in the same breath, they recognized the auspices of their initiatives' *supportive* unit of brothers and advisors that helped them persist toward degree completion.

Theme #3: Lifetime Benefit

The third emergent theme from the experiential narratives was the initiatives' prospective *lifetime benefit*. This theme and its code list, again, while only a fraction of the code instances of Themes 1 and 2, was entirely inductive and a testament to the NVivo Software but derived from prevailing codes such as the initiatives' *lifetime benefits*, *lifetime bonds*, *lifetime brotherhood*, *lifetime friendships*, and *lifetime successes* (see Table 7). While provocative, this theme was prognosticating and forward-looking. Nonetheless, like attending college itself is forward-looking, this theme inferred a hope toward a future level of success, and a plurality of participants agreed upon these forward-looking descriptive terms, casting a vision for their life beyond persisting and graduating through their current collegiate standing, thus cementing *lifelong supports*. As

these Black men highlighted, through their experiences and related meanings throughout the interviews, several were forward-looking and alluded to the prospective *lifetime benefit* of their specific Black male initiative community.

Table 7

Theme #3: Lifetime Benefit Codes Frequency Table

Codes	Frequency	Percent
Lifetime benefit	2	25.0%
Lifetime bonds	1	12.5%
Lifetime friendship/relationships	3	37.5%
Lifetime support systems	1	12.5%
Lifetime success	1	12.5%
Total	8	100%

Note. NVIVO generated report.

Whether on the sports team, in their fraternities, as a part of MOVE, the gospel choir, or even in the SGA, several pointed to moments and marked initiative-related individuals whose influence and effect would last a *lifetime* and be potentially life-altering. The idea of *lifetime bonds* and life-altering relationship instances deserved attention in this study because of their declared impact. Such statements precisely infer a level of Black male initiative effectiveness that moves from a mere conceptual space toward a more *lifelong* outlook. Several participants recounted precise life-altering impacts upon them from specific acts and individuals within the Black male initiatives' historically Black college community.

One such narration came as #Mr_UNCF stated emphatically, "I'm gonna be okay! I'm okay!" Further expressing his story and where he came from, he explained:

It just makes me feel better about myself. Especially where I've come from. I have not had a family. I'm also a gay male. I come from pastors, preachers, and churches, so my family doesn't mess with me. I've been on my own since I was 13. Homeless. Like, I literally was sleeping outside when I was 14 and 15. Doing stuff just to eat. Like, it's wild where I come from. I graduated high school. I got through high school on my own. I have a family now. Literally. I've had a family for a long time [now]. They accept me no matter what. We get into it all the time, but these are literally my brothers.

#Mr_UNCF continued:

Like, I know if I go to [advisor name], I know he's going to get on to me, but he wants to see better in me. Like, he knows I want to be SGA President next year. So, he sees the work in me. He's expecting me to be on time. He expects me to help. Like that just makes me feel better because I used to dream of all this stuff. I never thought I could get here. I never thought I could be a part of any of this. Literally! I never thought I could hold Greek letters. Like it just makes me feel better about myself. Especially where I've come from. It means a lot. All of this. Just being a part of something. That's why I try to give my best. Like, it just means a lot to be a part of something... I'm okay!

#MR_NBA stated the primary impact was "to be a man!" He further explained:

Really didn't grow up with a father. I grew up with my grandfather, but he was kind of old. It was certain things he couldn't teach me, and MOVE is teaching me

how to be a man. Basketball also taught me how to be a man and taught me how to take responsibility.

#D-Ace, a member of the sports team and the National Honor Society, spoke equally as clear and cogent regarding the lifelong benefit of Black male initiatives and stated:

The life benefit is just building that connection with just different people. With [sports], you are obviously going to build a connection with your teammates. With the honor society, you're building a connection with other people in the honor society. It's different people, different types of people. It may be people that you are not usually comfortable with. So, just being around different types of people because, you know, in this world nowadays, it's about who you know. So, building that connection and networking with different type of people with different backgrounds from different areas, that goes a long way, because now you have built that networking. I'm from Birmingham, Alabama, so now, when I come to Texas, I may/can call somebody up, and if I need a friend to get a job that lives in Texas, I can connect them with somebody, or if I need it for myself. So, just building that network. Being at HBCU is probably the best decision I made in my life. Just being around my people every day. It's just getting to know people from different areas; it's a fun experience, and I don't take it for granted. So, every day I wake up and I just appreciate where I am. So, being at an HBC is preparing me for the real world. I feel like I'm well prepared for the real world based on what I've learned and the connections I have built.

#Mr_President's narratives also spoke of lifetime access and connections to fellow initiative members, faculty and staff advisors, and initiative alums. He stated:

(1) So, SGA, that looks perfect on your resume and being the president for that.

As well as [fraternity name], the connections that you make with the older alumni and others in your fraternity you always reach out to them for different scholarships, job opportunities, all types of things. But connections are really major, and when you're a part of different organizations... matters for lifetime.

(2) Also, we have a great choir director, and he really is a great supporter, and old choir members can come back and ask him for anything and he's there. So, it's really in all these different organizations, the main thing is like having a lifetime connection. Like 20, 30, 40 years from now, I can come back, walk into the choir room and say, I was a product of choir and sing with the choir. (3) I wouldn't say it sets me up for a lifetime success, but I would say that it puts me in a position to... because just off doing this, learning the things that I learned, I could go work in a corporate office or something like that, and know how to conduct a meeting using Robert's Rules of Order and different things like that.

#J_Duece's narrative displayed the initiative's true motivating and transformative aspects in the following instance. He stated:

You look at that graduation thing. You look at it as a big achievement in your life, just how graduating high school was a big achievement in your life. But it's bigger because graduating from college... man...that diploma... I mean... that degree... it's everything in the real world. It definitely weighs a lot out there in the real

world, because I worked in the real world before I had to come to college. I had a position at the Boys and Girls Club, where I got a supervisor job, and I was receiving the pay. They had moved me to a salary pay and everything, but then my supervisor pulled me in office and said, we can't leave you in the position because you haven't graduated college. And that really, really, I won't say hurt me, but I felt like I let myself down because I didn't go straight into college out of high school. And I was great at my job, but just because I didn't have that degree, I couldn't maintain that supervisor position and keep giving back to the kids and stuff.

Each narrative portion pertained to the prospective *lifelong benefit* of the brotherhood and supportive community of Black male initiatives at their historically Black college. The jewel of each narrative was that they needed no interpretive filter as the participants' statements clearly and concisely conveyed the most straightforward and authentic meanings regarding the prospective *lifelong benefits* of Black male initiatives. *#Mr_UNCF's* narrative was powerfully impactful as he ardently stated, "I'm okay," at the close of his interview, conveying that his experiences meant a role reversal with life-altering benefits. I remember the tears he held back at that moment and the emotion that flooded my mind and heart upon hearing the narration of his misfortune. Still, the life-altering thoughts he conveyed throughout his narrative were that he was okay now and into his future because the initiatives' relational dynamic transformed his current outlook and future life prospects. While *#Mr_UNCF's* narrative did not produce any matching codes on the frequency table, his, *#J_Duece's*, and *#D_Ace's* narrative's *lifelong benefit*

message was clear and present throughout and spoke volumes about how they interpreted the *lifelong benefit* of their Black male initiatives' real-life impact.

Theme #4: Leader-ING

The fourth emergent and noteworthy theme in a plurality of the reflected participants' narratives was *leadership or leader-ING* (see Table 8). While the *leader-ING* term characterized initiative participants who functioned in a learning and a leading role simultaneously, the beauty of this theme's ideology was that these Black men operated from a generativity space where they became the leaders they learned to be and conferred those similar skills to others within the initiatives' sphere of influence. These same Black men took that proverbial charge and then cast a vision for themselves and others within their initiatives' sphere of influence and reciprocally set higher social and academic expectations for each other that fomented self-worth while promoting community and an individual-initiative-institutional congruence dynamic that influenced perseverance toward degree completion (Braxton et al., 2004).

Table 8

Theme #4: Leader-ING Codes Frequency Table

Codes	Frequency	Percent
Leadership positions	1	25.0%
Leadership symposium	1	25.0%
Leadership roles	2	50.0%
Total	4	100%

Note. NVIVO generated report.

First, #D_Ace, #J_Duece, #Mr_MOVE, #Mr_NBA, #Mr_President, and #Mr_UNCF all held leadership positions within their noted initiatives. A plurality of

these gentlemen also referenced *leader-ING* from a place of generativity because they held positions and received the guidance of their advisors but then paid forward the same skills to others within their sphere of influence. *#Mr_President* described his leader-ING role, being the student government association leader, and stated,

That really is like running school. All the different committees and what events we have going on, I have to approve it. All these different works, meet with people, give speeches, and different things like that. And just that itself expands my mind. It gets me in a right space for classwork.

#D_Ace, a member of the National Honor Society and team captain, added,

Just the way I carry myself. I like to work hard. So, anything I do, I want to go a thousand miles. I want to get it done 100%. So, it impacts me a lot because it's just my mentality. You gotta have that hard-working mentality if you want to be successful. Then, be a positive light in somebody else's life. Every day, somebody may be going through something, so you never know. So, I want to be a positive light and help whoever needs to be helped.

#Mr_MOVE, as the student leader of the MOVE initiative, conveyed his vision to lift academic and social standards, thus, raising expectations and not settling for mediocrity from initiative members. *#Mr_MOVE* conveyed:

MOVE – Men of Valor and Excellence... it's a growth thing. I feel like college is the time and place where you grow the most. Especially as a young adult. A lot of the lessons we learn here we take into adulthood. And so, 30-50 members, that's a lot of growth right there. But the whole plan is to help really expedite that whole

process. We're gonna grow. We're going to learn how to be a man. Making sure that we have our pants on correctly. Making sure that when we walk outside of our dorm room, we're not just walking out in sweatpants and a tank top. But, you know, look presentable, because at any time, you never know, there could be somebody that can give you the interview of your life and give you the job that you've been waiting for. The other things that I try to preach to them... make sure you look presentable at all times... especially when it comes down to days that we have meetings; when you come to a meeting, at least have on a pair of jeans. If you don't have on a pair of jeans, I'm going to have to tell you to just go ahead and turn around and we can talk chop it up later, and I'll tell you what you missed. And if you don't like me for that moment, that's cool. I let him know it's all coming out of the place to love, because I've been in that same position, and that same mindset as them at some point in time. So, I understand where they're coming from. They think, oh, you're trying to get on my case. No, I'm not, I'm telling you for the better... Because I feel like, especially in the black community... a lot comes down to exposure. A lot of people haven't really seen Black excellence firsthand, so, when we do the Men-In-Suits, and you see a group of Black men... minority men in suits and in unity all marching together as one. It's a thing! Dang we're really a powerful group of men. And it's not highlighted enough for people to really just understand, this is me. This is who I am. I'm part of this community and we can do some great things together.

#Mr_UNCF, president of a campus fraternity, cited a similar idea stating:

I'm involved in everything. Being in the leadership role, we have to be at every event. We have to be involved with the students. Tell them to put on some clothes. Tell them to go to class. It's kind of our job... We're here to get it done because you never know who could walk through those doors from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. So, being President and seeing the leadership role I'm in and what I wanted to show the people that's going to come after me... I wanted to be an example.

#Mr_NBA expressing the initiatives' impact stated,

Sports... getting here... you gotta be social on the team. You gotta be a leader. It was pointed out that I was a leader, and I didn't know how much that meant to me, until somebody told me. I have to be vocal every day. And that took a big part of me because I've never been vocal. I've always been quiet. So, when they looked at me like that [a leader]. I was like, I'm not quiet. I am a leader. I can do this. So, it made me just really think that I can do whatever I want [choose] to do because I'm a leader.

#J_Duece, sports team and SGA member stated,

With the SGA, we be having meetings and activities... where they feed us... I really like how the leader of the SGA, [advisor name], is very outspoken [direct] towards us, and wants our answer. He likes to hear from us and what we have to say as students. That gives us a good way to express ourselves to him, and for him to relay that over to the administration. For [sports team], I have many, many good experiences with my brothers. Everybody on the team I look at as my

brother. I try to motivate them, as I am the oldest on the team. I just try to push all of them to do the best that they can and be the best person that they can be on and off the court. And like I said with [sports team], it builds lifetime bonds. Years from now, I'm gonna know and call some of these dudes and still just check-up on them. Like hey, how you doing man? How is everything going with you? How is life? The same thing with them, I know I got *lifetime* friends... friendships out of playing [sports team] here on campus.

These narrative portions depict the *leader-ING* roles in the initiatives' participant feedback loop. Most accurately deduce leadership to casting a corporate vision, setting corporate direction and expectation, critical thinking skills for decision-making, and building and motivating teams to accomplish set goals. In their *leader-ING* roles, these Black men set expectations, held one another accountable, and strengthened their Black male initiative community's persistence toward degree completion. The ideas espoused demonstrated *leader-ING* on a group-to-individual and then individual-to-group dynamic.

Noteworthy Supplementary Topics

Beyond the four dominant emergent themes of *brotherhood*, *supportive community*, *lifetime benefit*, and *leader-ING*, the participants' experiential narratives illuminated a few supplementary themes worth citing for their theoretical and practical implications. Straightforwardly, those additional narrative points included:

- The value of the historically Black college cultural experience noted by several participants,

- The value of time management skills and their impact and prospective role in persisting, graduating, and lifelong impact.
- The discrepant cases, or as I prefer calling them, adverse incidences and occurrences noted in the narratives.

While their findings were minimal yet equally consequential, I thought it prudent to mention them as they had a role in Black men's persistence and graduation at these two institutions.

Historically Black College Cultural Experience

One could never overstate the value of undergraduate education from an East Texas historically Black college. Present in a few narratives, the interviewed Black men asserted the significance of the supportive and inclusive historically Black college environment and cultural expressions that preserved, presented, and promoted Black culture, Black history, Black rigor and excellence, and, ultimately, Black men (see Table 6). It is worth noting, incidentally, that several of the initiatives identified throughout this study were unique to historically Black colleges and specifically targeted Black men expressly based on their cultural designations. Moreover, at each turn, the participants distinctly compared their historically Black college experience to that of a predominantly white institution. They made significant comparative distinctions regarding the two types of institutions and their contributions to Black men and culture.

Several participants offered honest and explicit renditions regarding the value of the historically Black college cultural expression comparatively. #D_Ace stated, "I had a test due and had a game the same day. The teacher called me to make sure I took that

exam. that was big! At HBCUs, the instructors really care, and that goes a long way."

#Mr_NBA similarly noted, "way different here. I'm relatable here because I'm Black.

Seeing my same color is like we relate to each other. Like certain things I couldn't relate

to PWIs because of different cultures." *#D_Quad* inserted, "being here at a HBCU, I feel

like this is where I belong. I can really speak my mind. I ain't got to hold back and be

myself without pretending to be somebody I'm not. It is very welcoming." Lastly,

#J_Duece added,

I could definitely say the HBCU experience is a great thang. Because I done been

to Columbus University in Georgia, where it's predominantly white, and I don't

want to say that the teacher wasn't... didn't understand me or didn't feel me, but

here at [HBCU name}, I assume at every HBCU, the teacher is more relatable to

you. They get everything about you. They understand... and you meet me a lot of

people like you, and if they're not like you, they got somebody in their family

that's similar to you in so many ways, they automatically relate to you. Like I

have got so many relationships with my professors and professors on campus, just

because... my little brother acts just like you man. He got a big heart just like you.

And then just like that, we click, and I got a lifetime friend just from that.

These narratives directly imparted the historically Black college aspect into the

conversation. The statements equally conveyed the participants' outlooks and meanings

regarding historically Black colleges with no provocation but without a filter. They spoke

concisely about the respect and character of the historically Black college and its

relatability significance. Colloquially hearing these statements evoked Maslow's needs

matrix and, even more profoundly, Tinto's theory that when congruence exists between the individual's psychosocial dimensions and the institution's cultures and subcultures, persistence levels are greater (Braxton et al., 2004).

Time Management

Remarkably, a few participants specified how overwhelming things got as they combined the academic rigors of college with their social micro-community and initiative demands. At the same time, the codes did not rise to the level to merit an actual theme (see Table 9); several, although unprompted, advised on the importance of managing themselves and their time to maintain their academic compliance and meet their social and initiative obligations. While these commitments were overwhelming at times, each participant pointed out the importance of accurately managing their academic and social demands to meet the rigors while also persisting toward fulfilling those demands and degree attainment.

Table 9

Supplementary Codes: Time Management Frequency Table

Codes	Frequency	Percent
Learn Time Management	1	50.0%
Time Management	1	50.0%
Total	2	100%

Note. NVIVO generated report.

#Mr_UNCF, who splits his time between a fraternity, MOVE, the UNCF Royal Court, and the cheer squad during Springtime sports, expressed,

It kind of takes a toll on me sometimes because I be so tired. I've missed a lot of things because I'm handling business, or I'm trying to, and I forget, oh, I got

school. So, then I take a nap, and now I'm up late trying to make sure the grades are right.

#Mr_President added,

Being part of all of them, I learned time management really well. I think, all of these different organizations that I'm a part of, also, while doing my homework and being a full-time student, it's really getting me set up for the real world.

#Mr_NBA stated,

Academics... time management, that's the biggest. You gotta... being a student assistant right now... working for the Dean... And I still got to train myself because I'm playing next semester. So, I got to hold myself to accountability. I got to have a 3.0, but they want me to have a 2.0. So, I got to take certain time out. I probably get here at 10:00 and leave at 10:00 at night. I still got to do my schoolwork, got to take exams, got assignments I got to do, and I still gotta manage it.

Lastly, *#D_Ace* summed it up and stated that “you gotta have that hard-working mentality if you want to be successful. So, that carries over into the social life, and education. So, with me it goes a long way.”

While these Black men expressed the value of their initiatives to build community and support them persisting toward degree completion, each admitted the necessity of time management to meet all their academic and social obligations. Considering their initiatives, schoolwork, and campus social presence demands, unprovoked during the interviews, these men thought it prudent to mention the importance of managing their

time to meet their obligations. Several confessed to prioritizing specific demands over others, thus missing some things, while another alluded to moving around all day but staying up late to prioritize their academic success. The men primarily pointed to the importance of time management as a supplementary theme worth mentioning.

Adverse Incidents and Occurrences

In the grand scheme of complex interactions with Black men and the initiatives set forth to improve their persistence and graduation rates at historically Black colleges, some instances fundamentally contradict desired intentions. Such instances produced what may appear as discrepancies in the data while having no significant impact on the ultimate findings. However, some aspects of human interaction were inevitable when viewed within context. For this research project, I projected space for such instances and considered them as *not-so-positive or adverse events* rather than negative; however, for this section, I termed those instances as adverse incidents or adverse occurrences. Precisely, the COVID-19 pandemic and a school shooting and subsequent campus lockdown at one of the research sites.

COVID-19

I assembled the intricate aspects of this research project at the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic and built in other contingencies to counter all in-person interview constraints. With those contingencies in place and front of mind, surprisingly, when I scheduled interviews, both campuses had relaxed their COVID protocols and operated at 100% capacity of their normal activity levels with advisory actions in place. During the

interviews, though, only one participant referenced the pandemic as a *not-so-positive* or *adverse* experience as part of his Black male initiative participation.

Notwithstanding COVID-19 as its own catastrophe, what amazed me about this single narrative was the unexpected response to the question. #D_Ace stated the following:

Yeah, I can say like one-time last year we had to face a lot of adversity, but we had that connectedness where it didn't really deter us and make us go down. So, we stayed together... it meant that was a character builder for me and just the whole team. Yeah, you know, with COVID and stuff last year, it was kind of a struggle, but we fought through. Just being around the team helped a lot cause, I don't think... So much going on with Covid, I think being on [sports] team helped me more than it didn't.

Once I asked the question regarding a *not-so-positive* experience, I initially braced for the narrative to express him losing teammates, several team members getting sick, or even some having to withdraw from school and the team being negatively affected. However, #D_Ace's narrative acknowledged the COVID hardship as a struggle but conveyed the incident as a character and team-building opportunity. He indicated that being a part of the team helped him more than not being a part. I recalled my COVID experiences and mentally noted that his response to such a catastrophic time was terrific. It was also remarkable that when asked the same question, none of the other seven participants referenced COVID-19.

Campus Shooting

A school shooting was another thing I never considered when planning for this research study, despite the current school shooting statistics across the country. Thus, I was shocked when a participant mentioned a campus shooting and school lockdown when referencing the not-so-positive experience question. As I ensured a consistent interview protocol, I was amazed that *#D_Trey* was the only participant mentioning this incident. *#D_Trey* noted that during the campus's homecoming celebration party, the campus encountered a shooting, and the proceeding campus lockdown.

#D_Trey stated:

The only negative thing I would say was that after our homecoming event, we had a shooting. It kind of frightened us a little bit. Gave us a little scare. It kind of scared us a little bit because we didn't expect that here. Not saying this a bad school, you just would never expect it. After that, as a team, we just went back to the dorm rooms, and stayed in the dorm room until they said that it was over.

#D_Trey's narrative regarding the shooting was self-explicating. Without any interpretive filters, the narrative expressly demonstrates the value of the team and the brotherhood and family dynamic as they lean on each other despite gun violence. *#D_Trey* stated they came and stayed together as a team until the campus police and administration gave an all-clear to return to normal. At first mention, the uniqueness of the incident caused me to take note and expect other participants' expressions on the subject matter. The intriguing thing was that no other participant commented on the shooting as an adverse incident. I

did not change the interview protocol, marking the incident as an adverse event, wholly relying on the participants to express it if they chose to.

In closing, anomalies are a built-in component of human interaction. Once those anomalies yield second-level, third-level, and even fourth-level derivatives, researchers and scholars may come several steps closer to understanding and clarifying the greater depth of complex human interaction and human reasoning. The supplementary concepts noted in this section were minimal and needed to align seamlessly with the four chosen emergent themes. However, while minimal, their insightful data attributes provided real-world knowledge vital for understanding some of the practical and theoretical facets of the effects of Black male initiatives at East Texas historically Black colleges. These noteworthy data points, again, while minimal in terms of code frequency, indicated a couple of necessary data themes, such as the value of a historically Black college's culture and climate and the importance of time management to meet all academic, social, and initiative obligations. Furthermore, thoughts, understandings, and explanations never perfectly align during complex human interactions, and adverse events occur. Moreover, that is no criticism; it is a reality, and as research scholars, we cannot fear adverse instances because they describe human interaction frankly and Black men's experiences with Black male initiatives candidly.

Summary

At the outset, I endeavored to answer three central questions. First, I sought to know Black men's experiences with Black male initiatives at East Texas historically Black colleges. I then needed the participants to interpret their specific meaning of those

experiences with Black male initiatives. Last and most pivotal, I needed the participants to convey the effect their experiences had on their ability to persist and graduate from their respective historically Black colleges. My analyses of the data in Chapter 4 for this qualitative interpretive description study yielded four emergent themes from the audio-recorded interview protocol where participants responded to the same questions during their interviews. Of the four themes, the more overwhelming theme of brotherhood emerged based on code frequency from the participant narratives. Next, the theme of a supportive community and, afterward, the lifetime benefit of the initiatives emerged from the experiential participant narratives. Last, the leader-ING theme emerged, where the participants opined on transposing their learning and leading roles and experiences. Notably, a few participants mentioned two supplementary themes, one shouting out the value of the historically Black college culture and then the importance of time management as they endeavored to meet their academic, social, and initiative rigors. Also, based on analysis of the data, these complex interactions occurred in the obscure shadows of COVID-19 and a campus shooting, each of which, while adverse events, surprisingly had a reverse effect on those who mentioned them during their respective interviews. In Chapter 5, I will present more discussion regarding the research findings, explain my conclusions, and present recommendations for further research opportunities.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Due to the stagnant 34% graduation rate for Black men at 4-year colleges over the last decade (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Harper, 2012), this qualitative interpretive description study's purpose was to explore the real experiences of Black men at East Texas historically Black colleges who engaged in Black male initiatives to determine how and why such initiatives positively affected Black male persistence and graduation or not. I also sought to complement the limited literature regarding the effect of Black male initiatives on Black men at historically Black colleges. While *de facto* segregation was identified as partly the cause (Lemonik & Mariel, 2019), the endemic academic and cultural barriers that undermined achievement, heightened graduation struggles, and left many Black men unprepared for the rigors of college (Harper, 2012; Harper & Newman, 2016) was also a noted cause. Each of these contributed to low graduation trends that adversely impacted the social, economic, mental, and physical well-being of Black men, their families, their communities, and the overall American economic community.

Once campus administrations approved access, a campus liaison provided a purposeful group of Black men aged who were at least 18 years old and attending full-time at the two approved institutions to participate. Eight men consented, and I then conducted the audio-recorded one-on-one semi-structured interviews. By hand and using the NVIVO software, I analyzed the participant's narratives for their meanings to develop

initial codes, emergent categories and cross-groupings for selective codes, and the principal themes. I grouped the emergent themes into four main categories to summarize the findings. More precisely, the emergent themes were brotherhood, supportive community, lifetime benefit, and leader-ING, as they more accurately described the data findings. I present the interpretation of the study's findings, limitations, recommendations, and implications in this chapter.

Interpretation of Findings

To understand better the phenomena of Black men persisting and graduating from East Texas historically Black colleges, as detailed in Chapter 2, I used the interpretive description approach to focus more precisely and accurately on the participant's experiential narratives in their real-life context to expose directly, practically, and applicably "interpretive understanding and meaning" (Kolltveit et al., 2016, p. 2). I also grounded this study in critical race theory conceptual tenets, namely, cultural capital, narratives or storytelling, and social capital, all focusing on student persistence and graduation (Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Solórzano, 1998; Yosso, 2005). As Thorne et al. (2004) exclaimed how the researcher "drives interpretation" (p. 11), I suspended all personal ideologies to understand better these participant's experiences with Black male initiatives, as their narratives conveyed a wealth of experiential knowledge that guided the pivotal insights exposing the effects of Black male initiatives on Black male persistence and graduation at historically Black colleges.

Accordingly, the inductive and thematic tendencies of this interpretive description approach allowed me to contextually center these Black men's narratives with all their

anthropological complexities and elucidations in their social, academic, and cultural framing, all of which led to a source of lived experience and knowledge with interpretive meaning and understanding, that directly aligned with the conceptual framework of this study, answered perplexed management questions, (Gray, 2020; Kolltveit et al., 2016; Thorne, 2014; Thorne, 2016; Thorne et al., 1997), and that potentially lead to positive social change. While the experiential narratives from the Black men studied, in essence, reiterated and confirmed much of the distinguished and seminal works highlighted in the literature review of Chapter 2, there were additional aspects of this study's findings that I featured that affirmed, confirmed, expounded upon, and potentially expanded the knowledge base regarding Black male initiatives, in general, and particularly at these East Texas historically Black colleges.

Black Men's Persistence Struggle and Graduation Problem

This study's findings aligned with the representative body of seminal scholarly works illuminating, addressing, and tackling Black men's collegiate struggles with persisting and stagnant graduation trends at 4-year U.S. colleges, as such struggles broadly impacted the economic health of Black families and American communities (Harper, 2012; Harper, 2021; Harper & Newman, 2016; Lemonik & Mariel, 2019). In Chapter 2, I addressed several internal and external social and cultural capital forces affecting Black men's persistence and degree completion, as noted by those seminal scholars. The internal socio-cultural capital forces pertained to the close-knit individuals and surroundings that modeled life-shaping behaviors and expectations. In contrast, the external socio-cultural capital forces consisted of the systems, structures, institutions,

associations, and interactions outside their immediate environment, all of which had short-term and long-term implications helping to shape the value continuum that ultimately enhanced or stifled their resilience/persistence and eventually, their degree completion (Bentley-Edwards & Chapman-Hilliard, 2015; Pajares, 2006; Yosso, 2005). More straightforwardly, in Chapter 2, I stressed how these majority-Black, poverty-stricken urban neighborhoods were indicative of a *de facto* segregation and *nigging* in the below-par schools often characterized as "just as bad as prisons" that produced persistent achievement gaps and structural deficits (Allen & White-Smith, 2014, p. 445; Harper, 2009; Keels, 2013; Kinloch et al., 2017; Lemonik & Mariel, 2019; McGee, 2013; Paschall et al., 2018; Reardon et al., 2016; Vejar, 2019). It is important to note that these seminal works illuminated this study's research problem and gap and highlighted the need to confront Black men's psycho-social collegiate vulnerabilities and persistence deficiencies.

The Need for Persistence Strategies, Namely Black Male Initiatives

Likewise, this study's key findings aligned with and affirmed the primary contentions of seminal scholarly works advocating for persistence strategies/initiatives for Black men at 4-year U.S. colleges and then defined, identified, and positioned those strategies/initiatives to affect Black men's collegiate resilience and graduation efforts (Brooms, 2018; Brooms & Davis, 2017; Brooms et al., 2015; Elliot et al., 2019; Harper, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2021; Harper & Newman, 2016; Harris et al., 2020; Palmer & Maramba, 2012; and Palmer et al., 2013). In Chapter 2, I centralized how Brooms (2018), Elliott et al. (2019), Fullard (2019), and Hastings and Sunderman (2019) collectively

distinguished these strategic initiatives, theoretically and practically, as innovative, supportive, and inclusive socio-cultural adaptation tools that promoted and championed the holistic and personal developmental needs and core capital constructs of Black men pursuing 4-year degrees. More expressly, Zook (1994), who honed in on the value of Black men pursuing degrees that positioned them for professional careers to oppose potential deviant behavior and life outcomes, and Brooms, Elliot et al., Harper (2012), Harris et al. (2020), Palmer and Maramba (2012), and Palmer et al. (2013) all contemporarily and empirically expressed how strategically positioning Black male initiatives' valuable micro-communities influenced Black men's persistence and graduation at college campuses.

Moreover, the eight Black men interviewed for this study consistently cited, in some variation approximately 104 times (see Table 5), their initiative's *supportive community* and *brotherhood* with its constant and consistent academic, social, and emotional care and socio-cultural support as crucial to their progress, social integration, determination/persistence, and degree completion while simultaneously combating their dropout rates, producing more socially responsible Black male leaders, and, ultimately, positive social change, all of which reiterated Brooms (2018), Elliot et al. (2019), Fullard (2019), and Hastings and Sunderman's (2019) scholarly works. Notably, each term had its distinctive role, and the term *supportive* was more than just an adjective modifying the noun *community*. As the two terms were distinct, the conceptual ideas of *community* and *support* worked in concert, helping to produce actual results for the interviewed Black men at these two historically Black institutions. For instance, it is one thing to have a

family. However, a different dynamic applies to having a family that supports and helps get you to a desired finish line academically, socially, and emotionally, and this was a distinction with a difference, as noted by the narratives from this study. Equally remarkable was knowing and noting how these Black men emphasized the social, cultural, and political capitalists' value of supporting one another and reciprocating that same support, as they say, to their brothers, their family, and their Black male initiative community, which, too, affirmed Brooms (2018, 2019), Brooms et al. (2015) and Harper's (2006, 2012, 2016) findings of a home away from home like supportive community replete with holistically imperative and impactful social and academic partnerships and relationships.

Culturally Sensitive, Relevant, and Responsive

Another key finding from this study was the social and cultural relevancy of Black male initiatives as peer and *family-like* support systems focused on retention, persistence, and achievement, culturally sensitive social reinforcement, and safe spaces that gave voice for Black men to adapt and develop, each of which reiterated and affirmed the seminal works of Harper (2006), Ottley and Ellis (2019), Palmer and Maramba (2012), and Palmer et al. (2011) cited in the literature review of Chapter 2. Throughout this study, these Black men validated how their initiatives, specifically within the historically Black college ecosystem replete with Black and male administrators, professors, coaches, and advisors, proved more academically, culturally, and socially inclusive, sensitive, responsive, and to be a safe space where Black men matter, were affirmed, and could make meaningful academic, social, and political

contributions (Brooms, 2018; Palmer & Maramba, 2012), also noted in Chapter 2. Their narratives established that one must not forget nor overlook Black men's shared experiences, knowledge, voices, reality, and lived understandings and must consider them historically and scholarly relevant, as stated by Ladson-Billings (1999) in Chapter 2. These sentiments echoed overtly from their narratives, as several recalled a professor who called to check on them or the advisor who shared a personal life struggle to relay a critical life lesson during a mentoring moment. Even the men being there for one another left each with the impression of being seen, heard, and relevant. Consequently, these descriptive terms fulfill Maslow's (1943) needs spectrum at every level: physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.

Effort and Engagement Mandate

Next, this study's findings overwhelmingly reiterated and affirmed Palmer et al.'s (2013) student *engagement* necessity and Brooms's (2018) *effort* mandate. Equally indispensable in the Chapter 2 literature review and this study's findings were program availability and structure and individual *effort and engagement*, indicating the significance of Black male college students first to have access to, then stay informed and involved, and lastly, embrace and leverage the supportive and inclusive safe spaces aimed at aiding and abetting their personal and academic development, social adaptation, persistence, and degree completion (Brooms, 2018). Listening to an amalgamation of how influential the brotherhood was, how essential the peer-to-peer and peer-to-mentor feedback loop was, and how evincing the historically Black college ecosystem, each participant affirmed Palmer et al.'s (2013) and Brooms's (2018) admonishment of the

essentiality of individual *effort* and *engagement* for the strategies and tactics to yield their desired and intended dividends.

Illuminatingly and repeatedly, this study's Black men overemphasized how they equally reciprocated the *effort* and *engagement* they observed and received from those within their brotherhood. Even during their tired, overwhelmed, defeated, and ready-to-quit moments, they perceived the importance of persisting for themselves and giving no one emulating their guidance and leadership any excuses not to persist and persevere. This specific portion of my study's findings affirmed Palmer et al.'s (2013) notion of "maximizing the opportunity of engagement" (p. 67) and exposed a more insistent layer of *effort* and *engagement*. These Black men conveyed an intentionality of leading by example. Then, they maximized their engagement opportunities by presenting themselves to their initiative peers, the student body, and institutional faculty and staff through their physical appearance, poise, and grace. They communicated how they worked tirelessly to ensure their grades and peers' grades always met academic standards and held one another to the higher aim of the Dean's List and even President's awards. The entire narrative expose demonstrated how essential *effort* and *engagement* were to their persistence, graduation, and their cohorts within their initiative brotherhood, but also, as Palmer et al. (2013) noted, which this study affirmed, "these men became more familiar with their internal sense of self and their choices" (p. 67).

Transformative Opportunity

I did not discuss the *transformative* implications of Black male initiatives during the relevant and seminal works in Chapter 2's literature review. However, this study's

participant narratives revealed and then aligned with, confirmed, and even expounded upon Broome's (2018) views that Black male initiatives offered opportunities for a Black man's growth, maturity, and to "learn about their future possibilities" (p. 149), all of which suggested enduring *transformative* possibilities for Black men during college and beyond. While I understood the purpose of this study was to explore the Black male initiative's effect on persistence and degree completion, potentially in theory and practice, most of the Black men's narratives in this study revealed a more profound and expansive *transformative* Black male initiative effect. Transformative in the sense that their narratives implied, affirmed, and extended Broome's (2008) points that the initiatives potentially offered personal, academic, and social knowledge, understanding, experience, and critical thinking and problem-solving skills and techniques that not only helped improve and sustain their current collegiate endeavors but also potentially carried over and added *transformative* layers that benefited their futures.

The term *transformative* summarily emphasized these Black men's conveyed sentiments that their bonds, the knowledge gained, the myriad experiences had, and the socio-cultural capital's resources, when and if leveraged, laid bare current networks and opportunities that not only promoted persistence and degree completion, and potentially extended beyond graduation into their futures. For instance, being the student representative president of a historically Black college campus fraternity translated to national trips with training and networking opportunities, or even being part of the college sports team with interstate travel opportunities and recruiting scouts present, competing physically, and it demanded an above board academic and social acumen.

However, it may translate to potential future NBA or NFL opportunities, which would prove *transformative*. This more introspective, transformative, and expanded vision of themselves affirmed Pajares's (2006) point, as I noted in Chapter 2, about self-efficacy as a person's belief in their capacity for success motivated and incentivized personal growth, individual accomplishments, and life productivity. These points from the narratives imply a *transformative* effect for practical and theoretical purposes. Therefore, more profoundly, the narratives confirmed how the initiative opportunities provided experiences and networking that offered introspection, causing several men to reimagine their life prospects because of exposure to more fantastical possibilities and opportunities.

Limitations of the Study

I identified a few limitations to this qualitative interpretive description study. One limitation was the limited transferability potential of the findings as being representative of a whole population due to the small purposive sample of eight Black men participating in various Black male initiatives at the two East Texas historically Black, as both were unique institutions and population types, notwithstanding the wealth of knowledge conveyed through their narratives. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) specified how using "sufficient descriptive data... that reflect situation-specific conditions" (p. 254) and providing "rich, thick descriptions" (p. 256) to convey the research findings and giving the insider accounts of the Black men who engaged Black male initiatives at East Texas historically Black colleges were crucial, extending the results beyond these participants and study settings may present a challenge. I suggest a larger sample of Black male

college students in the future, which would afford better representation and generalization of the findings.

Next, I reiterate Brooms's (2018) and Palmer et al.'s (2013) particulars regarding student effort and engagement, respectively, as being compulsory caveats for structurally building and maintaining the micro-communities and socio-cultural and political capital networks that platform the transformative opportunities availed through Black male initiatives. As this study's researcher and a K-12 educator, while hoping for the best outcomes for Black college men and encouraging effort and engagement as vital, there is no magic potion that triggers or forces either element. Therefore, participant effort and engagement remain a limitation for this study as *it* is an internal, intrinsic construct, not externally manipulated.

For the last limitation, as noted in Chapter 1, while I expected college-age Black men to possess the insight and emotional intelligence essential to clearly and thoughtfully present experiential narratives expressing the real effects of Black male initiatives, that concept was also out of my control. As I established a rapport during each interview, an open-ended interview protocol, and restated and reworded questions and points throughout as needed, I relied solely on each participant to convey their experiences without my superimposing or finishing their sentences. With those limitations noted, the data collected from each participant was profound and prolific and helped tremendously and definitively answer the three main research questions.

Recommendations

Additional research on the effects of Black male initiatives could prove quite effectual to the postsecondary education and beyond prospects of Black men. Therefore, I offer several recommendations or opportunities to expand and enhance this study, all in the seminal scholar's research traditions noted in Chapter 2's literature review.

Specifically:

1. Extending the participant pool to all the other historically Black institutions in Texas to measure more exhaustively the effects of Black male initiatives in Texas to generate a larger participant pool.
2. Conducting a mixed methods approach using one-on-one interviews with quantitative surveys and questionnaires may prove beneficial to capture data from Black men who would like to contribute to the phenomena but cannot sit for an interview.
3. Expanding this study to other institution types with and without Black male initiatives to explore other factors that affect Black men's persistence and degree completion.
4. Last, exploring the structural facets of Black male initiative programs to determine what does and does not work or even areas for improvement and growth to establish a playbook or checklist promoting program quality.

First, Texas is home to nine historically Black colleges and universities. Namely, Huston-Tillotson University, which is in Austin; Jarvis Christian University in Hawkins; Paul Quinn College in Dallas; Prairie View A&M University in Houston; St. Philip's

College in San Antonio; Southwestern Christian College in Terrell; Texas College in Tyler; Texas Southern University in Houston; and Wiley University in Marshall with all situated in the southern and eastern half of the state. Increasing the participant pool to these other historically Black institutions could generate a larger sample size and potentially produce additional data points that expand the knowledge base, help reach an even more superior data saturation point, and support greater triangulation of the data regarding the effects of Black male initiatives. Additionally, an increased sample size could broaden the experiential narratives of Black men and lead to a more profound understanding of Black male initiatives in practice and theory, thus increasing scholarly knowledge on the subject matter.

When I began planning this study, I recognized that the one-on-one interviews would generate a wealth of vital, rich data that went to the heart of the study and would answer the three key research questions. While waiting nearly a year to get institutional approvals to recruit and interview, facing those roadblocks, I briefly considered adding surveys and questionnaires to begin collecting data for this study. However, a complete study redesign would require me to lose even more time. Therefore, I recommend using a mixed methods approach for future research by including surveys and questionnaires with an opportunity for some written descriptive responses regarding their experiences with Black male initiatives for participants who cannot sit for interviews in conjunction with the one-on-one qualitative interviews. A mixed methods approach could produce valuable data-enhancing knowledge regarding Black male initiatives. Commissioning such an approach in future research may prove invaluable. While I understand that

qualitative data offers, as Denzin and Lincoln (2008) stated, "rich descriptions of the social world" (p. 16), and quantitative data would not necessarily show causation but ascribe data correlation, combining the two approaches could still prove effective in capturing insights into the phenomenon. Thus, it could extend the knowledge regarding the effects of Black male initiatives on Black male persistence and graduation.

This research study's key questions focused on knowing what factors affect Black men's persistence and degree completion at the postsecondary level, with this study principally focused on the effects of Black male initiatives. Continuing in that same vein, for future research, I recommend expanding this study to other institution types, with and without Black male initiatives, inside and outside of the historically Black colleges and universities ecosystem. Hearing the narratives from Black men at other institution types, with and without Black male initiatives, may reveal the need for expanding Black male initiatives to all institution types. Doing so may also reveal other factors that affect the persistence and degree completion of Black men at the postsecondary level.

Last, I recommend exploring the structural facets of Black male initiative programs to determine what aspects positively and negatively affect Black men's persistence and degree completion. The narratives from this study were illuminating and enlightening. While the sample was small and not perfectly transferable to a larger population, the knowledge from the data informs postsecondary education management teams to take strategic steps to establish and strengthen Black male initiative networks to support better Black men's persistence and degree completion. The result of knowing

what aspects positively and negatively affect persistence and degree completion would inform an institutional playbook or checklist that promotes program quality.

Implications

Black men are an intricate element in the proverbial periodic table of the American ecosystem by participating in this nation's educational, social, and economic machinations through college enrollments, workforce participation, entrepreneurship, raising families, and ultimately making essential community impacts equivalent to all races. Nevertheless, their 4-year college degree completion rate remained virtually stagnant at 34% over the last decade (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019; Harper, 2012), which proposed developmental opportunities. The Black male initiatives deployed at 4-year colleges are persistence and degree completion tools intended to affect Black male persistence and graduation. This study addressed the literature gap and affirmed and extended the experiential knowledge base using a unique institution and location type to demonstrate how Black men embraced Black male initiatives as perseverance, resilience, and degree completion strategies.

Using the qualitative interpretive description approach allowed this study's experiential narratives, with all their real-world complexities, to speak to and reveal how valuable the socio-cultural and political micro-communities embodied in the Black male initiatives platforms were to affect Black men's persistence toward degree completion. This study explored a real-world problem for Black men substantiated by scholarly literature with potentially pivotal implications for management theory and practice and positive social change implications. By giving prominence to the experiential narratives

as depicted by the Black men pursuing college degrees in this study, the participants characterized the significance of Black male initiatives' community bonds to improve their persistence and overall degree completion track. This research study, therefore, adds insights to the literature on Black male initiatives' effect on Black male persistence and degree completion and potentially provides steps to improving the persistence and overall degree completion trends of Black men by enhancing their national academic postsecondary data, impacting the overall academic, economic, and social health of Black men, their families, and their communities, and influencing cross-sector innovation and strategic initiatives helpful to Black men and Black boys that benefit the Black economy and the overall American economy.

Academic & Social Implications

A substantive academic attribute of this study was that as the experiential narratives came explicitly from Black men who were at least 18 years old attending East Texas historically Black colleges and participating in a Black male initiative, they represent a unique population and institution type that adds significant empirical data points regarding the Black male initiatives' programs at the postsecondary level for theory and practice. I reviewed numerous scholarly articles regarding Black male initiatives prior to speaking to these Black men. I recall how Bentley-Edwards and Chapman-Hilliard (2015) underscored the limited literature distinguishing Black male college students' behaviors and attitudes, which implied to me how marginalized and underemphasized Black male voices were in research. I subsequently sat in interviews with postsecondary level Black men holding on-campus and national collegiate

leadership positions, just grateful to share honestly and openly their experiences for this study. I recounted no reticent moments to share from these Black men during the interviews; one young Black man expressed that he was honored to participate in the research study. Therefore, I concluded that these Black men first understood their assignment to provide honest and transparent experiences that chronicled the critical academic and social implications of the research at this moment and then the value of their empirical knowledge regarding Black male initiatives, particularly in this age where critical race theory and diversity, equity, and inclusion are under constant political assault because social change only happens when we heighten and proliferate the voices of the marginalized. Conclusively, augmenting the narratives of this study may amplify the real postsecondary needs of Black men and prompt the required investments in Black male initiatives at colleges and universities that can improve resilience and degree completion rates, bringing about positive social change and real academic improvement for Black men.

Economic & Social Implications

The empirical data in this research study has straightforward economic and social implications. To impose upon today's political sentiments regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and critical race theory and necessitate their postsecondary value, I could channel Nelson Mandela's (2003) famous quote that "education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world." I could even draw from Horace Mann's (Carleton, 2023) thought that "education, then, beyond all other divides of human origin, is a great equalizer of conditions of men—the balance wheel of the social machinery" to

embellish the point. I could even peradventure go out on a limb and echo Malcolm X (BlackPast, 2007), who stated that "education is an important element in the struggle for human rights... education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs only to the people who prepare for it today." These quotes only point out the necessity of educational differentiation and strategic techniques and initiatives that place importance upon Black male initiatives as having the ability to affect Black men's resilience and degree completion rate. Each declaration captures the sincerity of their day but channels and contributes to the political energy of today and aptly situates scholastic achievement as pivotal for impacting the individual, influencing humanity, and affecting the human condition, all of which indicate and implicate, theoretically and conceptually, positive social change. Considering how the empirical knowledge from this study demonstrated the productive effects of Black male initiatives to have a positive impact and increase overall degree completion trends of the Black men interviewed, one may deduce that the potential social and economic health of the Black men, their families, and their communities would benefit producing positive economic and social change.

Transformative Cross-Sector Implications

The insights the young Black men interviewed for this study shared provided a vital passageway into the Black male initiative phenomenon. As the researcher, the interviewer, and a Black male initiative participant during my undergraduate years, I supposed several similar ideals while preparing for this research study. As a natural introvert, I remembered how I felt being part of a service fraternity and the ensuing brotherhood. I reminisced about the hours and days my brothers and I spent together

learning, traveling, and some days just having each other's back emotionally, spiritually, and financially. I recalled how my mother brought groceries for me and my 'brothers'; many of their parents did likewise. However, I never categorized our bonds until hearing the participant's expressions, although I knew how several of us remained connected even after thirty years and how there were times when we called upon each other during that time for love, friendship, and support. I never qualified or quantified those implications until I iteratively reviewed the interviews, read and reread the participant narratives, and determined how transformational my experiences were and, by default, how transformative their experiences were and may become.

The findings from this study potentially speak directly to Black men's social and emotional health and, by default, the social and emotional health of Black families, Black communities, and all communities. Years ago, I read an African proverb that asserted how "a family in harmony will prosper and excel in everything." This study's findings almost perpetually indicated transformation in one young man who grew up on the streets but is now determined to persevere and is on a path to degree completion. A couple of the other participants had harmful, life-altering experiences. However, the Black male initiative shifted their outlook, and they, too, are on a path of perseverance and degree completion. The point is straightforward: the results revealed in this study have transformative implications for the social and emotional health of Black men, and innovatively duplicating and replicating these types of initiatives across societal sectors and intergenerationally because of their potential to produce healthier Black men and

productivity, may transform the next generations of Black men and their sons thus improving their and everyone's economic health.

Theory and Practice

As the empirical data from this study potentially adds to the literature regarding Black male initiatives affecting the persistence and graduation of Black men, I hope that new innovative programs with similar impact and intentions emerge on college campuses and as interventions in primary and secondary schools around the United States. As this study amplifies the voices of the Black men participating in Black male initiatives, I also hope that this study's data may inspire historically Black colleges and university management teams to use the Biden Administration's Build Back Better Act's dedicated \$10 billion funding (The White House Briefing Room Statements and Releases, 2021) to bolster and expand campus-wide Black male initiatives to strengthen the persistence and graduation trends for Black men, understanding that dedicated people are the ones that can make finances have a real impact. Lastly, I hope that the narratives from this study enlighten decision-makers to champion Black male initiatives on campuses throughout this country.

Conclusions

I watched a TED Talk several years ago by Chimamanda Adichie (2009) called *The Danger of a Single Story*. Summarily, Adichie referenced how only knowing one thing about a person, country, or group of people, that single story "creates stereotypes... and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." The video presentation was eye-opening,

informative, and transformative because the thoughts conveyed forced me to examine my perceptions and frame of reference when dealing with people and situations. The point I want to convey is that Black men's stories matter, even when some choose to overlook their contribution to theory and practice, this study puts their contributions front and center and features their experiences with Black male initiatives. Although the focus of this study explicitly targeted Black male persistence and graduation during their 4-year college tenure, I find it prudent to postulate that the narratives also indicated that the Black male initiative community and its supportive structures could potentially be potent enough in some instances to have a lifelong transformative benefit on Black men. Zook (1994) highlighted how the original Black male initiative pointed to some minimal innate personal guidance, skills, and determinations regarding "sociological hazards" besides their academic and social skill set. Being circumspect and prudent, I must highlight that the perceptions and meanings noted by the Black men interviewed for this study expressed a positive effect but expanded that effect to transformational whole-man benefit, extending the knowledge base regarding the Black male initiative phenomenon.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocols

RQ1: What are Black male college student experiences with Black male initiatives at three East Texas historically Black colleges?

RQ2: What meanings do Black male students make of their experiences with Black male initiatives at three East Texas historically Black colleges?

RQ3: How do Black male college students perceive the Black male initiatives' effectiveness to improve their persistence and graduation at three East Texas historically Black colleges?

Topic: Academic Influence

1. What do you think is the academic purpose of Black male initiatives on the college campus?
2. Describe a positive academic experience.
3. What academic benefit did the experience provide?
4. How did the experience influence/influence your persistence (ability to continue to graduate despite difficulty or opposition)?
5. Describe a not-so-positive academic experience.
6. What can the campus professional do to aid/ensure a positive outcome?
7. What can you do to aid/ensure a positive outcome?
8. How did each of these academic experiences influence/influence your persistence (ability to continue and graduate despite difficulty or opposition)?
9. What lessons or meanings did you take from each experience—the positive and the not-so-positive?

Topic: Social Influence

1. What do you think is the social purpose of Black male initiatives on the college campus?
2. Describe a social experience.
3. What social benefit did the experience provide?
4. How did the experience influence/influence your persistence (ability to continue to graduate despite difficulty or opposition)?
5. Describe a not-so-positive academic experience.
6. What can the campus professional do to aid/ensure a positive outcome?
7. What can you do to aid/ensure a positive outcome?
8. How did each of these academic experiences influence/influence your persistence (ability to continue and graduate despite difficulty or opposition)?
9. What lessons or meanings did you take from each experience—the positive and the not-so-positive?

Expert Panel Review.

An expert panel is utilized to validate the authenticity of the research questions in order to minimize errors and strengthen the quality of the research (Appendix X). The expert panel validates the authenticity of the research questions by reviewing an overview of the research problem and methodology. They also assisted through iterations to make sure the interview questions reflect the reality in the actual data collection, and if the interview questions would be appropriate in respect to answerability, clarity, and suitability.

II. PROFILE OF THE EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER *[To be completed by invited panelist]*

1. Do you have professional licensure or certification? Yes No

2. If yes to the above, what type of licensure/certification? PRINCIPAL CERTIFICATION

3. Do you have a terminal degree? Yes No

4. If yes to the above, please select the relevant degree type obtained.
Masters Doctorate Higher Doctorate

5. If yes to the above, please select the field that most closely describes your terminal degree

Psychology	Business	Architecture/Design	Engineering
Sociology	Communications	Urban Planning	Computer Sciences
<u>Education</u>	Linguistics	Public Admin.	Data Analytics
Economics	Criminology	Healthcare Admin.	Mathematics
Political Science	Law/Jurisprudence	Clinical Medicine	Life Sciences
Anthropology	Social Work	Medical Tech./Support	Earth Sciences
Cultural Studies	Therapy (OT, PT, ST)	Nursing	Physics/Chemistry
Human Geography	Ministry/Theology	Pharmacology	Humanities
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Field (Not Listed)			

6. Having read the researcher's planned study (from Section I), do you claim one of the following areas of expertise related to the study?

- Scholarly Expertise (academic or professional research publication, rank)
 Practitioner Expertise (academic or professional practice, licensure)
 Both Scholarly and Practitioner Expertise

7. How long have you worked in that particular academic field or industry?

- Less than three years
 3-5 years
 6-10 years
 11-15 years
 More than fifteen years

8. Please describe your area of expertise as it relates to this topic:

I recently wrote a dissertation for Baylor University detailing my experience as a Black principal, working with Black boys in the traditional and alternative educational settings. The dissertation journalized the real-world experiences of Black boys in the 21st century.

EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER (NAME): Dr. Dexter Q. Floyd

DATE OR REVIEW: 8-24-2021

PANELIST WRITTEN FEEDBACK FOR INTERVIEW:

The interview questions are the nucleus to acquiring the information necessary to answer the research questions. The interview questions were specific and broad. I like how some questions forced the interviewee to (retrospectively) reflect within, while at other times showing what could be changed systemically. I would adjust the description of the "not so positive" experience. I would focus more on "why" do you feel this was not so positive. How could this experience change to positive? What does "social" mean to you? How could you or how do you plan to implement the lessons/meanings you learned from each experience.

Although the questions were good questions, the greatest will be acquired in the follow-up questions.

Expert Panel Review.

An expert panel is utilized to validate the authenticity of the research questions in order to minimize errors and strengthen the quality of the research (Appendix X). The expert panel validates the authenticity of the research questions by reviewing an overview of the research problem and methodology. They also assisted through iterations to make sure the interview questions reflect the reality in the actual data collection, and if the interview questions would be appropriate in respect to answerability, clarity, and suitability.

II. PROFILE OF THE EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER [To be completed by invited panelist]

1. Do you have professional licensure or certification? Yes No

2. If yes to the above, what type of licensure/certification? Educator & Principal

3. Do you have a terminal degree? Yes No

4. If yes to the above, please select the relevant degree type obtained.

Masters Doctorate Higher Doctorate

5. If yes to the above, please select the field that most closely describes your terminal degree

Psychology	Business	Architecture/Design	Engineering
Sociology	Communications	Urban Planning	Computer Sciences
<u>Education</u>	Linguistics	Public Admin.	Data Analytics
Economics	Criminology	Healthcare Admin.	Mathematics
Political Science	Law/Jurisprudence	Clinical Medicine	Life Sciences
Anthropology	Social Work	Medical Tech./Support	Earth Sciences
Cultural Studies	Therapy (OT, PT, ST)	Nursing	Physics/Chemistry
Human Geography	Ministry/Theology	Pharmacology	Humanities
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Field (Not Listed)			

6. Having read the researcher's planned study (from *Section I*), do you claim one of the following areas of expertise related to the study?

Scholarly Expertise (academic or professional research publication, rank)

Practitioner Expertise (academic or professional practice, licensure)

Both Scholarly and Practitioner Expertise

7. How long have you worked in that particular academic field or industry?

Less than three years

3-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

More than fifteen years

8. Please describe your area of expertise as it relates to this topic:

School administrator, worked on campus at a HACC, worked w/ college & career readiness

EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER (NAME): Vanessa Holmes

DATE OF REVIEW: 8/18/2021

PANELIST WRITTEN FEEDBACK FOR INTERVIEW:

I think the questions are thought provoking. My
Wondering would be if you could possibly expand
the questions to include experiences, both
academic/social, that contributed to not
graduating - support, etc. to show the effect of
the experiences on graduation/retention.

Expert Panel Review.

An expert panel is utilized to validate the authenticity of the research questions in order to minimize errors and strengthen the quality of the research (Appendix X). The expert panel validates the authenticity of the research questions by reviewing an overview of the research problem and methodology. They also assisted through iterations to make sure the interview questions reflect the reality in the actual data collection, and if the interview questions would be appropriate in respect to answerability, clarity, and suitability.

II. PROFILE OF THE EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER *[To be completed by invited panelist]*

1. Do you have professional licensure or certification? Yes No
2. If yes to the above, what type of licensure/certification? Ph.D in African American Studies
3. Do you have a terminal degree? Yes No
4. If yes to the above, please select the relevant degree type obtained.
Masters Doctorate Higher Doctorate

5. If yes to the above, please select the field that most closely describes your terminal degree

Psychology	Business	Architecture/Design	Engineering
Sociology	Communications	Urban Planning	Computer Sciences
Education	Linguistics	Public Admin.	Data Analytics
Economics	Criminology	Healthcare Admin.	Mathematics
Political Science	Law/Jurisprudence	Clinical Medicine	Life Sciences
Anthropology	Social Work	Medical Tech./Support	Earth Sciences
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultural Studies	Therapy (OT, PT, ST)	Nursing	Physics/Chemistry
Human Geography	Ministry/Theology	Pharmacology	Humanities
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Field (Not Listed)			

6. Having read the researcher's planned study (from *Section I*), do you claim one of the following areas of expertise related to the study?

- Scholarly Expertise (academic or professional research publication, rank)
- Practitioner Expertise (academic or professional practice, licensure)
- Both Scholarly and Practitioner Expertise

7. How long have you worked in that particular academic field or industry?

- Less than three years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- More than fifteen years

8. Please describe your area of expertise as it relates to this topic:

I work with African American males in the college setting

EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER (NAME): Nafesa Muhammad

DATE OF REVIEW: 8/21/2021

PANELIST WRITTEN FEEDBACK FOR INTERVIEW:

I think the questions are fine. I have a few questions about Black Male initiatives at these three colleges.

- 1) So each of these colleges has programs specifically designed for the success of Black men?
- 2) Have each of these three colleges been successful in graduating Black men? Are black women not included in these initiatives? I am asking because it speaks to why these black male initiatives arose at these colleges.

Expert Panel Review.

An expert panel is utilized to validate the authenticity of the research questions in order to minimize errors and strengthen the quality of the research (Appendix X). The expert panel validates the authenticity of the research questions by reviewing an overview of the research problem and methodology. They also assisted through iterations to make sure the interview questions reflect the reality in the actual data collection, and if the interview questions would be appropriate in respect to answerability, clarity, and suitability.

II. PROFILE OF THE EXPERT PANEL REVIEWER *[To be completed by invited panelist]*

1. Do you have professional licensure or certification? Yes No

2. If yes to the above, what type of licensure/certification? Principal cert

3. Do you have a terminal degree? Yes No

4. If yes to the above, please select the relevant degree type obtained.

Masters Doctorate Higher Doctorate

5. If yes to the above, please select the field that most closely describes your terminal degree

Psychology	Business	Architecture/Design	Engineering
Sociology	Communications	Urban Planning	Computer Sciences
<u>Education</u>	Linguistics	Public Admin.	Data Analytics
Economics	Criminology	Healthcare Admin.	Mathematics
Political Science	Law/Jurisprudence	Clinical Medicine	Life Sciences
Anthropology	Social Work	Medical Tech./Support	Earth Sciences
Cultural Studies	Therapy (OT, PT, ST)	Nursing	Physics/Chemistry
Human Geography	Ministry/Theology	Pharmacology	Humanities
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Field (Not Listed)			

6. Having read the researcher's planned study (from *Section I*), do you claim one of the following areas of expertise related to the study?

Scholarly Expertise (academic or professional research publication, rank)

Practitioner Expertise (academic or professional practice, licensure)

Both Scholarly and Practitioner Expertise

7. How long have you worked in that particular academic field or industry?

Less than three years

3-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

More than fifteen years

8. Please describe your area of expertise as it relates to this topic: 1. A middle school and behavioral high school Principal.
2. State Turnaround School coordinator
3. I participated in black male initiatives in college
4. Current mentor and advisor for a Black male initiative.

Appendix B: Reflexive Journal Protocols

Three Essential reflections before and after each interview and reflexive journaling.

Before

1. What information do I need to gather?
2. Who/What individuals and instruments will I observe and report on?
3. List the questions that I need to answer.

After

1. Was the research both research questions answered with rich narrative?
2. Is follow-up necessary?
3. Were there any personal biases in questioning or responding.



Reflexive Journal Protocol

This Reflexive Journal Protocol for Eric Johnson's Dissertation exploring the effects of Black Male Initiatives on the persistence and graduation of Black men at East Texas historically Black colleges.

Pseudonym	Campus
Date	Initiative

Three Essential reflections before and after each interview form the basis for this document.

Before

1. What information do I need to gather? **{see interview protocol}**
2. What individuals will I observe and report? **Black men at East TX historically Black colleges**
3. List of questions I need to answer. **{See interview protocol}**

After

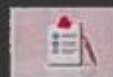
1. Were the research questions answered with rich narratives? yes no
2. Is follow-up necessary? yes no
3. Were there any personal biases in questioning or responding? yes no

Personal Observations

Descriptive Adjective _____

Noteworthy Points & Moments _____

Member checks: Data Sent: Additional feedback provided:



Reflexive Journal Protocol

This Reflexive Journal Protocol for Eric Johnson's Dissertation exploring the effects of Black Male Initiatives on the persistence and graduation of Black men at East Texas historically Black colleges.

Pseudonym <u>#D-ACE</u>	Campus <u>Campus 1</u>
Date <u>11-21-2022</u>	Initiative <u>NHS & Basketball team</u>

Three Essential reflections before and after each interview form the basis for this document.

Before	
1. What information do I need to gather? (see interview protocol)	
2. What individuals will I observe and report? <u>Black men at East TX historically Black colleges</u>	
3. List of questions I need to answer. (See interview protocol)	
After	
1. Were the research questions answered with rich narratives?	yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Is follow-up necessary?	yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Were there any personal biases in questioning or responding?	yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Personal Observations

Descriptive Adjective Humble, An example, Value Facilitator

Noteworthy Points & Moments Culture Important - An example of LIFETIME CONNECTIONS

Member checks: Date Sent 12-3-22 Additional feedback provided: NONE



Reflexive Journal Protocol

This Reflexive Journal Protocol for Eric Johnson's Dissertation exploring the effects of Black Male Initiatives on the persistence and graduation of Black men at East Texas historically Black colleges.

Pseudonym <u># J-DUCEE</u>	Campus <u>Campus 1</u>
Date <u>11-31-2022</u>	Initiative <u>SGA & Basketball Team</u>

Three Essential reflections before and after each interview form the basis for this document.

Before

1. What information do I need to gather? (see interview protocol)
2. What individuals will I observe and report? Black men at East TX historically Black colleges
3. List of questions I need to answer. (See interview protocol)

After

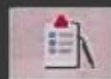
1. Were the research questions answered with rich narratives? yes no
2. Is follow-up necessary? yes no
3. Were there any personal biases in questioning or responding? yes no

Personal Observations

Descriptive Adjective: Humbled

Noteworthy Points & Moments: CONNECTED, UNIT

Member checks: Date Sent: 12-3-22 Additional feedback provided: None



Reflexive Journal Protocol

This Reflexive Journal Protocol for Eric Johnson's Dissertation exploring the effects of Black Male Initiatives on the persistence and graduation of Black men at East Texas historically Black colleges.

Pseudonym # D-Tray	Campus Campus 1
Date 11-21-2020	Initiative Basketball Team

Three Essential reflections before and after each interview form the basis for this document.

Before

1. What information do I need to gather? (see interview protocol)
2. What individuals will I observe and report? Black men at East TX historically Black colleges
3. List of questions I need to answer. (See interview protocol)

After

1. Were the research questions answered with rich narratives? yes no
2. Is follow-up necessary? yes no
3. Were there any personal biases in questioning or responding? yes no

Personal Observations

Descriptive Adjective ASSIST - RAABATHOLE #6 - ZONED - DOWN

Noteworthy Points & Moments HBCU, BROTHERS

Member checks: Date Sent: 12/7/22 Additional feedback provided: NONE



Reflexive Journal Protocol

This Reflexive Journal Protocol for Eric Johnson's Dissertation exploring the effects of Black Male initiatives on the persistence and graduation of Black men at East Texas historically Black colleges.

Pseudonym # D-Quas	Campus Chapin 1
Date 11-21-2022	Initiative Basketball Team

Three Essential reflections before and after each interview form the basis for this document.

Before

1. What information do I need to gather? (see interview protocol)
2. What individuals will I observe and report? **Black men at East TX historically Black colleges**
3. List of questions I need to answer. (See interview protocol)

After

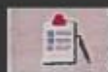
1. Were the research questions answered with rich narratives? yes no
2. Is follow-up necessary? yes no
3. Were there any personal biases in questioning or responding? yes no

Personal Observations

Descriptive Adjective **CHANGED - AWAKENED - THUNDER** *Sept 10*

Noteworthy Points & Moments **TEAM**

Member checks: Date Sent: **12/7/22** Additional feedback provided: **NONE**



Reflexive Journal Protocol

This Reflexive Journal Protocol for Eric Johnson's Dissertation exploring the effects of Black Male Initiatives on the persistence and graduation of Black men at East Texas historically Black colleges.

Pseudonym <u># MR - MOVE</u>	Campus <u># 2</u>
Date <u>12-8-2022</u>	Initiative <u>MOVE</u>

Three Essential reflections before and after each interview form the basis for this document.

Before

1. What information do I need to gather? (see Interview protocol)
2. What individuals will I observe and report? Black men at East TX historically Black colleges
3. List of questions I need to answer. (See Interview protocol)

After

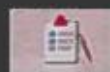
1. Were the research questions answered with rich narratives? yes no
2. Is follow-up necessary? yes no
3. Were there any personal biases in questioning or responding? yes no

Personal Observations

Descriptive Adjective young NAIVE But Visionary, SINCERE

Noteworthy Points & Moments FAMILY, LEAD, GRAD, GPA

Member checks: Date Sent: 12-31-22 Additional feedback provided: about



Reflexive Journal Protocol

This Reflexive Journal Protocol for Eric Johnson's Dissertation exploring the effects of Black Male Initiatives on the persistence and graduation of Black men at East Texas historically Black colleges.

Pseudonym <u># MR - UNCF</u>	Campus <u># 2</u>
Date <u>12-9-2022</u>	Initiative <u>UNCF ROYAL COURT MOVE, SISMA, Peer-Academic COUNCIL</u>

Three Essential reflections before and after each Interview form the basis for this document.

Before

1. What information do I need to gather? (see interview protocol)
2. What individuals will I observe and report? Black men at East TX historically Black colleges
3. List of questions I need to answer. (See interview protocol)

After

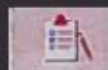
1. Were the research questions answered with rich narratives? yes no
2. Is follow-up necessary? yes no
3. Were there any personal biases in questioning or responding? yes no

Personal Observations

Descriptive Adjective: LIFE STORY, THANKFUL

Noteworthy Points & Moments: LEADERSHIP, FAMILY, BROTHERS

Member checks: Date Sent: 12-31-22 Additional feedback provided: NONE



Reflexive Journal Protocol

This Reflexive Journal Protocol for Eric Johnson's Dissertation exploring the effects of Black Male Initiatives on the persistence and graduation of Black men at East Texas historically Black colleges.

Pseudonym <u># MR - PRESIDENT</u>	Campus <u># 2</u>
Date <u>12-8-2022</u>	Initiative <u>MOVE, SGA, KAPPA, SHAR</u>

Three Essential reflections before and after each interview form the basis for this document.

Before

1. What information do I need to gather? (see Interview protocol)
2. What individuals will I observe and report? Black men at East TX historically Black colleges
3. List of questions I need to answer. (See interview protocol)

After

1. Were the research questions answered with rich narratives? yes no
2. Is follow-up necessary? yes no
3. Were there any personal biases in questioning or responding? yes no

Personal Observations

Descriptive Adjective FOCUSSED + REFLECTIVE

Noteworthy Points & Moments LEADERSHIP, B UNIT, BROTHERHOOD BROTHERS

Member checks: Date Sent: 12-31-22 Additional feedback provided: NONE



Reflexive Journal Protocol

This Reflexive Journal Protocol for Eric Johnson's Dissertation exploring the effects of Black Male Initiatives on the persistence and graduation of Black men at East Texas historically Black colleges.

Pseudonym <i># MR - NBA</i>	Campus <i>#2</i>
Date <i>12-8-2002</i>	Initiative <i>MOVE, BASKETBALL TEAM</i>

Three Essential reflections before and after each interview form the basis for this document.

Before

1. What information do I need to gather? (see interview protocol)
2. What individuals will I observe and report? Black men at East TX historically Black colleges
3. List of questions I need to answer. (See interview protocol)

After

1. Were the research questions answered with rich narratives? yes no
2. Is follow-up necessary? yes no
3. Were there any personal biases in questioning or responding? yes no

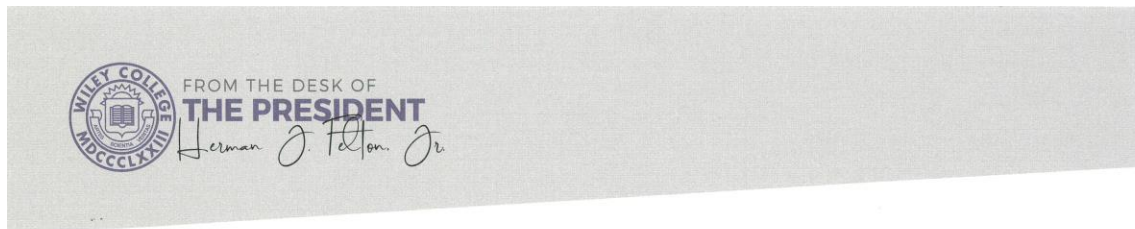
Personal Observations

Descriptive Adjective: CONFIDENT, HUMBLE, THANKFUL

Noteworthy Points & Moments: GIVE BACK TEAM

Member checks: Date Sent: 12-31-02 Additional feedback provided: NONE

Appendix C: Campus Approvals



September 28, 2021

Eric Johnson
 PhD Candidate
 Walden University
 XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Mr. Johnson:

In keeping with Wiley College's Institutional Review Board research protocols, the Board has reviewed your request to use Wiley College with respect to your research entitled, "*Black Male Initiatives' Effect on Black Male Persistence and Graduation*" at Walden University.

The IRB has made their decision for you to proceed after carefully reviewing your submissions which included:

- Invitation to participate letter
- IRB application
- Informed consent form
- Research certification
- Required readings
- Protocol documents

Our IRB has determined that your project does not pose any threat to our human subjects and/or the institution, and that the confidentiality rights of our human subjects will be adequately protected. As such, I hereby approve your request to use Wiley College as a research site.

As you proceed, please note that the College's protocols require researchers to promptly report any proposed changes in activities, as well as any unanticipated problems or challenges associated with safeguarding the rights and welfare of our human subjects participating in the above referenced research project. Please note that any substantial departure from the scope of the original research and/or protocols that were provided to the College may require another IRB review and approval.

Best wishes for your continued success on this very significant research initiative.

Inspirata Procedunt,


 Herman J. Felton, Jr., J.D., Ph.D.
 President and CEO

GO FORTH *inspired.*

December 8, 2022

Eric Johnson
PhD Candidate
Walden University

Dear Mr. Johnson:

In keeping with Texas College's research protocols, we reviewed your request to use Texas College with respect to your research entitled, "Black Male Initiatives' Effect on Black Male Persistence and Graduation: at Walden University.

Our team made their decision for you to proceed after carefully reviewing your submissions which included:

- Consent form w/ Walden University's IRB approval
- Copy of Wiley College's IRB approval letter

Upon review, our team determined that your project does not pose any threat to our human subjects and/or the institution, and that the confidentiality rights of our human subjects will be adequately protected. As such, I hereby approve your request to use Texas College as a research site.

As you proceed, please note that the College's protocols require researchers to promptly report any proposed changes in activities, as well as any unanticipated problems or challenges associated with safeguarding the rights and welfare of our human subjects participating in the able referenced research project. Please note that any substantial departure from the scope of the original research and/or protocols that were provided to the College may require another review and approval.

Best wishes for your continued success on this very significant research initiative.

Inspirata Procedunt,



Dr. Jan Duncan
Vice President for Academic Affairs

[External]:: RE: Sample letter

Duncan, Jan <~~jduncan@texascollege.edu~~>

Fri 12/9/2022 1:59 PM

To: Johnson, Eric <~~Eric.Johnson@tylerisd.org~~>

1 attachments (237 KB)

Johnson E.pdf;

CAUTION:This email originated from outside of the organization! Do not click links, open attachments or reply, unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the content is safe!

Greetings:

Please view the attached letter.

Jan E. Duncan

Jan E. Duncan, Ph.D.

Vice-President of Academic Affairs

Tel. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Email: ~~XXXXXXXXXX@XXXXXX~~

From: Johnson, Eric <Eric.Johnson@tylerisd.org>

Sent: Thursday, December 8, 2022 12:45 PM

To: Williams, Isaac ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

Cc: Duncan, Jan <~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~>

Subject: Sample letter

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] This email originated from outside of Texas College. **DO NOT CLICK LINKS** or **OPEN ATTACHMENTS** unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dean Williams,



Texas College

Office of Academic Affairs

December 8, 2022

Eric Johnson
PhD Candidate
Walden University

Dear Mr. Johnson:

In keeping with Texas College's research protocols, we reviewed your request to use Texas College with respect to your research entitled, "Black Male Initiatives' Effect on Black Male Persistence and Graduation: at Walden University.

Our team made their decision for you to proceed after carefully reviewing your submissions which included:

- Consent form w/ Walden University's IRB approval
- Copy of Wiley College's IRB approval letter

Upon review, our team determined that your project does not pose any threat to our human subjects and/or the institution, and that the confidentiality rights of our human subjects will be adequately protected. As such, I hereby approve your request to use Texas College as a research site.

As you proceed, please note that the College's protocols require researchers to promptly report any proposed changes in activities, as well as any unanticipated problems or challenges associated with safeguarding the rights and welfare of our human subjects participating in the able referenced research project. Please note that any substantial departure from the scope of the original research and/or protocols that were provided to the College may require another review and approval.

Best wishes for your continued success on this very significant research initiative.

Inspirata Procedunt,

Dr. Jan Duncan
Vice President for Academic Affairs

Martin Hall | 2404 N. Grand Avenue | Tyler, TX 75702 | 903-593-8311

www.texascollege.edu

Appendix D: NVivo: Initial Codes to Emerging Categories

Name	File	Ref
academic	1	2
academic level	1	1
standard academics	1	1
academic purpose	1	1
academic purpose	1	1
activities	1	2
different activities	1	1
little activities	1	1
basketball	1	4
basketball team brotherhood	1	2
basketball teammates	1	1
playing basketball	1	1
basketball team	1	3
basketball team	1	3
basketball team brotherhood	1	2
ball team brotherhood	1	2
benefits	1	3
academic benefits	1	1
lifetime benefit	1	1
social benefits	1	1
big achievement	1	1
big achievement	1	1
brother	1	3
actual brother	1	1
big brother	1	2
building	1	2
building bonds	1	1
character builder	1	1
certain people	1	2
certain people	1	2
closing	1	2
closing argument	1	1
closing statement	1	1
college	1	2
college life	1	1
college student	1	1
different organizations	1	2
different organizations	1	2
different people	1	2
different people	1	2
different things	1	3
different things	1	3
dorm room	1	3
dorm room	1	3
events	1	2
good events	1	1
homecoming event	1	1
experience	1	4

academic experience	1	1
fun experience	1	1
positive experience	1	2
game	1	4
game days	1	3
role game	1	1
homecoming	1	4
homecoming event	1	1
homecoming game	1	2
homecoming stuff	1	1
homecoming game	1	2
homecoming game	1	2
Honor society	1	3
Honor society	1	3
leadership	1	2
leadership positions	1	1
leadership symposium	1	1
leadership roles	1	2
leadership roles	1	2
level	1	2
academic level	1	1
social level	1	1
life	1	3
else life	1	1
life benefit	1	2
lifetime	3	7
lifetime benefit	1	1
lifetime bonds	1	1
lifetime friends	1	1
lifetime friendships	1	1
lifetime relationships	1	1
lifetime success	1	1
lifetime support system	1	1
little bit	1	3
little bit	1	3
male	1	2
black male	1	1
male initiative	1	1
men	1	2
minority men	1	1
push men	1	1
plan	1	2
lesson plans	1	1
whole plan	1	1
playing	1	2
playing basketball	1	2
positive experience	4	9
positive experience	4	9
positive light	1	2

positive light	1	2
research	1	2
research program	1	1
research study	1	1
student	1	3
college student	1	1
full time student	1	1
student government	1	1
study	2	4
different study halls	1	1
research study	1	1
study nights	1	1
study sessions	1	1
supervisor	1	2
supervisor job	1	1
supervisor position	1	1
team	1	5
9th grade football team	1	1
football program	1	1
Part basketball team	1	2
college basketball	1	1
thing	2	5
crazy thing	1	1
growth thing	1	1
negative thing impact	1	2
positive thing	1	1
time	2	4
full time student	1	1
Learn time management	1	1
time management	1	1
took time	1	1
whole lesson plan	1	2
whole lesson plan	1	2
work	1	2
much work	1	1
working mentality	1	1

Appendix E: Emerging Categories, Themes, and Overarching Themes

Emerging Categories	Raw Data
Socio-Cultural Capital	
academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And then also... at that academic level... It's a, you know, he's, my brother. So, when it's... the academics come easy, plus your friends and your new family help you with your work and stuff. • So...like you hold others accountable academically, and you check to make sure... • Even though my GPA ain't at a 4.0 right now, but just knowing that somebody on our team has a 4.0... getting recognized... getting awards for having that 4.0... President's Awards... and such and such... it makes me wanna do it. • hold others accountable academically, and you check to make sure...
activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And I feel like with SGA, it gives the student body more voice, and then with that voice, we're able to be more stuff, as in, we can have different activities on campus
brother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So, it's like, that brotherhood still continues, even though it's just something that starts on campus, it becomes a true brotherhood. • when it was a time when I feel like I didn't have anybody, but I'm there to help them, it's kind of like, it's like the best feeling. • I mean... it's brothers... so that's... you know you still have your ups and downs as brothers, but at the same time, I let him know it's all coming out of the place to love, because I've been in that same position, and that same mindset as them at some point in time. • friends and your new family help you with your work and • always I'mma reach back and help my brother whatever he needs
Team basketball basketball team basketball team brotherhood	<p>Like you might not get much playing time, but we need your cheering on the bench.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • yeah, I can say like one-time last year when we had to face a lot of adversity, but we had that connectedness where it didn't really deter us and make us go down. • Because we looked at so, like at a high we looked at a high standard, like, we have to hold ourselves to a higher standard, cause, like, we all have no football program. • You can have teammates, like... he a perfect example... J... [another student] Like... he... he the type of person... like, don't give up • It's a brotherhood for people, and it just gives you their bond that you need, especially when you come into college... and you know, for a lot of people, it's their first time being away from home, and you might have that lonely feeling... So, having that brotherhood and knowing that you're not in this alone, and that there's other people that's going through that same journey as you. • It's that brotherhood that we gone always... he's my brother • So, it's like, that brotherhood still continues, even though it's just something that starts on campus, it becomes a true brotherhood
big achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You look at that graduation thing... You look at it as a big achievement in your life, just how graduating high school was a big achievement in your life

POLITICAL CAPITAL	
certain people faculty support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I got to have a certain GPA... got to have certain respect for certain people, like the coach, for one... teammates... I got to just be mindful.
college	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yeah, definitely motivated me to stay in college my degree It motivated me to even go back because I tried... I went to... a technical school right after high school, but I feel like it wasn't working out for him, so I immediately had stopped, and like, I even received an incomplete status for my classes and everything.
different organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> And then also in MOVE... that organization is great too, cause it's a lot of men that's trying to do right. So, they must know, you must be a good person, or you must mean or something of worth, because I was in that organization, and I know how I am.
experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> And... honestly... it's never really been a bad experience. So, that was a bad experience, but I made it good because I took time out to learn everybody. I could definitely say the H-B-C-U experiences here at Wiley college is a great thing. Like, my experiences here, they help me become, like, more social
Honor society & SGA events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> So, SGA... Student government Association... That looks perfect on your resume. That's what really motivated me to join SGA because I felt like I needed that, and it turned the negative situation into a moderate situation. I still had to go through some things to endure that, but if it don't kill you it only make it stronger

TRANSFORMATIVE CAPITAL	
Life lifetime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> But connections are a real major when you're a part of Different organizations... matter for lifetime... But... being part of these organization, you know, scholarships, meeting people, make connections, 2/10 having fun, just living in a college life. he same thing with them, I know I got lifetime friends... friendships out of playing basketball here on Wiley Campus.
male men students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any black male understands brotherhood. We're really a powerful group of men. I know here at our school; we have a great choir director his name is [name]... We can do some great things together
positive experience Not so positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He really is a great supporter. Ah... I don't really like to think on the not so positive... I mean, probably like the worst thing is probably expecting something from somebody who you saw a brother, and you just really didn't get those expectations back.
positive light	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making sure that when we walk outside of our dom room, we're not just walking out in sweatpants and a tank top, but, you know, look presentable, because at any time, you never know, it could be somebody there that can give you the interview of your life and give you the job that you've been waiting for. be a positive light and help whoever needs to be helped
study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> them... like... I had to call them like let's have study session. such as, you need to help with a test or something
work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> friends and your new family help you with your work and