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Challenges Black Males Face at Predominantly White Institutions

Jerrell LaMon Starling
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Jerrell LaMon Starling

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Review Committee
Dr. Robert Voelkel, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Mitchell Pratt, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University

2024

Abstract

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MA, City University, 2010

BS, Chaminade University, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

The problem is that Black males in higher education have declining retention and graduation rates compared to other ethnic groups. Over the past two decades, Black males have declined in enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. Colleges and universities have struggled to attract, keep, and graduate Black male students, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent research has shown that Black male students have experienced the most challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today's educators and practitioners have emphasized the need to do more to keep Black male students and help them complete college. Framed by Critical Race Theory, this study investigated first-generation--, third-, fourth-year Black male students' perceptions and experiences attending predominantly White institutions (PWIs). This qualitative research study employed one-on-one, in-depth interviews to understand Black males' challenges and obstacles to attending PWIs. With many racial challenges, the results finally provided insight into the participants' perceptions and experiences of academic and social persistence at PWIs. Findings indicated a deficiency in the existing body of research about eliminating obstacles connected to race and enhancing institutional help to address the distinct requirements of Black men striving to get a college degree.
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Dedication

God. This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Stephen C. Wright, Dr. Brenda Jackson, Dr. Michelle Gramling, and Cassandra Nash, a student at Walden University. Their unwavering support and invaluable contributions have been the driving force behind this study. I am deeply committed to making them proud and using the knowledge gained from this study to advocate for the importance of education. Most importantly, this study is dedicated to students of color facing barriers and challenges in pursuing higher education. We can overcome any obstacle with the strength we derive from our faith.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This qualitative study explored the experiences of first-generation Black male third- and fourth-year undergraduates who attended predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Every year, the National Center for Education Statistics (2019) reported that Black men faced steeper challenges than their Black female and White peers. First-generation, low-income Black students from low socioeconomic backgrounds encounter many challenges when working toward their college degrees (Patterson, 2021). Patterson claimed that Black male college students live in a multifaceted social milieu. Black students in the United States, particularly men, still encounter barriers that impede their academic achievement.

First-generation, low-income Black students in the United States, particularly men, still encounter barriers that impede their academic achievement. In short, Black male students have some of the lowest rates of persistence and completion compared to other subgroups in higher education, as shown by various studies (Banks & Dohy, 2019; Brooms, 2018; Carter-Francique et al., 2015; Strayhorn, 2017). Higher education still significantly underrepresents Black men. Fairfax (2022) emphasized that African American men encountered distinct academic obstacles. Many individuals have encountered injustices and structural obstacles during their educational journey. Upon entering college, many students discover themselves in a primarily isolated setting. Many individuals will have familial and financial obligations that persistently jeopardize their focus on their academics. Some individuals will distance themselves from old home

companions who are unfamiliar with or do not relate to the college environment. There is a need to address cultural beliefs, racism, microaggression, lack of financial and family support, lack of inclusivity, and lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in United States higher education.

The problem is that Black males still have declining retention and graduation rates compared to other ethnic groups. This study investigated barriers Black men in the United States faced in their efforts to persevere and graduate from college. Low rates of PWIs have been linked to institutional racism and marginalization.

Colleges and universities still struggle to attract, keep, and graduate Black male students. Researchers have shown that a college education is essential for economic progress, financial stability, and success in competing in a global market.

According to Banks et al. (2017), Black male students at predominantly White institutions had a six-year graduation rate of 45.9%, while Hispanic students had a rate of 55%. White and Asian students had a graduation rate of 67.2% each. Enrollment decreased by 3.2% in the fall of 2021 and 3.4% in 2020 (Graham, 2022). Enrollment in higher education, particularly in four-year colleges, decreased. Graham reported that community colleges were the most severely affected. Community colleges saw a 10% decrease in enrollment in the United States in the fall of 2020, followed by a further loss of over 5% in the fall of 2021. Overall, there has been a significant decrease in enrollment figures for men in recent years. The COVID-19 epidemic disproportionately affected Black families in the United States, resulting in substantial job and income losses

compared to other families. Recent surveys show a decrease in the number of Black students who get college degrees. Higher education institutions have faced challenges in retaining students of color, particularly Black males, since the pandemic. Francois et al. (2022) reported that there was a combined negative effect of COVID-19 stress and racial trauma on Black American students.

A recent Chalkbeat survey in 2021 revealed that Black students, particularly Black men, encountered significant hurdles during the COVID-19 pandemic when it came to obtaining technology and accessing resources to support their families. Despite Black students' pursuit of higher education, Black men have been falling behind their female peers and overall cohort for several decades now. Throughout history, Black men have faced barriers to accessing higher education, gaining employment, and completing degrees. Over the past ten years and during the pandemic, male college enrollment rates have steadily decreased at predominantly White institutions. The Chalkbeat study (2021) found that Black male students were the ones who faced the most difficulties during the pandemic. Blankenberger and Williams (2020) argued that the rapid spread of COVID-19 necessitated a shift from traditional teaching methods to remote learning in higher education, affecting individuals, institutions, and physical and social technology. It's become clear that COVID-19 is a permanent fixture in our reality.

Academic authorities must strive to lessen the impact on the Black community. People in leadership positions in decision-making must do more to help this population succeed. Black and Latino men still face low enrollment rates at predominantly White

institutions (PWIs). According to Graham (2022), the proportion of Black men declined by 14.3% between spring 2020 and spring 2021. Moreover, community colleges typically have more minority students and adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Black male undergraduate enrollment in colleges and universities has seen a substantial decline. Educators often perceive men of color as intellectually inferior, troublemakers, and prone to criminal behavior, disregarding their homes and communities' emphasis on education. In the spring of 2021, Graham discovered a 21.5% decline in Black male students in two-year colleges. Black male student enrollment issues undeniably affected colleges and institutions nationwide. Campus environments remain unwelcoming for males of color, according to research. Studies show that some minority males excel in complex school settings due to their strong drive to better their lives and families. Nationwide, colleges and institutions should be urged to establish retention programs that support minority students, especially males of color. Focusing on the needs of Black male students in higher education is essential for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

According to the literature review, it is essential to increase the college enrollment of Black men to ensure a sense of belonging and educational success. Various researchers showed that predominantly White institutions do not understand how to meet Black students' specific needs. McElderry (2022) highlighted many challenges, barriers, and obstacles this demographic faces because of low retention and completion rates. Higher education must address and understand race-related issues, focus on educational inequities, and address other factors affecting students' persistence. Today's institutions,

particularly PWIs, are noting this trend and developing targeted enrollment initiatives and programs to improve retention and graduation rates through institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) curriculums. As a result, PWIs must implement a national organization to provide mentor training for Black youths, maintain initiatives and programs, and offer scholarship support for men of color.

Background

For this qualitative study, I recruited 75 male students to participate in one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 12 participants at various predominantly White institutions (PWIs) who agreed to this study. Participants were black males between 19 and 25, completing their third and fourth years of undergraduate education at their institution.

The National Center for Education Statistics reported that 36% of Black male students, 52% of Latino male students, and 63% of White male students finished a bachelor's degree within six years (NCES, 2022). According to NCES, undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions declined by 9 %, from 17.5 million to 15.9 million students between fall 2009 and 2020. Research showed that minority men, mainly Black and Latino men, still lag academically. Research also revealed that they lagged behind their peers in various aspects of educational achievement, such as college attendance and degree attainment, and were more likely to experience unemployment and jail. The graduation rate for Black and Latino men in PWIs is significantly lower compared to other demographic groups, including Black and

Latina women. In short, researchers have shown that a significant number of first-generation individuals from minority groups do not pursue higher education or get degrees, leading to challenges such as lack of support, financial struggles, racial disparities, a sense of belonging, unemployment, and incarceration. Table 1 shows the %age of degrees conferred.

Table 1

The %age of degrees conferred by race or ethnicity and sex

Associate's and bachelor's degrees confirmed by the postsecondary institution by race/ethnicity and sex of student 2018-19							
Level of degree and sex	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native	Two or more races
Associate's degree	1,012,202	52.4	12.4	24.4	6.3	0.9	3.6
Male	396,254	54.7	10.4	23.4	7.1	0.8	3.6
Female	615,948	51.0	13.6	25.0	5.8	1.0	3.6
Bachelor's	1,911.018	62.3	10.3	14.9	8.2	0.5	3.9
Male	803,184	64.3	8.8	13.9	8.8	0.4	3.8
Female	1,107,834	60.8	11.4	15.7	7.7	0.5	3.9

Note. Adapted from the National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Undergraduate Enrollment. Condition of Education. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions have struggled to keep students of color, notably Black males, to the finish line. Many men of color still face these perceived challenges: leaving high school, being first-generation college

students, needing to work full-time or not having the financial income to persist, lack of financial aid and help, lack of support and resources, savings to afford today's increasing tuition costs, and racial injustices on and off college campuses. Historically, first-generation students working toward a college degree have additional challenges than those from families with college degrees (Cataldi et al., 2018).

Black males are still leaving (PWIs because of negative campus experiences. PWI campus climates have significantly affected Black students' mental health and educational success (Black & Bimper, 2017). Although previous research has focused on college preparation, access, retention, and persistence issues, Blacks, especially males, continue to have adverse outcomes in the United States higher education system.

Many predominantly White institutions still have a shortage of Black male students, faculty, and staff. Research shows that Black men from poorer neighborhoods may have fewer opportunities for connections to social capital and financial resources that can help them attend and succeed in college (Best Colleges, 2023).

Hill (2022) highlighted the ongoing significance of improving the rates at which Black males graduate from college, given the changing racial composition of the United States. The United States expects the minority population to grow continuously and surpass the number of non-Hispanic whites within the next two decades. According to Hill, projections suggest that the Black population will experience a growth rate that is twice as high as the growth rate of non-Hispanic white individuals. Contemporary educational authorities need to tackle disproportionately low college enrollment rates

among Black pupils, focusing specifically on Black male college students. Scholar-practitioners must tackle the deficiencies in skills and education among the rapidly expanding minority groups in the United States. Our education system cannot meet the demand for mathematicians, engineers, and scientists. Hill also stressed the importance of our education system investing in the rapidly expanding sectors of our population. According to Burt et al. (2012) and Maciolek (2020), a college education can improve prospects for employment, economic growth, mental and physical healthcare, the ability to afford to live in less crime-ridden and cleaner communities, sustainability of livelihood, political and social capital, and more. All of these factors can have an impact on future generations. Educational leaders must ensure that the next generation adequately equips itself to thrive in the global economy.

According to Hill, Black college students from low-income homes may face difficulties related to racial isolation, unlike their non-minority counterparts. Hill's research also revealed that a significant number of Black male college students originate from predominantly Black communities. Black male college students frequently encounter non-academic obstacles, such as managing the demands of employment, academics, and social activities. Employment while in college can be a source of stress and additional demands on students' already-packed schedules. They are required to fulfill work obligations, allocate time for attending classes, and complete projects. Students must effectively allocate and use their time. Students may find it especially difficult when assigned group tasks with conflicting timetables. In addition, students'

partners may have distinct scheduling constraints compared to others (Hill, 2022). Most perceived difficulties can affect students' capacity to excel in higher education.

<div align="center">**Problem Statement**</div>

The problem is that Black males' low retention and graduation rates at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) are still a national crisis. Researchers have shown that first-generation Black males are less likely to seek academic help than their white counterparts (Helling & Chandler, 2021). However, Black male students who accepted attending PWIs exposed themselves to hostility and a lack of assistance, according to McElderry (2022). McElderry stated that Black male students exposed themselves to hostility and a lack of support when they accepted attending (PWIs.

Many Black males try to navigate the college process just like their peers, but many have the added pressure of being the first to attend college. Past studies showed that once minority men enter the collegiate environment, barriers exist that prevent them from progressing toward degree attainment (Harris, 2018; Strayhorn et al., 2013). Black male students face unique challenges at predominantly White institutions, including invisibility, microaggressions, and a Black faculty and staff shortage (Best Colleges, 2023). Recent historical data shows that the Black male college graduation rate is lower than the national average. Best Colleges reported that at four-year institutions, Black men completed their degrees at the lowest rate, 40 %, and Asian women completed their degrees at the highest rate, 75%. Enrollment disparities and completion rates for Black men indicate enduring social injustices stemming from institutional and structural racism

(Best Colleges, 2023). Studies show that Black women are making progress in degree attainment. In short, today's institutions of higher learning are not doing much to help Black students, particularly men of color, cross the finish line.

According to Hall (2017), Black first-generation undergraduate male students continue to trail behind their white peers at graduation rates. Research shows that undergraduate degree completion rates for Black men are still substantially lower than college degree completion rates for men of other races. Matthews-Whetstone and Scott (2015) showed that Black males lag behind their female counterparts in completing bachelor's degrees. Recent data showed substantial disparities in college completion rates among racial groups. Chalkbeat (2021) argued for increased efforts to assist Black male students in completing their college education. In short, the gap between Black male college students and non-minority college students was significant, and it showed either discriminatory practices or inefficiencies within the system" (Washington, 2013).

Nelson et al. (2020) stated that Black males who matriculated into colleges faced challenges, such as psychological stress, racism, stereotypes, and bigotry. Black students often experience a lack of equity, diversity, and inclusion on campuses. Many Black students lacked the educational and financial resources to get into college and succeed after enrollment at (PWIs. Nelson et al. (2020) also stated that some students depend on financial aid because they lack financial support from their families because of their low-income status. In short, a review of the literature continues to show that college Black males' persistence and graduation rates are a national crisis in the United States.

In 2022, 18.5% of the total United States population self-identified as a male of color, according to the American Community Survey. 9.7% of the population were Hispanic or Latino men, 5.7% were Black men, 2.8% were Asian men, 0.3% were American Indian/Alaska Native men, and 0.1% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander men. 26.7 % of males of color aged 25 or older had a bachelor's degree or higher. Asian males have a 59.8 % rate, Black men have a 22 % rate, Hispanic or Latino men have an 18.5% rate, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander men have a 21.2 % rate. The %age of males of color having a bachelor's degree or above has increased from 19.7% in 2010, with an average gain of 5.1 %age points across all racial/ethnic groups. Although there was an uptick, educational achievement for men of color in 2022 was below the national average of 34.5% for all males (Brown, 2023).

Many colleges and universities still are not doing enough to meet the needs of the increasing number of first-generation Black male students. In past decades, incidences of overt racism and discrimination have remained prevalent at colleges and universities. Research showed that barriers to graduating from PWIs for some Black male students are evidenced by the relatively low graduation and retention rates nationwide.

According to Strayhorn's research, in 2010, Black males comprised only 4.3 % of the population. Research shows that minority students, especially Black male undergraduates, still struggle to continue their education because of financial constraints, a hostile school environment, and inadequate help in addressing systematic racism. Several experts have noted that most White institutions lack an understanding of how to

address the unique requirements of Black pupils. Higher education institutions must acknowledge and comprehend race-related concerns and other factors affecting students' ability to continue their studies. However, recent advancements show that many (PWIs have implemented additional initiatives to support the emotional and mental well-being of first-year, first-generation, and low-income Black male students on their campuses (Strayhorn, 2022). In short, studies continue to show that Black male students are experiencing obstacles and struggles nationwide.

Soland and Kuhfeld (2021) found that there are still barriers to Black students attending college, such as using technology, under-preparation, institutional barriers, personal non-academic barriers, and college tuition costs. There is a gap in the literature regarding vital academic support services, a sense of belonging, and financial resources for Black students, particularly males attending PWIs.

In this study, I focused on why some Black male students do not graduate from college. The data from this study could help public and private institutions develop and implement better retention policies, procedures, and initiatives for all students. The literature review described in Chapter Two offers more insight into the significance of supporting this underrepresented group of students. Black male students attending PWIs can have positive outcomes if provided with a sense of belonging and financial resources, especially for first-generation men of color.

This qualitative study investigated perceptions and experiences of third and fourth-year undergraduate Black males at PWIs. As our nation becomes increasingly

diverse, it will be essential to help students, particularly men of color, in higher education. In short, today's educational leaders must improve outcomes for all students, notably men of color, who cannot succeed. This study also aimed to highlight the perceptions of Black males attending PWIs. The findings [in this study] can provide feedback to colleges and universities to support male students' persistence and retention efforts. Bank et al. (2019) emphasized that colleges and universities should address programmatic barriers within the institutions that perpetuate systemic barriers to students of color's success in higher education.

The primary aim of this study was to identify the critical reasons and barriers that lead to a decline in the retention and graduation rates of Black men attending PWIs. Through extensive research, I explored various strategies and recommendations educators and administrators could implement to recruit and increase retention. Today's education system must restore the value of education in the Black community. More importantly, stakeholders must help build resilience and a sense of belonging in Black males while pursuing higher education.

Despite the increase in diversity, colleges and universities nationwide still struggle to provide better support and resources to keep and graduate students of color to the same degree as their White and Asian counterparts. From the past and present literature, Black males still have declining retention and graduation rates compared to other ethnic groups. The goal was to explore more college resources for first-generation students attending PWIs. However, in this study, the findings highlighted barriers to

persistence, retention, and graduation for students of color at institutions of higher learning. The following research question was used to guide this study.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the perceptions and experiences of third and fourth-year undergraduate Black males at predominantly White institutions (PWIs)?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was critical race theory (CRT). CRT was a movement of activists and scholars studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). When applying critical race theory (CRT), educators can explain the achievement gap and school dropout rates for Black males. Academic leaders could use this framework to understand race issues because higher education institutions still need to be immune to the impact of race and race issues in education. Educators can also use CRT for social justice or social change to better support faculty, staff, and administrators by applying critical race theory to improve their understanding of identifying and addressing race-related issues on their campuses.

Critical race theorists can also examine the institutional claims of no disparities in college completion rates among racial groups. CRT was used to address the inequity of public education (Lucas, 2018). CRT theorists can explain the psychological stressors or perceptions associated with racism for Black males attending PWIs.

Critical race theory (CRT) in qualitative studies seeks to analyze laws, policies, and systems that appear impartial. CRT argued that racism is customary in American life.

CRT's framework followed these five tenets: 1. The centrality of race and racism. 2. The challenge to dominant ideology (and the status quo). 3. A commitment to social justice. 4. The centrality of experiential knowledge. 5. An interdisciplinary perspective (Brooms, 2017). In addition, CRT continues to offer a liberating and transformative method for examining racial, gender, and class discrimination" (Brooms, 2017). CRT explores purposefully marginalized, oppressed, and problematized spaces to hear their voices through counter-stories and counter-narratives. To understand the experiences of people of color, I used critical race theory as a conceptual lens to understand the experiences of Black male students attending PWIs. I also used CRT to search for solutions to the systemic issues plaguing Black students in higher education, particularly men of color. Therefore, CRT can recognize and identify the lived experiences of people of color in a white-dominated society and how various contexts influence the PWI environment.

The logical connections between the framework presented and this study may help colleges and universities to identify the academic and social challenges, especially for Black men who face barriers to completing their degrees. Researchers have explicitly applied CRT to the issues of Black male students' achievement in their education at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). There should be actions to improve enrollment, retention, and graduation for all students, especially people of color. Therefore, CRT literature could help explain how race, racism, and power shape Black student experiences. CRT also challenges the hegemonic system of White supremacy (DeCuir-

Gunby et al., 2020). In short, critical race theorists continuously critique institutional claims of equal access and equity in higher education.

Nature of the Study

The study aimed to explore and examine Black men's perceptions and experiences attending predominantly White institutions (PWIs) through qualitative research. According to Brooms (2017), Black male students in the United States, Canada, and Britain frequently face ongoing anti-Black racism and discrimination in educational environments, which often belittle and marginalize them. In this study, I explored and described the Black male participants' experiences and perceived barriers and how to overcome these obstacles with practical strategies in higher education. I selected the sample size to explore the phenomenon critically. I collected the data by conducting in-depth interviews using the critical race theory (CRT) framework. Harper et al. (2018) argued that a vital race viewpoint emphasizes how the standard procedures of higher educational institutions ingrained race and racism.

CRT guided this research design and provided a lens for understanding the complexity of race and participants' experiences. For example, critical race theory helped me to examine how racism affects minority students, particularly Black men's academic and social success in higher education. Lee (2018) observed that CRT can standardize and investigate racialized experiences in study and practice by questioning conventional paradigms, techniques, texts, and discourses related to race, gender, and class. In this study, the 12 participants reported daily discrimination, microaggression, and racism on

campuses. In short, the data identified common themes from the participants' responses in this study. Therefore, CRT helped me comprehend the occurrence and recognize the apparent barriers.

Definitions

Black or Black Male refers to a racialized classification of people, usually a political and a skin color-based category for specific populations with a mid to mahogany brown complexion (United States Census Bureau, 2018).

Anti-Black Racism: Any behavior, practice, or policy that explicitly or implicitly reflects the belief that Black people are inferior to other racial groups.

Anti-racism is the active process of identifying, challenging, and confronting racism.

Critical Race Theory: This theory stresses the oppression of a race and gives a voice to minority persons (Robertson, 2017).

Discrimination is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of others (Matthew, 2017).

Diversity: It is the acceptance of people of different ethnicities, races, cultures, religions, sexual orientations, economic backgrounds, and personal beliefs.

Equity is about treating individuals fairly and allowing them to participate fully without artificial barriers to their success as students.

First-generation: College students whose parents did not participate in postsecondary education or graduate from college (Schelbe et al., 2017).

Institutional racism: It refers to overt and covert policies, practices, and laws that reflect and reinforce racial inequality and white superiority of specific racial groups concerning access to resources, opportunities, and power (Mendez et al., 2014).

Mentor: It refers to a person who performs as an advisor, advocate, coach, counselor, role model, or sponsor in contributing to the development and growth of the mentee personally or professionally (Edwards & Ross, 2018).

Microaggression: An everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slight, snubs, or subtle insults that can be intentional or unintentional, targeting a person based on their marginalized group membership (Harrison, 2016).

Persistence is a continuous and connected time despite difficulty or opposition (Tinto, 1998).

Predominantly White Institution (PWI): White student enrollment is over fifty %.

Racism is discrimination against people based on a racial or ethnic group, typically a minority.

Retention: It focuses on maintaining several factors, including a welcoming environment, high member morale, and organizational process (Tinton, 1998).

Social Justice is the belief that everyone should have equal rights and opportunities.

Social Justice Education: Society needs to treat individuals equitably.

Structural Racism: It refers to the totality of ways societies foster racial discrimination.

Undergraduate: It describes a student at a college or university who has not yet earned a degree.

*Underrepresented Studen*t refers to racial and ethnic populations disproportionately marginalized or represented in higher education.

Assumptions

For this study, the assumption was that only undergraduate Black male participants experienced challenges attending predominantly White institutions. I assumed the participants experienced at least one challenge at PWIs. The participants will overcome their challenges by graduating from a four-year institution.

Scope and Delimitations

Limitations that affected this study included the time and date for the participants' regional locations. Collecting narratives through interviews required a significant amount of time for participants. Creswell (2018) stated that people may not recollect events because of emotional trauma, memory distortion, or fear of punishment. A participant's recount of events may alter if they avoid revisiting specific occurrences. I needed to establish a trustworthy relationship with the participants so that they feel secure in revealing any current events and prevent misrepresenting their stories. Participants in this study did not encounter emotional disturbance. Undergraduate Black males pursuing higher education at PWIs made up the population for this study. This study used an in-depth one-on-one interview strategy to focus on the participants' perceptions. The researcher restricted the research to Black males ages 19-25 years old. Many students

were in this perspective age range when pursuing an undergraduate degree at a predominantly White institution. A significant limitation of the study included the COVID-19 restraints on the participants. In the post-COVID-19 era, participants agreed to Zoom interviews. All selected participants were available during scheduled telephone interviews with Zoom. Although the face-to-face interview was the preferred method for this study, this research was participant-focused. Zoom helped me schedule interviews with respondents across the United States.

Limitations

There were some limitations to this study. Since each student's college experience is unique, the study's small sample size may not yield data applicable to larger college populations. For example, I understood that participants' narration of events may change if they do not want to relive particular events. Every campus has different socioeconomic demographics, and the size of the Black population may also affect the inclusivity of this group on campus or at PWIs. The participants seemed anxious and excited to get a Visa gift card. The participants' scope limited the study's findings. They did not represent the entire Black male community, and the results will be particular to one environment, social experience, and region of the United States. This study explored the perceptions and experiences of third- and fourth-year undergraduate Black males at PWIs. Despite adhering to proper procedures and protocols in this research study, I acknowledged my personal biases to ensure trustworthiness; however, this study was not without limitations. The small number of students in this study may limit the generalizability of

the data to larger college populations. I knew every campus has different socioeconomic

demographics, and the size of the Black population may affect this group's involvement

and inclusivity at a PWI.

In conclusion, not all students face the financial pressure or stress of college, a

lack of belonging, racial disparities, a lack of mentors or peers, and a lack of support

systems. Therefore, the study's findings had limitations, as they only involved 12

participants and did not encompass the entire Black male community. The results were

specific to PWIs, academic and social experiences, and geographical regions of the

United States.

Significance

This qualitative study explored Black men's experiences at predominantly White

campuses through the lens of critical race theory. This study was significant because it

provided me with the information necessary to understand the worldviews of Black males

regarding challenges at (PWIs. Exploring this problem will help college administrators

examine various reasons hindering persistence, graduation achievement, and success for

Black male students. Most importantly, understanding the challenges contributing to

Black male students not completing their degrees from PWIs is essential in today's higher

education. Educational leaders can use this study to improve higher education retention

policies and procedures at both the federal and state levels. Research has shown that

various factors, such as income and race or ethnicity, influence student persistence

(Cumming et al., 2023). With graduation and retention rates significantly below those of

the comparison groups, the gap among Black men appears incomprehensible in higher education (Hall, 2017).

Black males continue to face significant challenges throughout their lives, including stress, family responsibilities, financial uncertainty, a lack of identity, a lack of a sense of belonging, a lack of support system, employment insecurities, mental health, and physical disabilities. A recent study showed that Black males represent the lowest %age (33.5 %) of college completion compared to the national average of 62.4% (Goings, 2020). Institutions must collect this data to find effective methods to support and keep Black male college students. In-depth knowledge about this phenomenon may benefit other institutions of higher learning throughout the United States as they strive to increase the retention of Black male students. Through actual studies involving students directly affected by this problem, colleges and universities get the data necessary to expand educational opportunities and develop institutional policies to increase retention successfully. This study was also significant because it allowed me to explore Black males' perceived experiences as they navigate and overcome challenges to achieve their degrees. The findings from this study may shed light on issues related to student retention, even though Blacks continue to face the stigma of being less valued. Specifically, Black male students can benefit from a sense of belonging and positive educational outcomes. The results may reveal to stakeholders how retention strategies can help remove perceived barriers.

Students of color are unprepared for higher education because of the disruption they experienced during their final high school years. The study's intended implications for positive social change were to provide additional insight into the academic and non-academic challenges that may support or hinder Black males from pursuing higher education. Many incoming or first-generation students need the support systems they once had in high school. Many colleges and universities still struggle to facilitate positive outcomes for men of color. The COVID-19 pandemic heightened this challenge.

Additionally, colleges and universities may develop the essential resources for Black males to close the college attainment gap and that of other ethnic groups. Because of low completion rates, there is still a need to focus on men of color in postsecondary education. This study expanded on prior research by addressing a gap in the literature regarding low retention and graduation rates and determining how to meet this population's uniqueness. In short, this study was significant because it provided a roadmap to explore Black male students' perceived experiences as they navigate challenges to complete their educational goals.

Summary

There are still many challenges and reasons students leave or persist in completing degrees. Over the past two decades, Black male graduation rates have declined in higher education. Johnson (2023) found that Black students may face challenges when attending a predominately White institution (PWI). However, the experience is often especially difficult for Black men. Black men encounter distinct

challenges in entering PWIs, including stereotypes, microaggressions, limited representation, and inadequate support systems (Johnson, 2023).

Many Black males leave college during their first year due to lacking support, services, financial resources, and a sense of belonging. Earning a college degree is essential across the nation in a global society. Another reason Black male students cannot graduate is that they often endue microaggression rooted in racist and gendered stereotypes. Black students, particularly men with first-generation and low socioeconomic status, are among the ethnic groups or racial minorities with the lowest graduation rates. A college education is one of America's most significant paths to improving life. Research shows that most students persist in higher education to earn a higher salary once they graduate. However, current research still indicates that incidents of racism and marginalization impact Black male students' ability to succeed (Best Colleges, 2023). Johnson (2023) noted that Black men at PWIs have problems, such as addressing negative stereotypes and microaggressions. In short, Black men at PWIs encounter a notable obstacle because of the insufficient presence of representation in the student population and faculty. Black men may face challenges in finding peers and mentors who can empathize with their experiences and help when they are a minority in college. The absence of representation can lead to loneliness and a perception of not fitting in on campus.

The Implication of Social Change

According to past and current research, Black male students cannot graduate because of these barriers: a lack of college and career readiness, diversity, equity, financial resources, support systems, a sense of belonging, and a lack of community and educational support in the United States. Research showed that Black male undergraduates attend and graduate from four-year colleges and universities at lower rates than their White American male and Black female peers. Black male students who enter college without access to positive social networks or role models, mentors, educational leaders, faculty, and staff may be critical for their retention and overall sense of belonging (Best Colleges, 2023).

Black undergraduate males are still severely underrepresented at predominantly White institutions. Significant studies often show that Black male students are under-prepared to overcome barriers at PWIs. Today's researchers, practitioners, and administrators must ensure an all-inclusive and supportive campus environment that is welcoming and safe for all students. There is still a need to create a path that embraces inclusive and welcoming opportunities for all students. More importantly, there is still a need to increase diversity in higher education, develop better strategies to remove the stumbling blocks for students of color, and address academic standards, systemic racism, financial resources, and access to resources. When the Black Lives Movement formed a few years ago, it ignited a national discourse on systemic racism and racial inequalities in the United States. This social and political reality also affected higher education. The

findings from this study may allow educators to understand the experiences of Black males to examine and challenge how race and racism implicitly and explicitly shape social structures, policies, and everyday practices in higher education. Policymakers should consider Black men's experiences through the CRT lens to understand their narratives and provide counter-narratives.

Recent research by the Lumina Foundation and Gallup in 2023 found that Black college students have lower six-year completion rates for any degree or certificate program compared to other racial or ethnic groups. Racial discrimination, the high cost of higher education, and external responsibilities are the reasons for this disparity. With these barriers in mind, practitioners, campus leaders, faculty, and staff must create and implement programs and policies to empower students and meet their unique needs, especially Black men attending (PWIs.

According to Johnson (2023), Black men at predominantly white institutions often have challenges accessing the support structures for their success. This problem could be because of a lack of resources and opportunities specifically designed to support Black students, as well as a lack of understanding among non-Black peers and professors. Brown (2023) showed that Black students, particularly men, are less likely to attain college degrees because of discrimination, financial struggles, external responsibilities, and racial discrimination today.

Stakeholders must work toward equity and social justice education to improve opportunities and outcomes for all students, particularly Black males attending PWIs.

Ultimately, leaders at predominantly white institutions should take a proactive and solution-focused approach to address the academic challenges that Black males have historically and systemically encountered. Burk (2020) asserted that higher education institutions must ensure a supportive organizational structure and support resources for Black students' psychological well-being. When faculty, staff, and administrators dominate the student body, they leave many students behind. However, one way to increase Black males' graduation rates is to understand their psychological, social, cultural, and personal experiences. Colleges and universities must proactively create inclusive campus communities (Patterson, 2021).

Despite the hardships, many Black men have triumphed over the obstacles encountered at PWIs and excelled in their academic and professional endeavors. To break down barriers, one should seek supportive groups, network with Black alums and mentors, and advocate for change on campus (Johnson, 2023). Ultimately, Black males may find attending a predominantly White institution challenging. However, they can conquer obstacles and succeed with perseverance and help (Johnson, 2023). Before I completed my undergraduate degrees, I studied at the City University of Seattle, Washington, and Chaminade University of Honolulu, Hawaii, and had a positive experience. By overcoming these obstacles, Black males can reach their full potential and positively influence their communities. Today's educational leaders and stakeholders must improve and provide more help for undergraduate students, particularly males of color.

In addition, PWIs must acknowledge and tackle the specific challenges Black men face and provide the essential resources and support systems for all students to succeed. By overcoming these obstacles, black males can reach their full potential and positively influence their communities. In short, today's educational leaders and stakeholders must improve and provide more help for undergraduate students, particularly males of color.

Gaps in the Literature

There is still a lack of institutional support and resources for first-generation and low-income Black male students attending PWIs. Educational leaders are still not doing enough to support people of color, particularly males, in higher education. There is also a lack of diversity to increase retention and graduation rates.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This qualitative research study explored the perceptions and experiences of first-generation Black male students PWIs who may lack the resources to persist and graduate. Past and present research still shows that many Black men from poorer neighborhoods may have fewer opportunities for connections to social capital and financial resources that can help them attend and succeed in college (Best Colleges, 2023). Patterson (2021) concluded that Black American males with low socioeconomic status face additional challenges in pursuing college degrees.

The literature review identified some reasons affecting the enrollment, retention, and success of men of color in higher education, such as a sense of belonging, support systems, hostile campus climates, employment challenges and financial concerns or lack of resources, basic needs, insecurities, and conflicts relating to gender and masculinity, to name a few. Although researchers know Black males' perceived challenges in higher education, they still lag behind their female counterparts in completing bachelor's degrees (Matthews-Whetstone, 2015). Brower (2015) stated that Black males have the lowest retention and completion rates among other ethnic groups. Racism, oppression, and marginalization mark the history of the Black experience in the United States by the dominant white culture (Coates, 2015; Kendi, 2016). Recent studies show an increasing focus on exploring the extent and quality of support systems for low-income students and first-year, first-generation Black male undergraduate students at predominantly White colleges.

Nelson et al. (2020) emphasized the difficulties that Black males encounter in higher education, such as psychological strain, racial discrimination, discriminatory beliefs, fear or hatred towards foreigners, and insufficient representation and fairness. Nelson et al. emphasized that students from low-income backgrounds frequently encounter financial difficulties because of insufficient familial help and institutional disparities, resulting in self-sufficiency and job instability. The study conducted by Nelson et al. emphasized the marginalization of mental health within the Black community, which leads to the development of depression among Black males and negatively affects their academic and social success.

Francois et al. (2023) found that Black students at mainly White institutions (PWIs) face racial microaggressions, which can have detrimental effects on their mental health and academic performance. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, people widely recognized the physiological and psychological ramifications of the new coronavirus epidemic.

Today's students, predominantly minority students, are learning how to navigate the COVID-19 era and racial trauma as Black students at predominantly White institutions. According to Dyer (2020), COVID-19 was affecting Black, Latino, and Native American populations harder than White communities. Studies reported that Black people are at increased risk within every aspect of the COVID-19 disease life span (for example, exposure to infection rates, the severity of the illness, access to care, hospitalizations, quality of healthcare, and death resulting from the structure and systemic

racism) (Devakumar et al., 2020; Lopez et al., 2021; Stuifzand et al., 2020). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions of higher learning must invest in programs to increase enrollment and retention of Black men because there is still much to be done to help this population succeed. This study highlighted the present issues, identified potential solutions or strategies, and framed ways to bring meaningful change to this phenomenon (Lucas, 2020). More importantly, this study may better support black men in higher education. However, current and past research continues to give limited insight into Black men's experiences and meeting their specific needs at (PWIs.

This study aimed to understand Black undergraduate students' experiences through critical race theory (CRT) regarding their perceived challenges and supports related to degree completion. CRT helps qualitatively explore students' experiences and sense of belonging at PWIs. In this study, I focused on improving graduation and retention rates and recommending retention strategies that may increase the graduation rate of undergraduate Black men. More specifically, I focused on creating an environment where undergraduate Black men who attend predominantly White institutions can thrive, feel welcome, and succeed as they pursue their educational journey. The literature review continues to show multiple barriers that impact Black students, particularly males. Therefore, this literature review will allow me to examine some of the reasons and challenges Black male students face while pursuing their four-year college programs.

Literature Search Strategy

Within five years of research, I used this study's current and past peer-reviewed articles from the Walden University online library. These databases included ProQuest search, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), textbooks, government websites, Sage Journals, Psych INFO, Research in Higher Education Journal, Inside Higher Ed, Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (HBHE), Journal of Black Males in Education (JAAME), ResearchGate, Wiley Online Library, and Google Scholar for open access to articles. The keywords used were Black males, Black men, predominantly White institutions, historically White institutions, higher education, postsecondary, racism, campus climate, racism, mentorship, and educational leadership programs.

Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Foundation

In this chapter, I provided a basic overview of relevant literature that outlines and explores how race and race-related issues influence Black male students' retention, academic success, and persistence at PWIs. This chapter describes the many perceived factors that affect Black students' college enrollment, retention, and graduation rate. More importantly, I explored the on-campus support for Black male students attending PWIs. This study expanded on previous scholars' work, who found a critical race theory approach to describe how race and race-related issues impact educational outcomes for Black male students. The primary goal of this study was to investigate Black males' perceptions, experiences, and perceived challenges, as well as what supports are available for students of color, particularly males attending predominantly White institutions. In

2014, Black men accounted for 4.3 % of total enrollment in higher education, the same

%age as in 1976 (Wood & Palmer, 2015). Studies have shown that many Black male

students continue to struggle to complete their college degrees. Lucas (2018) reported

that 34.1 % of Black males in the United States completed their undergraduate degrees.

Recently, Virginia Tech reported that Black male undergraduates were doing better than

most of their national counterparts (Virginia Tech, 2023).

Although higher education has experienced an increase in Black enrollment in the

past decades, Black men's completion rates continue to decrease. Various researchers

concluded that many Black college students are unprepared for higher education. A

recent study showed that Black males still experience obstacles in pursuing their college

degrees. Recent research contends that Black males cannot meet the individual academic

rigors and social college life at predominantly White institutions (Lucas, 2020). In this

qualitative study, I focused on perceived barriers to college persistence and strategies to

overcome those hurdles in earning a college degree.

For over two decades, Black male students' retention and persistence issues have

been a significant challenge for higher education. According to the literature, higher

education institutions have tried to improve their effective strategies by investing in

resources and implementing strategies to recruit Black male students. Often, Black men

experience negative stereotypes, microaggressions, structural racism, and racial injustice

because of a lack of college campus engagement. Racial microaggressions may cause

Black students to feel unwelcome, and they often experience isolation at PWIs. Black

PWI students frequently encounter prejudice, bigotry, and anti-Black sentiment on campus, according to Griffith et al. (2017). Research by Simmons (2019) found that Black men in higher education have lower academic achievement than their gender and racial peers. According to Strayhorn (2011), Black men face more significant challenges in completing their college degree programs compared with Black women in higher education. Past and present studies continue to show that Black men have the lowest graduation rates in higher education compared to other races in this population. In short, this population continues to fall behind their female counterparts and other racial groups in completing their undergraduate degrees.

NBC News (2021) reported that nationally, white students at public colleges are two and a half times more likely to graduate students and sixty % more likely to graduate than Latino students. This pervasive problem is alarming for Black students attending public universities. Black males at predominantly white colleges and universities face many challenges in seeking higher levels of education. This chapter's overall purpose was a CRT lens approach to describe how racism and race-related issues affect enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. Allen et al. (2018) asserted that more selective four-year institutions severely under-represent Black undergraduates. CRT literature helps explain how race, racism, and power shape Black student trajectories in higher education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

According to Solórzano and Yosso (2002), CRT challenges dominant frames that perpetuate White supremacy. It maintains the importance of race and racism as critical

components of United States society. CRT also seeks social justice and recognizes higher education as an oppressive and empowering space.

Literature Review Related Key Concepts

Critical Race Theory Overview

Critical Race Theory (CRT), which drew on society's past position on race and how that position influences the present and the future, served as the study's foundation. CRT helps academic leaders understand how cultural, political, economic, social, and legal factors intersect in an educational setting (Bell, 2003).CRT began in the mid-1970s. Lawyers, activists, and legal scholars refused to wait for the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s to protect people of color from oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Hiraldo, 2010).

In this study, I used CRT to describe the dilemmas faced by students of color, particularly men, in educational settings. CRT is a framework that may enable members of other groups to construct their reality, which could extend beyond the structures of the dominant group (Von Robertson & Chaney, 2017). I also used the framework to understand the structural issues that hinder persistence at predominantly White institutions. CRT can critique the ongoing lived experiences and societal racism that impact social change. Additionally, I examined CRT to address the racial inequalities in student outcomes and experiences at PWIs. Stakeholders have used CRT as one lens to reveal the various forms of racism that persist in today's educational system. Scholars and practitioners can extend the tenets of CRT to investigate race and racism in education,

offer insights, perspectives, and methods, and provide pedagogies that may guide efforts to identify, analyze, and transform the structural and cultural aspects of education (Brooms, 2017). Critical race theory is an appropriate framework for this study because it focuses on multiple issues that concern people of color in social science and equity in education (Lucas, 2018). CRT offers a way to understand race-colorless social and racial power structures in education.

In summary, researchers can use CRT as an analytical framework to gain insight into experiences, practices, and situations related to social justice in education. Today's critical race theorists can analyze Black male students, who often encounter negative or racist stereotypes and microaggressions on college and university campuses. Essential theorists of race can use a platform to challenge the racial nuances and perceptions within higher education.

Academic and Social Barriers

Black students continue to fall behind their peers academically and socially in educational settings. Recent and past research still shows that black students continue to face incidents of racism, isolation, and alienation at predominantly White Institution (PWI) campuses. Black students, especially males, experience significant barriers when pursuing higher education. However, many researchers have identified factors and perceived challenges that impact Black students' success in higher education, such as first-year negative learning experiences—for example, educational disparities, inequalities, financial difficulties, and a lack of academic preparation. According to

Wood and Palmer (2015), Black men have long been underrepresented at the collegiate

level. Dulabaum (2016) argued that male students of color face significant challenges in

higher education. On average, Black male students are less successful than other racial or

ethnic groups, including Black women. Elgin Community College (2010) reported that

Black and Latino male students have the lowest persistence rates and are likelier to drop

out than any other racial or ethnic group. These barriers continue to be problematic for

students of color.

One of the perceived barriers for Black male students was that they have often

experienced a feeling that they are the problem and how institutions see them (Brooms,

2017). According to recent literature, perceived barriers restrict Black students from

attending colleges and universities. Brooms and Davis (2017) claimed that Black men,

both in and outside of the classroom, commonly experience rejection or antagonism from

their White peers, which frequently results in denigration. They may cut themselves off

from the primarily White university population. Many Black students, particularly males,

still face various barriers, causing a decline in enrollment, retention, and completion. In

short, students of color nationwide are noticeably less likely to persist than their

counterparts. Black males and students of low socioeconomic status also still face many

obstacles when pursuing college degrees (Patterson, 2021). Future leaders must commit

to removing the identified barriers that prevent today's Black, Hispanic, Latino, and

Native American students from accessing educational opportunities. Racial equity is still

essential to removing perceived obstacles in higher education.

Examining the Status of Black Men

Over the past twenty years, Black males' troubled status in higher education has gained enormous attention at national conferences, in the media, in society, and in published scholarship. Research on Black men's experiences in higher education has increased. Educators, stakeholders, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers are concerned about the lack of progress that Black males are experiencing (Wood & Palmer, 2015). Compared to their overall proportion in the general college-age population, Black males remained underrepresented at the collegiate level. Black women have exhibited higher enrollment rates than their counterparts at undergraduate and post-baccalaureate levels. This remains the prevailing pattern.

The Obama administration launched the My Brother's Keeper White House Initiative in response to the growing scholarly and policy interest in Black boys (Castnell et al., 2017). Accessing higher education remains challenging for Black students, particularly at four-year colleges. Most students of color are prepared to enter college but still need to prepare to complete it. To compete in today's workforce, students must have a college degree to navigate the global market. Higher education research on Black males revolves around academic preparation, access, retention, persistence, and success. Harris (2018) discussed a unique set of influences that interfere with Black males' college progression and success more than other races and ethnic groups. Harris's study contended that gender differences in educational attainment have become more apparent across the national and international landscape regarding male youth losing pace with

females in many disciplines. There is a need to expand research on higher education access, equity, and excellence. Addressing racial disparities nationwide is also crucial.

Educational data showed that the gender discrepancy in academic performance and achievement is substantially more significant among Blacks than in other groups (Harris, 2018). Black and Latino male youths show lower educational performance and graduation rates than males in different groups (Matthews, 2014; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), as cited in Harris (2018). These trends stem from race and class inequalities, inadequate college preparation in high school, a lack of mentor advocates, and chronic unemployment.

For a diverse student body, a lack of diversity in higher education may provide challenges, according to ABC News (2021). Factors such as peer relationships, curriculum, faculty mentors, diversity in the student body, professors, staff, and institutions that fail to support Black men all contribute to the restriction of their academic and social experiences, ultimately impacting their ability to continue in college. Perceptions of educational outcomes among Black men may be influenced by their attitudes toward their campus, how they perceive themselves in the academic setting, and whether or not institutions welcome them. According to Brooms (2017), many college students struggle to navigate campus and continue their studies until graduation. Previous studies have demonstrated the significance of positive campus integration and institutional fit as successful retention strategies for college students. Brooms and Davis (2017) found that most students declared that Black students face various challenges on

campus. The authors' findings showed that divisions on campus were prominent for Black men. Another barrier that hinders Black males is a lack of opportunities for social integration and race relations on campus (Brooms & Davis, 2017).

Black men continue to face racialized and gendered identities on college campuses. They incessantly experience stigmatization in society, and the college environment has not been an exception. Still, there is a gap in the literature on removing race-related barriers and increasing institutional support to meet the unique needs of Black men pursuing a college degree. With the many racial challenges Black males face during their college experiences, they continue to need support from their family, community, colleagues, and their respective institutions of higher learning. Various researchers showed that Black male undergraduate students' access, persistence, retention, and graduation continue to be significant issues in higher education (Brooms, 2018a; Hall, 2017; Kim & Hargrove, 2013). Today's researchers must continue to identify the extent of campus climate, social injustice, sense of belonging, and academic performance of Black male college students.

Black Males at PWIs

The saturated literature shows that Black men continue to experience a hostile campus climate at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Based on the literature, evidence shows that Black men experience alienation, isolation, and a lack of a sense of belongingness—constantly threatened by reinforcing racist stereotypes (Wood & Palmer, 2015). The academic success of Black men at PWIs is seriously threatened by

stereotypes, claim Harper and Kuykendall (2012). PWIS must continue to enhance the campus environment and offer support to enable Black men's growth and development, given the lived experiences of Black men at these institutions (Wood & Palmer, 2015). According to other academics, the academic climate at PWIs is chilly, unwelcoming, and unpleasant for Black male college students.

Hines et al. (2021) stated that Black males were often underrepresented in postsecondary education settings and frequently encountered many barriers to college. The authors' investigation aimed to understand the pre-college and college experiences of Black males who successfully enrolled in postsecondary institutions. They conducted a focused group interview with seven Black males in a living and learning community to share their unique experiences before and during enrollment at a highly selective, predominantly White institution. Their thematic findings offered specific recommendations on how school counselors can help Black males prepare for and eventually enroll in higher education. They also discovered the need for more research on improving Black men's college enrollment outcomes and the role of school counselors in this process.

Exploring additional literature, Black males have the lowest 6-year graduation rate compared to all other racial demographics (NCES, 2019). Hall (2017) provided information about Black and Hispanic males having lower secondary and postsecondary education graduation rates than their white peers. This study is essential to know the factors contributing to the persistence of Black and Hispanic undergraduate males

enrolled at a predominantly white institution in the region. Haywood et al. (2016) focused on the challenges and experiences of this target group (Black male students). The study results suggested that Black males strongly feel culturally connected and included within the campus environment.

This study is critical because it shows the implications for low-income African male students seeking a college degree at a PWI. Lewis (2016) focused on the research methods used to understand Black males' transitional experiences in college and their social, interpersonal, and intrapersonal experiences. This study, however, is critical because it focuses on understanding the differences between Black male college experiences of Black males who attended PWIs and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). However, Lucas (2018) further focused on the impact of the current level of support that Black males receive relative to the challenges they face attending PWIs. This study is essential to understand why PWIs cannot implement programs and support for Black males in higher education, particularly PWIs.

According to Robertson and Chaney (2017), Black students, especially men, experienced psychological challenges from negative or hostile white campuses. Ottley et al. (2019) stated that black men find it difficult to persist and complete a college degree and provided reasons. This study may help colleges and universities explore student and administrator perceptions of retention strategies for Black male students attending a predominately White institution (PWI).

According to Boyd and Mitchell (2018), stereotypes frequently lead to the creation of hostile conditions for Black males in collegiate settings. The authors sought to break the deficit narrative surrounding Black males in college. They highlighted how Black males persist despite facing stereotypes. Boyd's and Mitchell's study included six participants. Their study examined participants through naturalistic observations, articulating students' stereotypes and experiences that shaped their future endeavors. In addition, they used strategies to dispel stereotypes and persist through terrifying experiences. The findings revealed that the participants dealt with internalized feelings caused by stereotypes; stereotypes reinforced them in various ways, and they persisted despite stereotypes by confronting, ignoring, and dispelling stereotypes associated with stereotypes (Boyd & Mitchell, 2018).

Black Males at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

In the initial iteration, Black males encounter academic and social obstacles, mainly because of the prevalence of race-based microaggressions (Lucas, 2020). Research has shown that historically, Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have continued to provide structural support and often seek additional resources for Black students' first year until graduation. Studies have shown that Black students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) possess more robust academic self-perceptions, exhibit greater satisfaction with their college experience, and have better engagement levels than their peers of the same race attending PWI (Wood & Palmer, 2015). HBCUs overwhelmingly still support Black students; however, researchers have

shown that many HBCUs have high attrition rates because they disproportionately enroll more first-generation, low-income, and Pell-eligible students. They found that more women enrolled in and graduated from HBCUs than Black men, despite HBCUs serving as essential institutions that facilitate access and success for Black students (Wood and Palmer, 2015).

Despite the poor portrayal and preconceptions surrounding Black men in higher education, some Black men persist in obtaining undergraduate degrees, as highlighted by Brown and Sacco-Bene (2018). Education has always played a central role in Black communities. Therefore, they continue to pursue their degrees at HBCUs and PWIs despite challenges that threaten to impede their academic success. In mainly White community colleges, the persistence of Black students has emerged as a concern in higher education, as they have the lowest graduation rate compared to other racial groups (USED, 2019). Community colleges continue to serve most Black male students enrolled in postsecondary education (Wood & Palmer, 2015). Wood and Palmer showed differences between Black men in four-year institutions and their counterparts in community colleges. This population is older than eighteen years, married with dependents, and has full-time jobs or careers that may have delayed their enrollment in postsecondary education. This population may not have higher education expectations beyond a two-year degree. Research has shown that community colleges have played an instrumental role in giving Black male students access to postsecondary opportunities.

They do not always persist in graduating or transferring to a four-year college or university.

According to the researchers, Black men have the most inferior graduation rates compared to males from other racial or ethnic groups, with a mere 16 % graduating within three years (Wood & Palmer, 2015). They concluded that using federal data to understand Black males' success in community college was challenging. Studies showed that Black men in community colleges perceived faculty and staff members as unsupportive and not invested in their success (Bush & Bush, 2010; Wood, 2012b). According to the authors, teachers should pay attention to students, listen to their concerns, and take action to support their academic progress.

According to the National Student Clearinghouse, male undergraduate enrollment decreased by 10.2 % from 2019 to 2021. This decline is higher than the general decrease of 7.8 % and significantly higher than the 23.5 % decrease among two-year colleges. There has been a sharp drop in college enrollment and persistence among Black and Latino men (Kim, 2022). According to research by Kim (2022) in Newsweek Magazine, there was a significant decline in the enrollment of Latino males, with an overall decrease of 10.3 % and a 19.7 %decrease, specifically among community college students. Enrollment numbers for men have sharply declined in recent years. Black men, especially, have enrolled in college at lower rates. In short, Black men have historically experienced unique barriers to fair access, job entry, and degree completion. Black men continue to face discrimination and obstacles that can inhibit their ability to enroll and

remain in college. Critical race theory (CRT) can investigate institutional reasons for enrollment and retention declines. There are many reasons or factors for the decrease in enrollment and high attrition rates among Black male students attending PWIs.

Factors Affecting Black Male Students at PWIs

There is a scarcity of Black male educators in higher education in the United States. Jeter and Melendez (2022) asserted that many elements contribute to this substantial issue. The critical factor is the scarcity of Black male educators who can act as role models for Black male students. Lucas (2020) conducted a study to analyze the level of support available at three PWIs in Northeastern Pennsylvania and its influence on the social, individual, and academic performance of Black males attending these institutions. Studies have shown that many Black men have achieved baccalaureate degrees, pursued advanced education, and contributed to workforce diversification (Beale et al., 2019). Predominantly, Whites have not successfully provided consistent support and kept Black students, especially Black men. Black men can succeed if support structures are available at primarily white institutions in their first year. Research has also shown that without access to Black male role models, mentors, and peers on campus, Black men may feel alone and isolated, especially at PWIs (Graham & Williams, 2022). PWI's support structures can have an enormous positive impact on persistence to graduation (Lucas, 2020). The institution can increase retention rates and improve gaps between black male students by explicitly dedicating support services and resources to black students. Scholars and practitioners must identify and address multiple perspectives that may affect

educational outcomes. Black male graduation rates from college have steadily declined over the last twenty years (Lucas, 2020). Researchers have examined potential reasons for the consistent gap in post-secondary academic outcomes between Black and White students attending predominantly White institutions.

Pre-Enrollment Factors

Past studies indicated that many Black families with lower income levels were underfunded and underperforming in public schools (Morgan & American, 2018; Perry et al., 2003; Scott et al., 2016). Studies also showed that lower funding levels for schools with the highest %ages of Black students often diminished educational opportunities (The Education Trust, 2014; Patrick et al., 2020). According to Hobson et al. (2021), the continuous impact of this issue results in inadequate college preparedness among Black pupils. Research has shown that Black students in their first year of college achieve lower scores on the American College Test (ACT) compared to their white counterparts. The ACT assesses high school student's preparedness level for college and serves as a standardized metric for colleges and universities to evaluate all candidates. Hobson et al. (2021) developed these fundamental English, reading, math, and science assessments to forecast achievement in introductory college courses.

Post-Enrollment Factors

In their study, Nichols and Evans-Bell (2017) found that Black students often face financial, intellectual, and social obstacles, making it challenging to complete their degrees. Poor academic preparation usually leads to placing Black students, particularly

first-year students, in remediation programs (Hobson et al., 2021). Family income limits

the adverse impact on Black students' 6-year college graduation rates (Hobson et al.,

2021). However, another crucial factor that negatively affects Black student performance

and graduation rates is the lack of Black faculty members (Field, 2017; Koch & Zahedi,

2019).

Psychosocial Factors

Many Black students possess the motivation and qualifications to attend college

but encounter significant challenges in attaining their educational goals. Recent research

contends that Black males cannot meet the rigors of academic and social college

environments at PWIs. (Lucas, 2020). Psychological factors affect racial and ethnic

minoritized students' change to college campus environments and contribute to their

persistence in college. Khan (2017) highlighted the significance of this finding,

specifically for Black men in higher education. Unaddressed mental health conditions can

cause further tensions and obstacles. Huerta et al. (2021) discovered that Black men with

ambitions to get a graduate-level degree have more excellent perseverance rates in their

undergraduate study, particularly among black and Latino men. According to Wood

(2012), many black males leave college after their first year because of a lack of support

systems, including academic support, peer tutoring, cultural awareness, and diverse

faculty and staff (Lucas, 2020).

Past studies explored Black college students' retention behavior. They identified

the effect of different social, psychological, and other factors on students' retention

behaviors. Khan (2017) explored how social and psychological factors affect Black undergraduate college students' dropout behavior in this study. Khan found that most students have part-time jobs and the need to support themselves, their children, and other family responsibilities that can push them to a breaking point. Overall, this study concluded that higher stress levels, such as childhood poverty, lack of parental involvement or support, no mentor, peer support, and lack of self-motivation, can increase the likelihood of college dropout (Khan, 2017). In addition, this study's rationale stated a high dropout rate among Black undergraduate students. Therefore, understanding students' psychological factors, particularly Black male students, is crucial for developing effective interventions and preventative measures for their success in higher education (Khan, 2017).

Social Factors

Social factors encompass several aspects, such as active participation in social activities, contact with peers, and the impact of family dynamics (Garrett et al., 2017). Social integration is a crucial part of institutional culture. According to research, social factors can contribute to a student's individualized stress or success in higher education. Students who experience positive cultural integration can access structural resources. However, students who experience opposing social challenges may drop out before graduation. Research still shows that when students receive acknowledgment or recognition from their families, they will probably persist to graduation (Garrett et al., 2017). Students who take courses on building relationships between men of color and

faculty members can learn how to increase their sense of belonging (Huerta et al., 2021).

Research also shows that social networks can affect student retention. For example, a

network that includes supportive institutions, faculty, staff, employees, family, peers,

upper-class students, and student organizations can be helpful for all students, notably

Black male students attending predominantly White institutions.

Pre-Enrollment and Post-Enrollment Factors

Due to the higher prevalence of Black males coming from lower socioeconomic

origins (Best Colleges, 2023), finance continues to play a crucial role in determining the

success of Black men in college. Many studies revealed that public schools, under-funded

underfunded and underperforming, served many Black families with lower income levels

(Morgan & Americana, 2018; Perry et al., 2003; Scott et al., 2016). Nichols and Evans-

Bell (2017) found that many Black students encounter a unique combination of financial,

academic, and social challenges that can make it difficult for them to succeed. Limited

family income and financial resources can make it challenging to complete a degree if

students want to continue funding their college after four, five, or six years.

A lack of Black faculty members is another crucial factor that negatively affects

Black students' academic performance and graduation rates (Field, 2017; Koch & Zahedi,

2019). According to data from the United States Department of Education (2019), only 6

% of black full-time faculty members were at degree-granting postsecondary schools in

the fall of 2018. Museus et al. (2008) documented that a campus climate that does not

foster a welcoming, engaging, and supportive environment for Black students affects

their degree completion negatively. In short, a hostile campus racial climate can affect a sense of belonging.

Socioeconomic Status

A student's socioeconomic status (SES) remains a significant factor in their ability to enroll and persist. Patterson (2021) said that Black American males and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds encounter many challenges while striving to get their college degrees. This study examined the perceptions of campus participation, recreation, and leisure roles among Black American male undergraduates from low socioeconomic backgrounds, focusing on their social integration. Patterson stated that young Black men have a lower degree attainment rate compared to their classmates. Patterson also noted that campus involvement, recreational activities, and leisure pursuits significantly influence students' overall experiences.

In this study, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development framed the qualitative method employed, as examined by Patterson (2021). Patterson interviewed seventeen participants who expressed feelings of loneliness and cultural dichotomy. Patterson postulated a hypothesis that, under specific circumstances, may cause social seclusion and cultural paradox, yet, in alternative scenarios, it facilitates students in surmounting obstacles encountered in college. The multifaceted functions of leisure pertain to incorporating Black American male undergraduates from low socioeconomic backgrounds into society, who experience many challenges in pursuing higher education. Black men frequently encounter resistance in both academic and social environments.

The multifaceted functions of leisure apply to young Black American males of low socioeconomic status (SES) origins who are actively seeking supportive relationships and enjoyable experiences while facing and surmounting obstacles in a White community. Research showed that campus involvement, recreation, and leisure activities positively impact students by promoting social adaptation, fostering relationships, and facilitating personal and social development (Patterson, 2021). Patterson's study focused on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development, which significantly affected the qualitative method employed in this study. Bronfenbrenner's (1976) ecological model of human development offered an educational viewpoint that explored how individuals develop through their interactions with their local environment and the influence of broader societal influences on the development process. A four-year predominantly white institution (PWI) in the southeastern region of the United States carried out this investigation. According to the literature, there is a requirement to improve the comprehension of social integration issues Black male students face, further using critical race theory. This will help them understand their daily difficulties while obtaining a college degree.

Socioeconomic factors affect students' performance, according to research. Students with better grades come from robust socioeconomic levels, receive more support from their parents, family members, or friends, and have previously attended preschool. Research studies still conclude that socioeconomic status determines students' academic performance and educational outcomes. First-generation and low-socioeconomic students

face compound challenges when pursuing their college degrees. First-generation students

are those whose parents still need a four-year or bachelor's degree in the United States.

By examining the various elements that impact choosing a college, such as family,

classmates, high school educators, and mentor programs, researchers and practitioners

can better understand how these aspects shape students' experiences (Cabrera et al.,

2014). First-generation students have enrolled in college at lower rates and display

different persistence and degree attainment.

To enhance undergraduate persistence rates, educational leaders should recognize

these characteristics and implement suitable interventions to ensure individuals have

access to an education that is both inexpensive and of high quality (Reynolds & Susan,

2020). Colleges and universities still cannot fulfill their potential as catalysts for social

mobility, particularly for students belonging to marginalized racial and ethnic groups.

Institutions must intensify their dedication to creating a secure and inclusive atmosphere

on their campuses, conducive to the success of individuals from all racial and cultural

backgrounds. It is imperative to enhance educational achievement and graduation rates

for underrepresented minority students, particularly males, in higher education.

Examining the factors that impact the academic achievement of Black males is of utmost

importance.

Educational Leadership Perspective

Black male students in higher education require unwavering instructional

leadership. In 2009, President Obama committed to the American people to raise the

number of community college graduates by five million by 2020 (Wood, 2012). President

Obama's commitment sparked widespread recognition of colleges' crucial role in the

global economy. Wood (2012) emphasized the importance of education and getting a

degree so that students can effectively participate in the international market economy.

Lucas (2018) highlighted the low success percentages of minority male students,

specifically Black male students, which has received significant criticism. Cumming et al.

(2023) assert that a faculty and staff that are diverse and receive ample support are crucial

for promoting equity and inclusion in college settings. Research showed a favorable

correlation between having a more racially or ethnically diverse faculty and higher

graduation rates among underrepresented minority students (Stout et al., 2018). Faculty

diversity remains a challenge, particularly in leadership roles.

Wood (2012) contended that some of these organizations faced criticism for

granting Black males an entryway but fell short of offering sufficient mechanisms for

social and economic mobility and help for achieving success. The literature research

corroborates the fact that many Black students, namely Black men, encounter obstacles

associated with the White culture or cultural disharmony, resulting in their alienation,

marginalization, and lack of acceptance at PWIs. Cultural dissonance refers to the

heightened tension or stress experienced by students because of the differences between

their home culture and the culture of their university (Lucas, 2018).

Economic Perspective

When assessing the economic consequences of the present condition of African American males in higher education, researchers must consider multiple issues (Lucas, 2018). Prior studies have portrayed this group of young males as unfavorable, with society frequently emphasizing their lack of accomplishments rather than recognizing their academic and social progress. Although Black males face challenges at primarily white institutions (PWIs), they persist in overcoming adversities (Lucas, 2018). Lucas challenged the deficit model portrayal that assumes that all Black male students face identical challenges in terms of their abilities, resources, and experience on (PWI campuses (Lucas, 2018). Multiple studies have shown that public schools that lack sufficient funding and cannot meet performance standards serve Black families with lower socioeconomic status disproportionately (Morgan & Amerikaner, 2018; Perry et al., 2003; Scott et al., 2016).

Although Black men may have comparable financial challenges, socioeconomic status, and lack of family support, it is crucial to acknowledge that not all the hurdles they confront are equivalent (Lucas, 2018). Receiving more robust support from parents, guardians, peers, and academic advisors during the transition to college can lead to a stronger belief in one's educational capabilities, greater satisfaction with academic performance, higher aspirations for success in college, and an increased likelihood of remaining enrolled for first-generation students (Havlik et al., 2020).

Sociological Perspectives

The literature research shows that Black male college students exist within a multifaceted social milieu (Patterson, 2021). Critical race theory (CRT) is a sociological approach that effectively facilitates discussions on progressive battles, racial inequalities, and the efforts of legal and academic authorities to bring about social change. CRT aims to confront and rectify the unfairness in the public education system, specifically those belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups (Lucas, 2018). Most CRT scholars are individuals belonging to racial minority groups who aim to question how the law and society shape the concept of race and the distribution of racial influence and authority (Lucas, 2018). Critical race theorists prioritize upholding the principles of the rule of law and ensuring that they uphold constitutional provisions for equal protection of the laws. They denounce the system of White supremacy. Lucas suggested that predominantly white institutions (PWIs) can explicitly address the challenges faced by Black male students in higher education using (CRT.

Critical race theorists and scholars understand that people who use the law do not always take a neutral position because they are part of the problem. However, essential theorists of race aim to find the inadequacies and educational disparities that violate civil rights. Therefore, CRT is an appropriate framework for this study because it focuses on many issues that continue to affect Black communities in the social sciences and equity in education. CRT is also a framework that ensures equity in education. CRT, the Black Lives Matter Movement /BLM, and the COVID-19 pandemic are crucial topics facing

today's higher education. Although CRT is the focus of this study, other educational scholars have disagreed with the reasons for low enrollment, retention, and graduation rates among Black male students, particularly male students in higher education.

Anti-Deficit Perspective and Deficit Thinking

Harper (2010) developed the anti-deficit framework, which informed psychology, sociology, and education theories. This approach challenges the mode of research inquiry that explores Black male educational attainment from a deficit perspective. The anti-perspective highlights Black men's many challenges on college and university campuses, focusing on factors contributing to their academic and social success. This deficit perspective framework blames academic failures on family structure, linguistic background, and a lack of cultural competencies (Valencia, 2010). Valencia argued that ongoing class and racial constructs are why underrepresented groups lack persistence and academic success.

Valencia blamed the victim for school failures instead of examining how schools are structured to prevent poor students, particularly students of color, from gaining access to learning. However, deficit thinking fails to acknowledge the institutional and systemic inequities contributing to academically unsuccessful students (Manthei, 2016). Deficit thinking maintains that students from historically oppressed populations handle the challenges and injustices they face (Bruton & Robles-Pina, 2009; Haggis, 2006; McKay & Devin, 2016). These perspectives continue to serve as tools that maintain hegemonic systems (controlled by others) and cannot place accountability on oppressive structures,

policies, and practices within the education system. It ignores systemic influences that shape disparities in social and educational outcomes (Chambers & Spikes, 2016; Ford, 2014; Valencia, 2010). Deficit thinking could prevent policymakers, educators, leaders, and communities from focusing on the actual root causes of minoritized and marginalized groups' challenges (Davis & Museus, 2019).

Studies have shown a significant correlation between increased retention and persistence among undergraduate students of color and early familiarity with graduate school (Luedke et al., 2019; Ramirez, 2011, 2013). Today, educational leaders can enable Black males to achieve success by recognizing their strengths and employing asset-based strategies instead of focusing on their weaknesses when interacting with them (USC Rossier, 2021). Educators and practitioners must know internal preconceptions and deficiency perspectives to establish culturally engaged campuses. Faculty members' changing curricula can achieve this by incorporating greater diversity and cultural relevance, particularly race and gender inequalities. Schools must facilitate intentional discussions regarding financial help and motivation to promote the growth of ethnic student organizations, amplifying the advantages of peer-led social support for students belonging to minority communities. In addition, it is imperative to develop programming that includes safe environments where men of color may come together to provide support for Black men in engaging in meaningful conversations about culturally significant subjects about adulthood and masculinity.

Higher education institutions should use social media platforms to teach and cultivate diverse and inclusive communities, as the adverse effects of negative social media can significantly influence students' psycho-sociocultural identity. Yao (2018) stated that social media offers a novel method for teaching anti-racist pedagogy and makes it readily available to the general population.

Educational leaders' actions are crucial in contributing to academic discussions on the significance of practical strategies and their implementation to enhance Black men's persistence and retention rates in diverse higher education environments (USC Rossier, 2021). Today's scholars and practitioners must address core systems of oppression and systemic inequities that permeate social and educational institutions. In contrast, critical race theorists analyze deficit thinking and highlight its adverse effects on oppressive systems and inequities in society and education.

Sense of Belonging

A significant number of Black and Latino pupils may choose to leave school prematurely because of feelings of exclusion or isolation, as reported by NBC in 2021. In the past twenty years, the importance of feeling a sense of belonging has become recognized as a crucial factor in the ability of college students to continue their studies. A sense of belonging pertains to students' psychological attachment to their community (Hurtado & Catheter, 1997).

According to Strayhorn (2019), a sense of belonging is a fundamental human requirement and a driving force that affects behaviors. Likewise, the racial atmosphere on

campus, adverse encounters, prejudice, and a lack of help from the university can all affect students' academic achievements, mental health, and feelings of inclusion. Multiple studies have shown that disparities in education on college campuses hinder the sense of belonging for minority students. Museums and Yi (2017) asserted that poor rates of persistence and degree still plague higher education completion, with students of color persisting at significantly lower rates compared to their White counterparts. Museums and Yi discovered a correlation between a stronger sense of belonging and a higher likelihood of persisting until graduation. The authors found that campus environments that are culturally relevant and responsive have the potential to either promote or impede a sense of belonging. Researchers posited that a campus climate that fosters cultural engagement could affect the development of a strong sense of belonging in higher education.

Campus Engagement

An examination of the literature revealed that predominately White institutions do not provide a welcoming environment for Black guys. McCall and Castles (2020) investigated the experiences and feelings of Black transfer students in a historically White university regarding their sense of belonging. The study examined the impact of support services, absence of support, and personnel on Black students' lived experiences and student engagement at a specific college. In their research, titled "A Place for Me? Black Transfer Student Involvement on the Campus of a Predominantly White Institution in the Midwest," certain students expressed cultural disparities. In contrast, others

expressed contentment with the help and initiatives provided by the university. The author's analysis of the collected data revealed several key themes, including the perspectives of the campus community, the extent of student involvement, the sense of belonging, the establishment of relationships, the role of staff, the level of university support, and the adequacy of support provided to these students.

The problem of educating Black male students for academic pursuits has been a topic of intense controversy throughout history. The limited services caused distressing encounters and profound animosity. This study revealed insufficient university services and support in retaining and assisting Black students.

Recent studies have found that students of color have more difficulty adjusting to the campus environment. As a result, they may be less engaged and less likely to persist through college. A sense of belonging and involvement in campus activities and organizations could influence Black students' decisions to attend a predominantly white institution (PWI). Today's students must access educational resources and services to help them navigate their new environment. With the rise of Black Lives Matter, Black students are still wary of campus life (McCall &Castles, 2020).

Patterson et al. (2019) shed light on the roles that campus engagement and recreation played in the experience of Black male undergraduates from low socioeconomic status (SES). This study is critical because the results suggest that intentional work by PWIs to engage with Black males from low SES backgrounds related to campus recreation could bolster students' persistence and campus graduation rates and

facilitate social and psychological growth. Richardson et al. (2019) examined universities enrolling the highest number of Black males in education degree programs. The findings highlighted increased enrollment of Black men in education degree programs at predominantly white institutions and online universities. The researchers concluded that there is a counter-narrative that validates Black men's presence in education programs and the utilization of enrollment data to plan for future recruitment. Robertson (2017) focused on the experiences of Black males at a predominantly White institution (PWI). This study is critical because it addresses the Black males' subtle and overt racism, racial microaggressions, and the devaluation of their race-related course content—who successfully adjusted, maintained good grades, and survived in a PWI environment.

Lewis et al. (2021) examined the unstructured feedback provided by students of color regarding their encounters with racial microaggressions and the detrimental impact of these encounters on their sense of inclusion within the campus community. The data analysis in this study revealed several prominent themes, such as the sense of intellectual inferiority and the frequent dismissal of pupils of color in the classroom. The results suggested that individuals belonging to racial minority groups exhibited a deficiency in empathy. These open talks frequently reveal the limited familiarity of White students with the real-life experiences of persons of color, leading to a lack of empathy and the tendency to view them as outsiders.

This study also used critical race theory to examine the experiences of students of color, including Black, Asian American, Latinx, and mixed-race students, with racial

microaggressions at a PWI. Lewis et al. (2021) employed open-ended qualitative responses to investigate the impact of racial microaggressions on students' sense of belonging to a PWI. The results revealed that Black students reported a notably higher occurrence of racial microaggressions compared to other ethnic groups. Students who feel valued, accepted, and included in a community may increase their campus engagement and have a sense of belonging. Engaging with peers, staff, and faculty fosters a sense of commitment and dedication. Researchers should center the voices of students of color to better understand the negative effect of a hostile racial climate on students of color (Lewis et al., 2021). Higher education institutions should implement effective initiatives to foster a strong sense of belonging and retention among all students, specifically focusing on Black males. Higher education officials have a dedication to fostering a diverse and inclusive university environment. There is a scarcity of Black male educators in higher education in the United States.

Impact of the Black Lives Matter

In 2020, the Black Lives Matter Movement experienced a significant resurgence, bringing attention to the systemic injustices that disproportionately affect Black Americans, particularly Black males (Jeter & Melendez, 2022). The ongoing statewide protests highlight the imperative to address the persistent impact of slavery, discrimination, racism, and segregation in the United States. Higher education is not exempt from this relentless malignancy. In 2015, students engaged in protests at ninety predominantly White colleges, which garnered national attention because of the presence

of hostile racial climates, persistent racism, and apparent inequalities that many Black students encountered (Allen et al., 2018). A college degree guarantees economic and social progress and often leads to equal possibilities for all persons. Unfortunately, subsequent cohorts within the Black community continue to endure the weight of this enduring structure of racial disparity and unwavering racism (Burke, 2020). Burke elaborated on the fact that racial inequality and racism have had a significant impact on all aspects of society, including family dynamics, economy, generational wealth, education, and social capital. For many years, higher education institutions have frequently replicated and sustained racial disparities. (Swanson et al., 2021). According to Swanson et al. (2021), disparities impact individuals belonging to the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities. According to Harper (2010), most colleges and universities have tried to enhance diversity and conditions for minority groups. However, schools have not successfully resolved specific issues, especially those encountered by distinct racial and ethnic groups in higher education. Harper also acknowledged that Black individuals have historically faced many obstacles when pursuing higher education.

The education system is not exempt from the pervasive presence of racism in American culture. Researchers assert that contemporary Black students continue to be affected by these disparities, which serve as a perpetual manifestation of broader institutional racism, anti-Black sentiment, and caste divisions throughout the United States. Burke (2020) argued that the persistent existence of racism and inequality can be

traced to two main factors: internal characteristics and institutional structures, notably among White groups. Black men frequently lack emotional autonomy. Thompkins-Jones (2021) stated that Black men still experience campus as a subtly and overtly hostile environment. There is a need to address these disparities nationwide with post-secondary institutions, policymakers, and researchers to recognize Black students' experiences in higher education. Institutions of higher learning must sustain a commitment to anti-racist tactics and biases. The literature contains many findings that highlight the troubling experiences of Black men at PWIs.

Campbell et al. (2019) found that Black students at PWIs can spend considerable energy and time dealing with feelings of alienation, frustration, and a lack of campus support. Often, Black students experience separation, racial stressors, unsupportive relationships with staff and faculty, and negative feelings of isolation. According to Campbell et al., not all Black students in universities with a large White student body have personally encountered racial prejudice. For Black college students, race still counts (Campbell et al., 2019). Racism and encounters with racial microaggressions remain pertinent concerns for individuals of color who are seeking higher education. For instance, a Black male student may be commonly seen by others as either an unintelligent athlete or as a high-risk student who is more prone to engage in criminal activities (Best Colleges, 2023).

Black men are more prone to disengaging from their studies when they perceive a lack of recognition and appreciation for their identity, abilities, and intelligence within

the educational setting. A significant number of Black students cannot complete their education in (PWIs because faculty members perceive them as academically deficient and having low aspirations for educational achievement. Additional data showed that faculty members at PWIs hold low expectations and harbor stereotyped beliefs about the intellectual capabilities of black men (Wood & Palmer, 2015). One major problem at PWIs is that students feel devalued because of a lack of connection with faculty and staff. Black students, especially Black males, experience a higher level of overload and stress by demonstrating their intellectual capabilities compared to White students. According to Wood and Palmer (2015), Black students were more likely to seek support from Black faculty members because of their experiences with White faculty members.

The competitive nature of PWIs can act as an additional obstacle to the academic achievement of Black men (Wood & Palmer, 2015). According to Harper (2013), the %age of Black males in the United States who did not finish their college degrees was 34.1%, which is higher than their White counterparts (Lucas, 2018). A primary issue regarding the academic achievement of black male students in predominantly White institutions (PWIs) has been their perception and experience of the campus environment. Black males' beliefs and experiences can significantly influence their college journeys, affecting several aspects of their personal, professional, social, and academic lives (Brooms, 2017). Considering the ongoing importance of race in the United States and within higher education institutions, it is imperative that all students feel included and achieve positive results.

Within the Black community, the educational achievements of Black American males are pretty poor, and this issue remains a critical problem in our nation. Joblessness, involvement in criminal organizations, acts of violence, imprisonment, and generational poverty, which researchers have linked to the challenge of accessing and achieving higher education, hinder this group's progress (Harris, 2018). Von-Roberts and Chaney (2017) stated that the K-12 education system providing unpleasant experiences could be attributed to the low enrollment of Black males in mainly White institutions (PWIs). Chaney (2017). Lopez and Jean-Marie (2021) discovered that anti-Black racism and White supremacy have a severe effect on people's lives and educational achievements.

Benjamin's (2011) assertion asserted that anti-Black racism mainly targeted individuals of Black ethnicity. The researchers investigated how anti-blackness and anti-Black racism was clearly evident in school environments, as well as in teaching, learning, and leadership practices (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Lopez and Jean-Marie discovered that education and schooling serve as breeding grounds for anti-blackness and anti-Black racism. Lopez and Jean-Marie employed CRT to substantiate their framework and conceptualize their research and ideas regarding race and racism in education and schooling. Thus, CRT is a multi-dimensional framework that acknowledges the existence of oppression in other elements of individuals' identities rather than viewing race as the sole factor. The CRT framework acknowledges that race is a social construct continuously influenced by political influences (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021).

Financial Barriers to Higher Education

Various reasons contribute to the educational barriers. Financial pressure or a lack of funds can be the primary reason students drop out if they need to hold down paying jobs while in college (NBC News, 2021). Black men still do not have as much money to survive. When their financial help runs out, for example, students often enroll in remedial programs without receiving college credit.

However, students from low-income backgrounds have a significantly lower likelihood of obtaining a bachelor's degree compared to their more financially privileged colleagues. College students still encounter financial obstacles when pursuing higher education. Dulabaum (2016) observed that financial resources and the cost of college tuition were significant obstacles for all demographic groups. Black students rely on financial aid, such as the Federal Pell Grant system and scholarships, to finance their post-secondary education. Most Black students depend on financial help, such as the Federal Pell Grant system and fellowships, to finance their post-secondary education. Over the past few years, college education's expense has risen significantly and rapidly. According to Lucas (2020), the financial capacity to afford education has a significant role in determining the achievement of Black men. The financial aid no longer adequately fulfills the precise requirements of covering tuition, books, and living expenses. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rise in financial obstacles faced by minority students.

Tolliver and Miller (2018) contended that academic program managers have asserted that financial help alone does not result in a greater rate of successful

undergraduate attrition. Minority students, especially men of color, have struggled to

keep employment or give up completing their education. Deciding to stay in school is a

big decision for most minorities and is difficult without financial and family support.

Working and paying for college can be stressful if students do not have the means.

Colleges and universities are experiencing (COVID-19 pandemic-related) low

enrollment, especially for Black male students. JBHE (2021) reported that over 44 % of

Black undergraduates experienced financial difficulty because of the pandemic; however,

only 37.5 % of White undergraduates said they faced financial problems (JBHE, 2021).

College tuition is no longer affordable for all students, particularly Black students. Based

on research, academic readiness continues to be a barrier for most students, especially for

minority students pursuing higher education. The state and federal governments must

consider simplifying some processes so students can navigate the admissions and

financial aid processes when applying to any institution.

The persistent presence of structural racism, racial inequality, microaggressions,

and campus climate contribute specifically to the marginalization of underrepresented

students of color, particularly Black men, and hinder their ability to get college degrees

successfully. Black students face additional obstacles, such as inadequate college

readiness, restricted financial means, insufficient mentorship initiatives, and a shortage of

educational help. Black men struggle to assimilate into the cultural norms of

predominately White establishments (Lucas, 2020). Campbell et al. (2019) argued that

race continues to be significant for Black students in the college environment regarding

their academic endeavors. Certain Black males can persevere and complete their education despite their difficulties. In their study, Campbell et al. discovered that the feelings of social estrangement experienced by Black college students can explain the disparities in various educational results among different groups. This study expanded upon the research conducted by earlier researchers, who have primarily examined the experiences of black students at PWIs using critical race theory (CRT) as a framework.

Mental Health Challenges

Continued expansion of mental health services in higher education is imperative. Recent reports show that individuals connected to historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), such as students, parents, employees, and administrators, have experienced mental health challenges because of both repeated bomb threats and discrimination based on race (Weissman, 2022). Weissman reported that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has investigated at least 59 incidents since January 2022. These threatening behaviors have had a psychological effect, leading to feelings of uneasiness and stress among students, staff, and families. Nelson et al. (2020) found that the Black community frequently stigmatizes or disregards mental health.

Black students who attend predominately white institutions (PWIs) have considerable challenges in dealing with feelings of isolation, dissatisfaction with their campus environment, and a lack of support from the university community (Campbell et al., 2019). Black students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) had encountered difficult situations. Due to the

COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected Black neighborhoods, and the distress created by bomb threats, students perceive this situation as highly difficult.

However, according to Campbell et al. (2019), attrition rates are increasing. Research studies have provided empirical evidence that not all Black students enrolled in PWIs encounter racial prejudice universally. A recent study has discovered that race continues to be a noteworthy determinant at the individual level, and the general atmosphere on college campuses affects various groups in distinct manners, irrespective of whether they attend HBCUs or PWIs (Campbell et al., 2019). In short, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), PWIs, and community institutions must help students who encounter instances of hatred, prejudice, and discrimination within the educational environment.

College Readiness

A significant number of Black kids continue to lack the intellectual and social readiness for college. The K-12 education system is crucial in preparing all students for success after high school. However, it frequently cannot offer students of color, especially Black male students, fair chances and support in higher education. It is necessary to facilitate the transition of Black male students who are the first in their families to attend PWIs. The researchers stated that the performance of Black male students depends frequently on their parents' involvement or socioeconomic level (Castenell et al., 2017). Recently, college readiness has expanded to include cognitive and non-cognitive skills that students must possess. Mental abilities are determined by a

high school's grade point average (GPA). Assessment scores measure non-cognitive skills that pertain to students' learning, self-belief in their abilities, social interaction, and personal goals (Jackson-Whitehead, 2018).

Researchers have discovered that differences in achievement and obstacles continue to exist because of the implementation of the curriculum (Castenell et al., 2017). Their research found that the current curriculum practices and programming contribute to the continuation of marginalization and the creation of oppressive circumstances that hinder the intellectual abilities of Black boys (Castenell et al., 2017). Research has shown that student-athletes encounter complex difficulties and often lack the preparation to meet the demanding requirements of highly competitive universities.

Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 hit Black, Latino, and Native American communities harder than White communities (Dyer, 2020). The impact of COVID-19 caused the following:

- Students have limited to no access to high-quality technology necessary for remote learning.

- Students have distractions in home environments that are not conducive to studying and learning.

- Students have trouble with devices that need to be shared with other users in students' homes.

- Students do not have any access to high-speed internet.

- Global pandemic concerns also affect students' ability to search for employment to support their basic needs or pay their student loans (Bradley University, 2021).

Challenges and Supporting Black Students in a COVID-19 Era

The COVID-19 pandemic illuminated additional challenges for Black students, particularly men, in higher education. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Black male students' financial stress, educational attainment gap, racism, and racial disparities have continued to affect enrollment and retention in higher education. Higher education provides knowledge and a space to prepare students, transform minds, engage students, and implement racial equality and justice in all areas of society. Institutions of higher learning must ensure a supportive organizational structure and environment for all students, especially marginalized and underrepresented students.

In the COVID era, higher education institutions must work with all stakeholders to increase access and opportunity for student success, including Black males who desire to pursue college degrees. JHHE (2021) reported that over 83 % of all Black undergraduates said they experienced enrollment disruptions because of the pandemic. Colleges and universities must invest in programs to increase enrollment retention for all students, notably Black men attending predominantly White institutions (PWIs). The challenges for colleges and universities are improving economic stability, developing strategies to eradicate racial violence, and providing resources and educational support to people of color.

According to Martinez et al. (2021), the COVID-19 epidemic has had a significant influence on young men of color in higher education. They argued that there is an urgent requirement for institutions and programs to address the unique needs of people of color to promote and support their educational participation and achievement. To combat declining enrollment, higher education institutions should implement activities targeting communities of color, particularly considering the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teaching Black Students Online

In higher education, professors and staff must cultivate activities, facilitate active learning, devise dynamic student engagement tactics, and implement culturally relevant instruction. Studies have found that kids belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups, as well as those from low-income backgrounds, are less likely to take part in high-affected educational activities (First-Gen, 2020). There is a scarcity of studies on the influence of social media and digital technologies on Black first-generation college students (Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2018). The media and popular culture often feature Black first-generation college students, but colleges, universities, and research organizations still do not adequately represent them.

Contemporary studies indicate that educators and staff should create an atmosphere that enables concentrated examination of matters concerning race and racism in both conventional and online classrooms, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) can affect the perseverance of Black male students in successfully attaining their higher education

degrees. Lynner et al. (2022) asserted that incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into online education is a moral and ethical imperative.

Educational Goals and the Institution Commitment

Higher education institutions today must identify and address areas within their organizations where racial inequities and trauma occur. Higher education institutions must commit to developing strategies to combat and eradicate racist behaviors and practices inside and outside the classroom (NADOE, 2021). The National Association of Diversity Officers of Higher Education (NADOHE) anti-racism framework is a strategy for stakeholders to adopt policies to eradicate systemic and structural racism. The Anti-Racism Framework also addresses ten priority areas where anti-racism strategies would significantly improve conditions for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students, faculty, and staff (NADOHE, 2021).

It is time for higher education to take the responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing learning environment where students, faculty, and staff, especially BIPOC communities, can exist in peace without fear of racial intimidation, harassment, or marginalization (NADOHE, 2021). Institutions must implement potential interventions to address inequities and promote anti-racism in higher education. Higher education can no longer ignore systemic and structural racism. With that in mind, federal and state, local governments, academic leaders, students, and policymakers must work and embrace a framework to advance anti-racism strategies to lead higher education to a sustainable but inclusive environment of excellence.

Importance of Diversity in Higher Education

The lack of Black representation in higher education continues to affect Black males' persistence and graduation. Although today's colleges and universities promote diversity, educational leaders must focus on creating an inclusive environment for all students. They also must address the history of racism, discrimination, and inequality deeply rooted in many institutions. The importance of diversity must extend beyond students, faculty, and staff. It must encompass how colleges and universities teach, their programs, and more resources that may help students succeed (Northeastern University, 2021). Diversity benefits everyone when they feel included. Diversity ensures that different individuals have access to and are represented based on gender, age, disability, social status, student status (first generation), sexual orientation, religion, and personality type. Institutions of higher education must promote long-term change in equity and inclusion.

Black male students still face unique challenges at predominantly White institutions, including experiencing microaggressions, feeling invisible, and lacking Black faculty. Today's educational leaders must work to achieve meaningful results from diversity initiatives because it requires more than just recruiting a broader range of students, staff, and faculty. Therefore, today's leaders must ensure that everyone on their campuses feels they can contribute to the academic community (Northern University, 2021). Institutions of higher education must create inclusive school campuses for Black males.

Benefits of Closing the Gap

There are many benefits to closing the gap. For example, diversity in higher education can enrich the learning experience for students and provide opportunities to interact with people from many backgrounds. Diversity can help improve collaboration skills and innovation, prepare graduates for an increasingly globalized world, provide strengths to navigate their careers in dynamic, multicultural work environments, increase chances for minorities to pursue high-level positions that may require advanced degrees, and give students from historically underrepresented communities opportunities to see themselves in their leaders. More importantly, it can create a solid workforce to close the diversity gap (Northeastern University, 2021). As a result, a diverse environment can help promote teamwork, develop a sense of belonging, enhance academic performance, and improve student outcomes in higher education.

Social and Academic Integration

Today's students would significantly benefit from actively immersing themselves in the social dynamics of the campus. The involvement of male students of African heritage in promoting the integration of campus culture is crucial. The process in higher education has been cumulative and compounding since institutions require students to develop their social and intellectual capacities independently throughout their college journey, often with little or no aid (Swail et al., 2003). Harper and Wood (2016) argued that minority male students at PWIs improve their ability to integrate academically and adapt to the college environment when they regularly face negative perceptions about

their intellectual skills, experiences of discrimination, racial stereotypes, and an unwelcoming campus atmosphere. Integrating academic and social aspects is essential for the perseverance and performance of students in higher education programs and courses, as supported by extensive research and models. Taking part in clubs, organizations, and activities is essential for improving students' sense of belonging, increasing self-assurance, and fostering academic and personal success (Best Colleges, 2023).

Brooms (2017) highlighted the importance of students' viewpoints and emotions regarding their preparedness for college's intellectual and social demands before and throughout college. In the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, educators and administrators need to adapt and tailor their educational programs to meet the varied needs of all students. When it comes to college, students need to pursue social integration (Patterson, 2020). Therefore, there is a need for additional in-depth research on the individual, societal, and cultural elements that influence the social integration of young Black boys (Patterson, 2020).

Diversity in Higher Education

There is still more to do to improve educational opportunities for individuals in certain ethnic groups despite progress in increasing diversity in higher education. The United States Census Bureau statistics indicated advancements in academic achievement among different ethnic groups from 2010 to 2019. The data also revealed disparities between white students and some minority groups (Bradley University, 2021). For example, the data revealed that over 40 % of white students earned at least 3% less than

the previous year. The data also showed that college enrollment was highest among Asian

and White students and lower among Black and Latinx students. The breakdown of 2019

enrollment by race or ethnicity based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data

(Bradley University, 2021):

- White: 89 %

- Asian: 66.9 %

- Hispanic/Latinx: 63.4 %

- Black: 50.7 %

It is imperative to tackle enduring problems in higher education. Educational

authorities should analyze and address structural disparities that impede the academic

achievements of ethnic and racial groups and eliminate obstacles. Additional factors

contributing to these gaps include structural inequalities, disparities in financial

accessibility, and the current COVID-19 epidemic (Bradley University, 2021). Current

leaders must comprehensively analyze these issues to establish equitable chances in

education.

Over the past few decades, prestigious public research universities have

encountered difficulties attracting and keeping Black students, particularly males,

because of low enrollment and recruitment rates. These organizations struggle to achieve

this goal because their mission statements emphasize the importance of diversity. Farmer

and Hope (2015) found that Black males encountered significant barriers in pursuing

higher education. The researchers also noted that the proportion of Black males who

complete their studies within six years is less than 40 % in public 4-year schools and private nonprofit colleges. Museums and Ravello (2021) found that the rates at which racial and ethnic minority students stay enrolled and complete their degrees continue to be a significant concern for researchers, policymakers, administrators, practitioners, and leaders in higher education. Regardless of their challenges, public and private schools should prioritize diversity and inclusion in their mission statements to improve educational outcomes for all students. Family and mentorship support significantly influences the presence and determination of black college students. A recent study by Beale et al. (2019) revealed a rise in the enrollment of Black males at colleges compared to previous years.

Nevertheless, Black women consistently surpass men in terms of college enrollment. Snyder and Dillow (2009) reported that black women comprised 66 % of the degrees attained by black students across all levels of academia. Prioritizing retention methods for Black students, especially males, in higher education is crucial. Ensuring the retention of black college men is essential for attaining academic excellence (Beale et al., 2019).

Before the COVID-19 epidemic, higher education faced a challenge regarding student enrollment. There has been a decrease in male college enrollment and retention rates. The COVID-19 pandemic has expedited the deterioration of educational attainment among Black men. The enrollment of Black males experienced a decline of 14.3 % in spring 2021 as compared to spring 2020. Graham and Williams (2022) reported that

community colleges, which have a higher enrollment of racial and ethnic minority students and learners from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds, have had a significant decrease in the enrollment of Black males.

In addition, two-year schools observed a 21.5 % decrease in the enrollment of Black male students during the spring of 2021. Traditionally, public colleges and universities in the United States have not adequately catered to the needs of black students and have made few efforts to address the specific challenges faced by racial and ethnic groups. (Castenell & Grantham, 2017). Several academics have suggested that Black male college students live in a multifaceted social milieu characterized by many obstacles.

Framework for Retention in Higher Education

Researchers often study the retention of Black students at PWIs. However, few researchers have examined what helped keep Black male students. Recent studies show that Black males attending institutions of higher education retention and graduation rates are still dismal compared to other racial groups. Although the United States continues to become more diverse, research acknowledges that graduation rates by race clarify that disparities between students of color and their counterparts still exist. Bohrnstedt et al. (2015) stated that nearly 30 % of Black college males enrolled in four-year institutions earned a college degree compared to 57 % of White male students (Ottley & Ellis, 2019).

Banks and Dohy (2019) proposed that higher education institutions often cannot address institutional obstacles that hinder the improvement of retention and graduation

rates among underrepresented populations. There is a substantial body of literature concerning college retention. The absence of support systems and retention strategies at PWIs can impede the persistence and completion of college degrees for Black male students. The graduation and persistence rates of Hispanic and Black male undergraduates often lag those of their White counterparts, frequently by a significant margin. Hall (2017) posited that racial microaggressions function as imperceptible obstacles.

While many schools face difficulties in promoting the persistence of Black males in higher education, a few succeed despite these constraints. Hall investigated the factors influencing persistence and graduation rates among Black and Hispanic undergraduate students attending regional four-year public colleges in Texas.

Support Structures in Higher Education

Investigating Black men's collegiate experiences and support systems is an essential field of study. Implementing a well-organized system of help for all students can enhance the rates at which students persist and complete their studies in higher education. Support structures can assist academics, scholar-practitioners, and educational leaders in examining the college experiences of Black males and understanding how these experiences may eventually affect their ability to endure and succeed (Brooms & Davis, 2017). Therefore, it is imperative to create and foster inclusive environments that promote a strong sense of belonging for Black men in higher education institutions (Thomas-Jones, 2020).

While Black males encounter difficulties with different social institutions, creating opportunities to articulate their needs, establish relationships, and engage in meaningful interactions might eventually improve their experiences in college (Brooms & Davis, 2017). Studies indicate that the presence of support structures can significantly impact eliminating obstacles. Furthermore, studies suggest that institutions need to offer improved and practical strategies to address the issue of persistence in obtaining a bachelor's degree for all students, including Black male students enrolled in PWIs. There is a need for more research on how academic institutions and their agents support Black males in academia to address their unique needs (Brown & Sacco, 2018). There is a need for educational leaders to conduct further research on how academic institutions and their representatives provide support to Black males in academia to satisfy their distinct requirements (Brown & Sacco, 2018).

Empowering Opportunities for Black Male Success

Despite Black males' challenges in the United States, they continue to build resilience while pursuing higher education. Blacks still view education as the great equalizer. Opportunities, support, and resources on college and university campuses can empower Black male students to effect change.

Strategies for Recruiting and Supporting Black Men

In recent decades, scientists and researchers have analyzed many approaches to attract and assist students in pursuing higher education. According to Harris (2018), researchers suggested that American boys encounter educational difficulties in

elementary school that ultimately harm their ability to enroll in college. Researchers and practitioners have also sought techniques and interventions to improve Black boys' academic performance and graduation rates in college. Academic achievements for African American males in the United States remain discouraging. Harris stated that the absence of higher education among this population is associated with various issues, including unemployment, gang activity, violence, incarceration, and intergenerational poverty. Studying program strategies and tactics can ensure student success.

Transition and Campus Support Program

College and university counseling centers assist Black males in addressing difficulties related to masculine support and academic retention. These services comprise a program to help transition from high school to college and support tailored to the college campus environment (Harris, 2018). Faculty members in the Departments of Black Studies and Psychology, who possess clinical expertise in working with Black populations on mostly White campuses, can empathize with the experiences of male student participants. They are most adept at addressing various difficulties in higher education (Harris, 2018).

A study by Goodwill et al. (2018) showed that Black college men employ many strategies to manage stress. These strategies include seeking support from their social networks, participating in physical activities, and taking personal responsibility for addressing societal concerns. Students not only grapple with mental health concerns but also contend with substance use or misuse, violence, and rage. Within higher education,

mental health counselors and researchers must persistently devise innovative methods to analyze stress and coping mechanisms.

Critical Strategies for Black Men

Traditionally, Black males have exhibited lower rates of enrollment and achievement in higher education compared with other ethnic groups. Colleges and universities have tried to increase the diversity of their student populations. However, there are several challenges that higher education institutions face regarding responsibility, such as the recruiting, retention, and graduation rates of all students, especially those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Camera (2016) stated that these problems have been commonly shared among individuals of African descent, with the graduation rates of these accepted students remaining around 40 %. In addition, the researchers found that just 28 % of Black individuals completed their studies at the same institution within six years after initially enrolling (Shapiro et al., 2017).

According to the Shapiro study, just a quarter of black men could effectively finish their studies at the schools where they initially enrolled. Previous research indicates that college students are more inclined to pursue further education after high school by recognizing the importance of mentorship, role models, peer interactions, on-campus support, family, and community.

Mentorship

Studies have shown that directing attention toward the effective methods of keeping Black male undergraduate students in college and helping them graduate may

cause increased persistence. Mentorships foster students' growth and self-fulfillment (Tolliver & Miller, 2018). Mentorship could be advantageous for students in their initial years of enrollment. For instance, a peer or mentor can assist newly enrolled students in navigating both the academic and social aspects of college life. According to Strayhorn (2019), actively taking part with peers, having social contacts, and developing positive relationships with other students might enhance one's feeling of belonging.

Studies have connected these interpersonal connections to one's mental and emotional health, self-worth, and assurance in different institutional settings, such as residential learning communities and student or campus groups (Brooms, 2019, 2020). Mentoring programs, also known as mentorship, can aid schools and universities in enhancing their retention and persistence rates.

Socialization

Many students may feel conflict or confusion between their cultural background and the cultural norms on a college campus. Socialization is crucial for the minority population to feel welcome. For example, a minority student who does not feel welcome may be susceptible to feelings of displacement, social isolation, and rejection on predominantly White campuses. Without sufficient support, minority students may not engage with their peers and have a positive collegiate experience (Tolliver & Miller, 2018).

On-Campus Supports

As colleges and universities become increasingly diverse, institutions must offer opportunities for students to engage with their college experience (Tolliver & Miller, 2018). They must allow students from all backgrounds to have a multicultural center that will enable students to engage and interact on campuses.

Support for Family and Community

Family and community support continue to be indicators of student achievement. Family and community support are also essential for retention and successful outcomes. Recent and past studies have found that students living in a supportive environment are more motivated to graduate from college. Tolliver and Miller et al. observed that some family and community members who had previously earned degrees received encouragement and advice, which instilled in them the determination to succeed in college. Although there are no silver bullets for students to overcome challenges while pursuing their education, students need strategies and social support networks to help them navigate successfully. Therefore, family and community support are crucial to student's academic success.

Black Male Initiative Programs

Black Male Initiative Programs (BMI) have proliferated and grown extensively on college and university campuses in the last two decades. Educational institutions commonly implement these strategies to enhance Black male students' retention and graduation rates (Brooms, 2017, 2018). However, it should be noted that several BMI

programs prioritize keeping students, ensuring their persistence, and facilitating their graduation. While BMI programs focus on the development of Black males, they can also serve as a valuable tool to cultivate conducive learning environments for students, increase and improve academic and social support, and grant access to essential resources on campus (Brooms, 2018). BMIs can assist Black male students in navigating unfriendly campus climates or repressive surroundings (Brooms, 2018).

BMI programs and Black professionals on campus are crucial in helping Black males' retention and persistence efforts. They provide a safe and supportive environment where they can form solid relationships and receive academic and social help. For example, Black men may feel empowered and motivated to succeed when they get support and inclusion from instructors, staff, and classmates with similar physical appearance. Belonging to a group that promotes community and various forms of assistance is synonymous with a sense of belonging. Essentially, a feeling of belonging is a fundamental human requirement that can affect an individual's actions and drive (Strayhorn, 2019). With Black teachers and staff serving as mentors, BMI programs can enhance the sense of belonging among Black male students by fostering feelings of empowerment, appreciation, inclusivity, and help (Brooms, 2018, 2019).

BMI programs can help increase Black male peer-ponding, faculty, and institutional agents and support students' career or professional goals (Brooms, 2018). There are multiple BMI-type programs on today's college campuses across the country. Research shows that participation in BMI programs positively affects students. BMI

programs also strengthened their experiences and successes, increasing their sense of belonging. Druery and Brooms (2019) conducted an in-depth, qualitative study exploring the experiences of five Black male students in the Black Male Leadership Collective (BMLC), a Black male initiative at a midsized historically White four-year institution. They used Museus' (2014) culturally engaging campus environment model as a conceptual frame to analyze and understand the men's experience in the BMLC. Students taking part in culturally engaging and enriching programs may have better educational outcomes than those who do not take part.

According to Druery and Brooms (2019), their findings showed that BMI and BMLC programs could serve as culturally enriching college environments for students to experience a sense of belonging at PWIs.   One of the extraordinary benefits of BMI programs is that they give Black male students a sense of awareness and a cheerful outlook that they can succeed, allowing them to be resilient and grounded in their identity.

Strayhorn (2008) showed that diverse interactions with peers affect the sense of belonging of Black men at predominantly White institutions. A sense of belonging is one key to educational success for all students (Strayhorn, 2019). As more Black males enroll in PWIs, they may experience a feeling of isolation. Studies have reported that Black men attending PWIs feel unsupported and unwelcome (Strayhorn, 2019; Wright, 2016). In short, students who experience culturally relevant knowledge individually and

collectively augment their engagement on campus, resiliency, and persistence to graduation (Druery & Brooms, 2019).

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter Two presented a comprehensive outline of the conceptual framework linked to CRT. This chapter explicitly outlined tactics for the recruitment, support, and fulfillment of the needs of all students, focusing specifically on first-generation Black male students attending PWIs. CRT offers a mechanism to investigate low graduation rates, specifically among Black male students. Within the realm of higher education, CRT aims to analyze comprehensively the obstacles and barriers that impede the success of Black men. In short, Black & Bimper Jr. (2020) employed the critical race theory framework to analyze race as a social construct, the impact of racialized narratives, and the many initiatives and schemes implemented to promote diversity in higher education institutions.

In summary, the literature review still reveals that the trend of Black male students' enrollment, retention, and graduation rates continues to decline. The Black Lives Matter Movement, racial disparities, disparities in access on campuses, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a lack of financial resources are the identified reasons for the decline in Black men's overall enrollment and low graduation rates. COVID-19 affected the enrollment rates of colleges and universities nationwide by causing undergraduate enrollment to decline by 3.2 % in the fall of 2021, followed by a drop of 3.4 % in 2020 (Graham & Williams, 2022). Graham and Williams showed that community colleges

experienced the most brutal hit by a 10 % decline in enrollment nationally in the fall of 2020.

Graham and Williams summarized the factors contributing to the decrease in enrollment. They presented four perceived explanations: 1. Black guys have limited financial resources. 2. Black kids experience a higher frequency of suspensions in secondary school. 3. Black male students in education face a lack of access to positive role models. 4. College campuses can exhibit racial hostility towards Black men. One of the primary obstacles that Black men and men of color have with attending college is the challenge of meeting basic needs, such as food, housing, jobs, and transportation. In their study, Nichols and Evans-Bell (2017) determined that many Black students face financial, intellectual, and social obstacles, which can hinder their progress toward obtaining a degree. Black males have a two-fold higher likelihood of experiencing unemployment compared to their White counterparts. Historically, there has been a more excellent representation of Black men in the criminal justice or jail system compared to their enrollment in schools and universities. Using CRT can provide a comprehensive understanding and facilitate the transformation of the prevailing discourse around Black males in higher education.

CRT can provide insight into the widespread challenges colleges and universities face regarding Black males' enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. CRT can amplify the perspectives and lived experiences of Black males who attend primarily White institutions (Lucas, 2020). Evidence consistently demonstrates that Black males are

encountering significant challenges in terms of their ability to persist and remain enrolled in PWIs. Despite extensive research conducted by numerous higher education institutions, developing and prioritizing enrollment campaigns and retention strategies remains necessary.

Brooms (2018) contended that students' narratives emphasize the capacity and opportunities for promoting the achievement of Black males through programs that focus on body mass index (BMI). The author's research showed that BMI programs might improve students' sense of inclusion within the campus community by providing them with opportunities to engage with sociocultural resources, comprehensive support services, a specific emphasis on the identities of Black males, and promoting resilience and determination. Graham and Williams (2022) asserted that current academics, scholars, educators, and administrators must acknowledge and embrace the need to offer targeted assistance and guidance to males. Black students often face a shortage of resources that impairs their ability to concentrate and graduate within the desired timeframe. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that student persistence concerns are not limited to any particular student group (Tolliver & Miller, 2018). Therefore, this study aimed to understand the barriers that impede Black men's achievement of bachelor's degrees at PWIs.

This study analyzed the impact of present support structures on Black male students to understand how supports influence Black male students' persistence to graduation at PWIs. This study also identified critical strategies, support, and resources

that colleges and universities can use to improve the graduation opportunities of Black male undergraduates at predominantly White institutions. The findings will assist PWIs in serving this student population with an essential understanding of how to offer improved resources, support, and services to Black males for their overall success in higher education (Lucas, 2020).

To summarize, Black men have the most inferior rates of college graduation when compared to other racial and gender groups. Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), it was reported that 28 % of Black men between the ages of 25 and 29 possess a bachelor's degree or a higher level of education. In comparison, 30 % of Black women, over 40 % of white men, and almost half of white women have achieved the same level of education. In spring 2021, the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCR) published a report stating an 8.9 % decline in undergraduate enrollment among men compared to the previous year. Among Black men, the decline was even more significant at 14.3 %. In contrast, women had a 4 % fall in enrollment (Inside Higher Ed, 2021). In short, the NSCR community institutions experienced the most significant decrease in enrollment.

Graham (2020) stated that Black men would have less access to social capital, less earning power, less socioeconomic mobility, and decreased occupational attainment without a college education. In today's global economy, higher education, ranging from adult education to technical school, community college, and a four-year institution, is essential to economic and job stability. Competing in today's job market with a college

education will be easy. In the twenty-first century, institutions must move from access to success for all students, particularly Black males. Black men encounter numerous obstacles throughout their educational journey, with difficulties arising as early as elementary school. This study examined the extent and influence of social, academic, and individual assistance provided to Black students, particularly men, with the perceived difficulties they encountered while enrolled in mainly White four-year institutions (PWIs).

The poor graduation rates of black male college students continue to get significant public attention. Research shows that Black first-generation college students often lack awareness of their first-generation college status upon arriving at college and university campuses (First Gen Blog, 2020). Researchers, college and university administrators, and professional staff must communicate to their leaders the significance of educating students who self-identify as Black and are the first in their families to attend college (First-Gen Blog, 2020). Matthews-Whetstone (2015) investigated three inquiries in this study titled Factors Affecting Bachelor's Degree Completion among Black Males with Prior Attrition. 1. What factors contribute to discontinuing post-secondary degrees and college dropout rates among Black males? 2. What factors affected their choice to pursue higher education again? 3. What variables facilitate or impede their degree completion? The author concluded that individuals who attended four-year universities took less time to complete their degrees than those who enrolled in two-year institutions.

The urgency of the situation is apparent: the United States' colleges and universities have historically struggled to keep and graduate Black students, especially first-generation male students from low-income families. Despite progress, overall research shows that there remains significant room for improvement. Colleges and universities must adopt a strategy that may improve Black male college graduation rates: financial aid, mentoring, and retention programs, such as Black Men Initiatives (BMIs). Hill (2022) concluded that research has shown formal and informal mentoring to improve academic performance, mental health, and well-being. In addition, colleges and universities that provide scholarships, mentoring programs, and inclusive campuses can increase Black male college retention and graduate rates. In short, colleges and universities must admit a large class of minority students each year to improve and provide robust orientation and retention programs for all students, including Black male college students. A national imperative is to foster community, corporate, and school collaborations, as well as higher education mentoring and assistance to ensure students' success since every student holds significance in the present global economy.

The primary goal of this study was to investigate the level of support and support structures that exist for Black male students attending PWIs. The brief literature review reveals a crisis among students of color, particularly Black male students in higher education. PWIs must develop an all-inclusive curriculum and support systems to enrich undergraduate Black males' academic and social experiences (Simmons, 2019). Chapter

three presents the researcher's rationale and application for the research methods used to

collect data.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The study investigated first-generation third and fourth Black male students' perceptions and experiences attending PWIs. This study approach also allowed me to understand real-life experiences and gain insight into the perceived challenges and strategies to overcome those impediments in higher education. The fundamental qualitative study analysis method requires the researcher to use varied qualitative data sources, including semi-structured interviews, to gain the participants' perceptions. In short, this chapter describes the research design, participants, instrumentation, role of the researcher, methodology, data collection procedures, and data analysis plan.

This chapter also provided information on trustworthiness and ethical guidelines. The second purpose is to understand Black male undergraduate students' experiences regarding the challenges and supports related to degree completion. Black male students continue to experience unique challenges that shape their post-secondary educational experiences at predominantly White institutions. These barriers include institutional racism, stereotypes placed on Black men, and the negative social media that continue to portray Black men as the problem. This study used CRT to apply a race-conscious lens to the lived experiences of Black students, notably male students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs).

Research Design and Rationale

This study conducted qualitative research to collect data on the opinions and experiences of first-generation, third- and fourth-year undergraduate Black males. The

focus was on understanding their obstacles and exploring the factors that support them.

Black male students attending mostly white colleges have access to accessible resources.

Evidence continues to indicate that Black male students face numerous challenges

throughout their academic paths. This study aimed to improve practitioners' and

administrators' understanding of the specific types of support needed to promote positive

educational outcomes for first-generation Black male students attending mostly White

institutions.

Crucial. Recognizing that not all Black male students faced the same challenges

or employed comparable strategies to overcome them is critical. Nevertheless, this study

aimed to investigate explicit and implicit biases by evaluating the personal interactions of

Black male students. This study also aimed to determine whether the results would align

with the findings derived from the literature review. Furthermore, this research will assist

stakeholders in understanding and identifying deficiencies in the literature review.

The qualitative method was selected over the quantitative one due to its

adaptability. This method was suitable since it allowed the researcher to comprehensively

understand how Black males interpret their experiences. Merriam & Tisdell (2016)

emphasized that individuals consistently develop knowledge when actively participating

in and interpreting an activity, encounter, or social occurrence, grounding qualitative

research in this belief. Creswell (2019) highlighted that qualitative research is a method

used to investigate and comprehend the significance that individuals or groups attribute to

a social or human situation. The author emphasized that the research process included the

development of questions and procedures, the collection of data, usually in the
participant's environment, the analysis of data in a way that starts with specific details
and progresses to broader themes, and the researcher's interpretations of the significance
of the data.

An essential characteristic of qualitative research is its capacity to assist
individuals in forming their interpretations of reality and actively participating in their
social surroundings. This study employs a basic qualitative research design. The
qualitative technique involves utilizing the researcher's experiences and interpretive
response approaches to solve the primary research questions (Walther et al., 2017). The
qualitative inquiry relies on the researcher's involvement in descriptive, interpretive, and
reflective procedures to ensure awareness of the individual's engagement in the research
process (Roger et al., 2018).

Target Population and Sample

This study focused on interpreting responses that describe third- and fourth-year
undergraduate sample participants about the research topic. This chapter provided a
comprehensive overview of the population and sample, the procedures for selecting and
protecting participants, the methods used for data collecting and analysis, and the role of
the researcher. I employed probing interview questions that could address the core
inquiry. I used open-ended interview questions to let the participants elaborate on their
experiences. The open-ended method enables the researcher to investigate the students'
experiences at their universities. This chapter also ends with discussions on

trustworthiness and ethical protocols for the study, along with a recapitulation of chapter three and an outline of the anticipated content in chapter four. My approach used CRT to systematically gather, examine, and comprehend data from a race-centered perspective, employing qualitative research inquiries.

Role of the Researcher

In educational research, qualitative investigations assign a distinctive function to the researcher, as they are the tools for data collection (Denzel & Lincoln, 2013). The researcher's task is to employ a technique to explain social phenomena. The researcher engages with the study participants, gathering data and analyzing the research results (Karagiozis, 2018). Initially, qualitative researchers must recognize their subjective positionality, influence the research process, and determine the collected data's technique, analysis, and handling. The researcher must show sensitivity and respect towards the rights of the participants.

The qualitative researcher must uphold an impartial demeanor toward participants, pivotal in extracting information. The qualitative researcher must comprehensively account for pertinent factors, such as biases, assumptions, expectations, and experiences, to establish their competence in conducting research (Greenbank, 2003). Qualitative researchers must maintain a distinct journal documenting their personal reactions, reflections, and discoveries regarding themselves and their experiences. During qualitative interviews, the researcher needs to recognize political factors, such as the research's cultural limitations.

During the research process for this dissertation, I incorporated personal, professional, and ethical considerations, upheld integrity, and maintained quality standards to support reliability and validity. This included minimizing my biases during data collection, research design, and analysis. As a Black male student currently attending a PWI, it was critical to understand unconscious biases and worldview perspectives while maintaining objectivity throughout this dissertation. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), it was also crucial to identify and monitor potential preferences associated with the researcher's interests that could affect data collection and analysis.

My previous experience as an undergraduate and graduate with my academic and social challenges supported the decision to conduct this study to help men of color have a better educational outcome attending PWIs. Additionally, I remained aware of biases and their impact on Black men's experience in higher education. Researchers emphasized that a talented researcher asks probing questions to get to the deeper levels of the conversation and seeks to understand and build a picture using various sources' ideas and theories. In short, qualitative research design was the most appropriate to evaluate the level of support for this population of students attending PWIs. Qualitative researchers are involved in the study. They actively participate, interact, and communicate with the participants during the interview process (Karagiozis, 2018).

Methodology

This primary qualitative research study employed one-on-one, in-depth interviews to understand Black males' challenges and barriers to attending PWIs. I used a qualitative approach to collect data. As a transformative leader, I employed a transformative worldview, narrative design, and open-ended interviewing. For this study, I also looked at race-related or perceived barriers to individuals in higher education. In addition, I explored institutional resources that help retain Black men; lastly, I focused on listening to Black men's stories using a narrative approach to collect data. I interviewed the participants to understand their challenges while attending White institutions. Therefore, qualitative methods allowed me to explore a topic or concept through rich, detailed information.

Participant Selection

Target Population and Sample

This study focused on interpreting responses that described sample participants' experiences with the research topic. This chapter described the population and sample, procedures for participant selection and protection, data collection and analysis, the researcher's role, and the use of guiding interview questions that could answer the central question. Mack et al. (2005) showed that qualitative research could take the form of several methods, such as participant observation and in-depth interviews. I also used open-ended interview questions to allow the participants to build upon their experiences. The open-ended approach allowed me to examine the students' experiences at their

respective institutions. This chapter also concluded with considerations for trustworthiness and ethical procedures for the study, as well as a summary of chapter three, including the expectations of chapter four. Besides utilizing qualitative research questions and CRT, I collected, analyzed, and interpreted data through a race-based lens.

Data Collection Procedures

In this qualitative study, I enlisted 75 male students to participate in semi-structured interviews. Nevertheless, I interviewed 12 individuals enrolled in predominantly White institutions (PWIs) in different parts of the United States. I inquired about nine aspects of their perceptions and personal encounters. The study recruited Black males aged 19 to 25 in their third and fourth years of undergraduate studies at their institution. This research investigated the experiences of Black male students in a PWI based on the highlighted concern. The second aim was to examine approaches for enlisting, keeping, and assisting Black males in higher education. Qualitative research involves interpreting human actions based on the experiences of individuals (Milacci, 2003). I employed interview methodologies to investigate concepts and discern recurring themes and patterns.

My qualitative study utilized a naturalistic approach to understand phenomena in unique contextual circumstances. This approach involves the researcher avoiding manipulating the phenomenon studied (Patton, 2009). Qualitative methodologies are well-suited for providing a thorough description and enhancing comprehension of the attributes of participants' perceptions and experiences related to the success of racial and

Black males on mostly White college campuses. The primary objective of this study was to examine and understand the factors contributing to the low rates of persistence and graduation among Black males (PWIs.

Data Analysis Plan

Zoom audio recordings and transcriptions were used for data analysis, which included thematic analysis of common qualitative interview questions (Caulfied, 2022). To get the study participants' perceptions, the researchers must use various qualitative data sources, including individual interviews and document analysis. I employed a naturalistic method in qualitative research to comprehend phenomena within specific contextual settings, where the researcher refrains from manipulating the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2009). Qualitative approaches are effective instruments for obtaining a comprehensive description and deeper insight into the characteristics of participants' perspectives and experiences related to the success of racial and Black males on predominantly White college campuses. This study seeks to investigate and comprehend why Black males have low persistence and graduation rates at PWIs. This study will produce secondary data using the interview guide and the U.S. Census Bureau.

Codes can identify recurring patterns, organize data chunks that go together, and trigger deeper reflection on the data's meaning. In this study, I used content analysis techniques on the interview transcripts to identify codes and themes across participants' responses. Saldaña (2013) showed that coding data might help the researcher identify repetitive patterns. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews. Interview

discussions provided the most direct and transparent approach to gathering detailed and rich data regarding a phenomenon (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). In a qualitative analysis, the interviewer should seek to hear participants' voices and listen to their narratives from their points of view (Brinkman, 2018). I transcribed and prepared the data analysis. I also used content analysis techniques on the interview transcripts to identify codes and themes across participants' responses.

The researcher can group codes into more significant categories based on how they inform the research study and fit into the participants' narratives. Therefore, I used deductive and inductive approaches to analyze data and conceptualize themes using CRT. Finally, I conducted additional data analysis to investigate the experiences of individuals from marginalized racial and ethnic groups in higher education institutions. These individuals faced numerous obstacles that could hinder their ability to persist and ultimately graduate.

Trustworthiness

The reliability of the gathered data may be linked to the researcher's credibility. Building trustworthiness involves successfully utilizing multiple data sources to establish triangulation and enhance the reliability of the conclusions (Mitchell & Jaeger, 2018). Researchers often describe trustworthiness as the equivalent of reliability and validity within naturalistic research (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The naturalistic study relates to the phenomenal as they exist in their natural settings. It works well with qualitative research

methods that explore such phenomena. Naturalistic researchers are always concerned about understanding existing phenomena, such as thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Ethical Procedures

The study followed all rules and regulations outlined by Walden University's Internal Review Board (IRB). I received my IRB approval number: 08-16-23-0786566. Ethical dilemmas could become a concern within any research study; however, the researcher's role is to minimize ethical dilemmas. I treated all participants respectfully and appropriately throughout the interviewing and data collection process, following the stated ethical guidelines. Ethical considerations (in qualitative research) must include participant withdrawal, voluntary consent, confidentiality, and unrecorded information (Othman & Hamid, 2018). I was transparent and understood the ethical guidelines for verbal and written confidentiality. I also made sure the participants suffered no physical, mental, or emotional harm. Walden University's IRB provided the informed consent form, which the participants completed and signed. I briefed all participants on potential interview risks during the informed consent process. Participants could cancel their interview discussions during the study.

Summary

Chapter 3 outlined the research design and method for the study. The qualitative research design allows me to explore factors influencing Black males' perceived challenges and better understand solutions for improving Black male students' educational outcomes. This research gave me a more in-depth study of Black male

students' everyday struggles in pursuing higher education. Chapter 3 also included the study's procedures and follows all the rules and regulations outlined by Walden University's Internal Review Board (IRB). Ethical dilemmas could become a concern within any research study; however, the researcher's role is to minimize ethical dilemmas. I treated all participants respectfully and appropriately throughout the interview and data collection process, following the stated ethical guidelines. Ethical considerations (in qualitative research) must include participant withdrawal, voluntary consent, confidentiality, and unrecorded information (Othman & Hamid, 2018). Again, I was transparent and understood the ethical guidelines for verbal and written confidentiality issues.

Chapter 4: Results

Black male students continue to face struggles to stay and graduate from college at predominantly White institutions (Turner, 2020). This study aimed to determine Black males' challenges at PWIs. This qualitative study also explored the perceptions and experiences of third- and fourth-year undergraduate Black males at PWIs. The primary research question guided this study: What are the perceptions and experiences of third and fourth-year undergraduate Black males at predominantly White institutions?

In this chapter, I provided a comprehensive account of the population characteristics, explained the methods used to gather data and the number of participants involved, explored the data analysis process, and examined the reliability of the analysis process. The findings may contribute to reducing the disparity in graduation rates among Black males who attend PWIs.

Procedure

During the study, I administered a nine-question questionnaire to participants regarding the difficulties they faced at an institution primarily composed of individuals from the White racial group. I investigated their perspectives, encounters, educational facilities, and assistance programs for students at a PWI. Fifteen individuals participated in the research study after seeing the advertisement on several social media platforms, including Walden Participant Pool, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Participants volunteered for one-on-one semi-structured interviews via Zoom audio-tape recording. Of the fifteen original potential participants, twelve Black male college undergraduates

participated in the study. The other three did not meet the criteria for participation. Each

participant identified themselves as a Black male over the age of 19 and attended a PWI.

I conducted interviews with twelve participants in each of the three geographical regions

of the United States: West Coast, East Coast, and Mid-West.

Setting

I requested the participants to select the date and time by electronic mail. I

utilized Zoom audio meetings to conduct individual semi-structured interviews. Zoom is

an online platform used for conducting audio and video conferences. Before the

prearranged individual semi-structured interviews, I emailed participants a copy of the

informed consent form to review and acknowledge, indicating their agreement to

participate in the study. I furnished the participants with a concise overview of the study,

the duration of the interview, the prerogative to refuse any inquiry, and the prerogative to

terminate the interview at any given moment. A total of twelve participants arranged an

interview and finalized the day and time through email communication. Individual semi-

structured interviews were recorded using audio on the Zoom platform, and written notes

were taken by hand. Each participant self-identified as a Black male undergraduate

student in his third or fourth year at a PWI. I secured the interview notes by password-

protecting them on a laptop and flash drive, then stored them in a locked file cabinet in

my home office.

Demographics

Table 2

Demographics of Participants who currently attend Predominantly White Institutions

Participant	Year-in-College	First Generation	Geographic Location
Participant 1	3rd	Yes	West Coast
Participant 2	3rd	Yes	West Coast
Participant 3	3rd	No	East Coast
Participant 4	3rd	Yes	East Coast
Participant 5	3rd	Yes	Mid-West
Participant 6	3rd	Yes	Mid-West
Participant 7	3rd	No	East Coast
Participant 8	3rd	No	West Coast
Participant 9	3rd	Yes	East Coast
Participant 10	3rd	Yes	East Coast
Participant 11	3rd	Yes	West Coast
Participant 12	3rd	Yes	West Coast

Note: Black male students at PWIs.

Data Collection

The institution review board (IRB) approved number (08-16-23-0786566) the interview and Zoom audio recordings provided a safe space for the participants to share their stories. The open-ended questions allowed participants to share their perceptions

and experiences in their voices. I simultaneously transcribed the audio recordings into Zoom records; then, I collected the data using semi-structured interview questions, which enabled Black undergraduate male students to discuss their experiences and share their narratives in their voices. During the data collection phase, I conducted interviews with twelve participants, each lasting roughly 30 minutes. Zoom, a virtual platform, was the data-collecting instrument for all individual, semi-structured interviews. This application also offered a total of twelve written transcriptions and summaries. I stored all interview transcripts and summaries on a portable USB flash drive. Following the individual, somewhat organized interviews, I attentively listened, examined, and condensed more than 85 pages of transcripts on the Zoom platform. I refined the transcript by selecting solely the participants' answers to the interview inquiries. Subsequently, I used the participants' feedback and discerned prevailing patterns derived from their comments to construct each individual's storyline. Ultimately, I acquired and stored the audio recordings and transcripts on a laptop or flash drive that required a password. Finally, I securely placed this device in a lockable file cabinet in the home office. I converted the Zoom transcription and handwritten notes into Word documents and saved and stored them on an identical flash drive.

Data Analysis

For this qualitative study, I analyzed the data using descriptive analysis to understand human experiences and increase knowledge of why Black male students have the lowest graduation %age from PWIs.

Qualitative research can help researchers access the thoughts and feelings of research participants, allowing them to understand the meaning people attribute to their experiences. For this qualitative study, I explored CRT as a lens to explore social phenomena.

I transcribed and coded the data collected from the one-on-one, semi-structured interviews and summaries using Quirkos software. The transcription allowed me to review, summarize, and identify key phrases and words relevant to the research question. In short, each participant shared their narratives of their college experiences with similarities to other participants, and there were similarities and connections with the literature review.

Results

This study sought to ascertain the perspectives and encounters of Black male undergraduates in their third and fourth years of study in a(PWI. I investigated retention measures designed to assist Black male students during their initial three years of study. However, there is a deficiency in the existing body of research about eliminating obstacles connected to race and enhancing institutional assistance to address the distinct requirements of Black men striving to obtain a college degree. With many racial challenges, the results finally provided insight into the participants' perceptions and experiences of academic and social persistence at PWIs.

Following my interviews with twelve participants, I have found several emerging themes that shed light on the limitations and challenges that Black male students continue

to encounter despite attending a mostly White college. After conducting interviews with

twelve individuals, I have noticed the following themes: Financial difficulties, a sense of

not fitting in, limited access to resources, absence of mentorship or mentorship programs,

racial inequality, and the need to sustain self-determination and motivation.

Central Research Question

The central research question for this study was: What are the perceptions and

experiences of third and fourth-year undergraduate Black males at PWIs? I asked

participants nine questions about their experiences at a PWI to address the central

research question. I employed open-ended inquiries, allowing participants to provide

elaborate narratives of their encounters or perspectives of the institution. Despite the

limited number of participants in this interview, their responses established a correlation

between the obstacles or barriers they faced and their ability to continue and graduate

from a PWI.

<div align="center">

Thematic Coding

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After receiving responses from the participants, I utilized descriptive language

and phrases to assign codes and arrange the data in the Quirkos data software. I

interviewed twelve participants to collect data on their challenges and the resources

available. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), qualitative data yields themes or

patterns through a thematic process or analysis. Creswell (2018) outlined the sequential

process for evaluating qualitative data, which involves the following steps: gathering

unprocessed material, arranging and readying the data for analysis, thoroughly reviewing

all the data, categorizing the data, extracting overarching patterns, composing detailed

descriptions, establishing connections between patterns and descriptions, and interpreting

the underlying significance. Through the examination of individual semi-structured

interviews, six distinct themes emerged that accurately encapsulated the essence of the

participants' experiences. I used the participants' responses to construct the narratives.

Theme development can explain the commonalities and disparities in the research

phenomena's processing and scrutiny of data (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). Codes

and themes enhance the analysis of data in qualitative research.

Table 3

Words and Phrases Coded in the Interview Transcripts

Categories	Emerging Themes
Financial Struggles	Financial Support
Sense of Belonging/Identity	Lack of Belonging
Limited Institutional Resources	Lack of Resources/Supports
Support Systems	Mentors/Mentorship
Racial Disparity	Discrimination/Racism
Internal Motivation	Self-Determination

Note: Table 2 lists the keywords and phrases from the participants' responses.

Theme 1: Financial Struggles

Theme 1 identified that financial support and help are less accessible to Black

students. The common theme most participants revealed and shared is financial help to

continue their educational journey. Participants 2, 3, 4, and 8 shared their financial struggles and racial discrimination. Still, they stressed the importance of potential changes that could enhance their academic experience if the institutions offered more scholarships to Black students, thus making tuition costs more manageable. Although Participant 11 highlighted his challenges, including the lack of academic advice and support, he acknowledged the positive impact of having an advisor and that financial help made a difference in staying in school. Participants primarily relied on financial aid, family, and employment for financial support.

Most participants identified the primary obstacle they faced during their third year of college as the financial burden of paying for their education. Financial stress remains a significant issue affecting participants' ability to get a bachelor's degree. A participant mentioned that he secured a full-time job to help cover his school expenses. Collectively, every participant emphasized the significance of scholarships or grants in attaining their college degrees. The availability of financial resources may ultimately affect whether students persist or withdraw from education. A few participants disclosed that the colleges did not offer scholarships to Black students.

A student's socioeconomic status (SES) significantly influences their ability to persist in higher education (Patterson, 2021). Insufficient financial help made up a primary obstacle for the people involved in this study. Increased financing or financial aid in the future may enhance the rates at which Black males can stay enrolled and graduate from higher education institutions. In their study, Nichols and Evans-Bell

(2017) found that Black students often encounter a distinct set of obstacles, such as financial, intellectual, and social issues, which hinder their successful completion of a degree in higher education.

Financial stress or a lack of funds can be the main reason students drop out if they need to hold down paying jobs while in college (NBC News, 2021). Literature continues to show that there are fewer financial resources. For instance, Black male students frequently enroll in remedial classes without earning college credit or when their financial aid runs out. Dulabaum (2016) noted that college students continue to face financial barriers in higher education, which has emerged as a significant barrier for all groups. Lucas (2020) stated that most Black students rely on financial aid, such as the Federal Pell Grant system, loans, and fellowships, to help pay for their higher education. Black students depend on financial help.

In the past few years, the cost of attending college has risen astronomically, according to Lucas. Literature also shows that the value of financial aid no longer meets the specific needs to pay for tuition, books, and living expenses. Tolliver and Miller (2018) suggested that successful undergraduate attrition requires more than just financial aid. Overall, financial barriers for minority students have increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Minority students, especially men of color, continue to struggle to keep employment or give up completing their education. According to the literature, deciding to stay in school is a big decision for minorities and is difficult without financial and family support. In short, the state and federal governments must discuss ways to simplify

some financial processes so students can navigate the admissions and financial aid processes when applying to any institution.

Theme 2: Lack of Belonging

Theme 2 highlighted areas for improvement, such as increasing diversity and creating more spaces for inclusivity. Most participants revealed their social challenges, including feeling less connected and having difficulty networking, highlighting the importance of inclusivity and leadership opportunities for Black students. However, each participant gave me a deeper understanding of their experiences of belonging and welcome, while a few expressed feelings of unwelcomeness. Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 expressed their desire for greater campus acceptance, diversity, and inclusivity. They noted their difficulties with feeling unheard and not valued in class. Participant 1 said, "Being Black makes me feel different from whites, and I am not treated fairly." Participant 2 asserted, "I experienced cultural deprivation and cultural isolation on campus. One thing that I would change is exclusivity and include Blacks in everything." Participant 3 shared, "I feel excluded from certain campus activities."

Participants 1, 4, and 6 also reported experiencing exclusion from social activities and class participation. Participant 10 shared his experiences and challenges, including the lack of attention from white students and the unfriendly campus environment; however, none of them reported feeling unsafe. He also shared his experiences of feeling like an outsider and facing racism at the institution, emphasizing the importance of student organizations for support and community. He also discussed the need for greater

cultural inclusivity and resources for students of color. Meanwhile, participants 3 and 10 expressed their desire for greater acceptance and inclusivity on campus and noted their difficulties feeling heard and valued in class.

Several participants shared their feelings about the lack of belonging and personal issues, which continue to be a common challenge for participants when staying or leaving their institutions. Participants expressed feeling undervalued and unheard of in social clubs and sports activities. It was an obstacle for most of the participants. Overall, the conversation shed light on the experiences of black males in higher education and the need for continued efforts toward inclusivity and equity. Institutions with diverse faculty and staff may make a difference in recruiting and keeping minority students. In short, the institutions would benefit when they increased inclusivity in their schools and improved campus events to be more inclusive.

A sense of belonging refers to students' psychological connection to their community (Hurtado & Catheter, 1997). More importantly, a sense of belonging is a basic human need, and motivation influences behaviors. NBC (2021) reported that many Black and Latino students may leave because they feel excluded or isolated. Museums and Yi (2017) found that research linked a greater sense of belonging to increased intentions to persist toward graduation. The authors also found that culturally relevant and responsive campus environments can facilitate or hinder belonging. Over the last two decades, a sense of belonging has emerged as a critical component of college student persistence. Literature still shows that campus racial climate, negative experiences,

discrimination, and an unsupportive campus can affect students' academic performance, psychological well-being, or sense of belonging. Various studies have shown that educational inequities on college campuses prevent minority students from feeling welcomed. In short, researchers asserted that a culturally engaging campus environment and involvement in campus activities or organizations could influence Black students' decisions to attend and stay at a predominantly White institution (PWI).

Lack of Resources

Theme 3 limited student resources and services highlighted all participants' experiences at PWIs and the need for institutions to provide resources and support to ensure their success and retention. Participants 3, 4, 8, 9, and 12 reported limited student resources and services, such as campus staff, faculty, and counseling support. However, they emphasized that the library's use is the most crucial resource for their studies. The participants also highlighted the benefits of tutoring and mentoring services. They reported that accessibility to mental health support and counseling services is vital on school campuses, but these services and resources are still limited, especially during the post-COVID-19 pandemic.

Participant 10 addressed the importance of overcoming challenges and supporting those who need them, including mentorship programs accessible to everyone, irrespective of race, disability status, and gender. Most participants believed that all students should have access to mentoring. They emphasized the significance of mentorship for their college success. Participant 10 then discussed the importance of resources and support

services, including teachers of color, to create a more diverse and inclusive environment. He said, "I have access to an academic advisor but not mental health counseling services." In addition, participant 12 stated that he wants access to academic advice but not mental health counseling. The conversation highlighted the experiences of Black males at PWIs and the need for institutions to provide resources and support to ensure their success.

Some participants revealed the importance of having Black male initiatives, Black student unions, and Black educational leaders on White campuses. They also stressed the need for Black leaders to inspire or motivate them to finish school. Many participants who joined the Black Student Union experienced pride, a sense of belonging, and encouragement to persevere. All the participants agreed they attended PWI to have better opportunities, be the first person in their generation to complete college, and make a difference.

Overall, the participants expressed a need for the institution's availability of mentorship programs, diversity, scholarships, and mental health support services. Participants shared their thoughts on the institutions' role in alleviating challenges faced by Black students, including the fear of discrimination when reporting incidents. They discussed inclusive efforts, available resources, and the need for better support and resources for minority students attending PWIs. All students, particularly Black male students, could benefit from increased resources and services in higher education. Participants showed their institutions could do more to hire and improve diverse faculty

and staff members in their classrooms and across campuses. Institutions can benefit by adding campus leadership to all students. During their educational journey, the most common barrier for participants was a need for more support, whether as insufficient financial resources or campus support services, such as tutoring and mentoring programs.

Theme 4: Mentorship

Theme 4 emerged as the participants emphasized the need for social changes in these institutions to support them. They talked about better academic and social support to ease the campus climate. One participant discussed the crucial aspects of attending Black Lives Matter Moment to shed light on the lack of support for all minority students on and off school campuses. Participants 1–10 noted a lack of support and information from the institution regarding educational resources, such as applying for financial aid, finding a mentor, or tutoring services. However, Participant 12 said that the mentorship program could be more effective. From these emerging themes, the participants commented on better support for faculty and staff members who identify as Black or African Americans in leadership. All participants expressed the urgent need for more college leaders of color and mentorship programs. Participants mentioned a lack of peer mentoring, role models, advisors, and academic leaders to inspire them.

Participants 1–10 further revealed the lack of peer mentors, mentorship programs, and exclusion from campus activities. Participant 10 added, "I have experienced racism; it is not a friendly campus climate, there is no great financial funding, and I am not fully represented; however, the biggest challenge is not having mentorship." Overall, the

conversations shed light on addressing Black males' challenges at predominantly White institutions, such as the need for better support systems to ensure their success. Many participants expressed that their White counterparts dominate most campus activities. The interviews provided valuable insight into the experiences of Black male students at PWIs. It highlighted areas for improvement, such as increasing diversity and creating more spaces for mentorship programs to support Black students. Participants stressed that financial stress continues to affect their third year in school. Most participants confirmed that mentors, advisors, financial help, and campus involvement are crucial for their educational success. In short, research shows that mentorship and support systems help students navigate the college environment. Overall, participants who received support in various forms have allowed these students to persevere and persist in completing their degrees. According to Jarrells (2024), Black men exhibit improved responses when supported through mentorship groups or a team of many mentors who can cater to their diverse requirements, such as academic and mental health help and career guidance and advancement.

Theme 5: Racial Disparity

Theme 5 emerged as a significant issue facing Black men. Each participant identified the racism and microaggressions that they experienced in the classroom from both peers and instructors. Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9 revealed their challenges, including racism and rejection, and believe the institution has not done enough to ease their burden. Participants 1, 4, and 5 stated that his institution has progressed in dealing

with discrimination. Participant 4 said, "I have experienced discrimination, racism, isolation, and a lack of culture at my institution. I often address it with friends because we stick together." Participant 5 expressed his desire to eradicate racism, discrimination, prejudice, and biases by altering people's perceptions. He also shared that "racism and racial issues are major challenges that we still face, and I wish to change them." However, participant 3 mentioned that racism, microaggression, and feeling excluded have been his most significant challenges. He stated he desires to change the mindset of white peers attending his PWI. Participant 4 also expressed that he desired to eliminate discrimination to create a more balanced environment. Participants 1–4 also discussed efforts to address racism, tailor the college experience for Black students, and the need for inclusivity in campus events and accessible resources for all students. Participant 8 said, "I experienced discrimination and biases at my institution." Participant 9 responded, "There is an emotional imbalance, and the biggest challenge was the inability to control being a Black student, and I experienced racism and racial abuse from individuals, not the institution." Overall, the participants emphasized the importance of treating everyone equally, regardless of race or ethnicity, and stressed the need for culture and gender equality. Participants' interviews highlighted the need for institutions to prioritize equity and equal access for Black students, notably men. The institution of higher learning must eliminate racial disparity and create a positive campus environment of respect for all races.

Theme 6: Self-Determination

Theme 6, the motivation to attend college, emerged as the final theme for all the participants. Participant 1 stated that he believed in himself, which helped him persist and pay no attention to negativity. He also noted that his mother gave him sound wisdom about overcoming college obstacles. Participant 6 said, "It is difficult. It takes a lot of courage to continue my education. The biggest challenges that I have faced at this PWI are racism and feeling uncomfortable." Participant 6 also said, "I believed in myself. I turned a blind eye to the situation and tried to stay out of trouble on campus." "It was my zeal to make it, and I was born to succeed," said Participant 7. Many participants identified themselves not only as third-year undergraduate college students but also as first-generation students. Multiple participants talked about their drive and ambition to succeed. They believe that self-belief and high self-esteem have helped them overcome barriers. Most participants had support from their family and friends while pursuing their college degrees. These participants expressed that their families helped them pursue their college degrees.

Trustworthiness

Demographic questions at the start of the interview, which sought background information on each participant's credibility and the validity of their identity, confirmed the trustworthiness of the data collected in this study. One of my roles is to confirm the validity of qualitative research. The data must be trustworthy, as they are reliable academic sources. Once I established the demographics, the common themes from the

participants' interview responses identified the trustworthiness and credibility of the data collection. We collected data through one-on-one, semi-structured interviews, which we recorded and automatically transcribed through Zoom. Throughout this process, I scrutinized my biases and double-checked participants' responses to ensure consistency, a crucial step in determining the validity of the results.

Verifying the research steps by examining transcripts as raw data, data reduction in storage, and note processing can achieve data consistency (Campbell, 1996). To prepare for any modifications, I practiced a nonbiased approach and saw the data from a grounded, systematic, realistic, and rational perspective (Patton, 2015). The data supported a deeper understanding of the research question.

Summary

Chapter 4 included the research setting, procedure, demographics, data collection method, data analysis method, and evidence of trustworthiness. Chapter 4 also identified the findings from twelve semi-structured one-on-one interviews coded into emerging themes for analysis in response to the following research question:

What are the perceptions and experiences of third- and fourth-year undergraduate Black males at predominantly White institutions (PWIs)?

The interview process involved prompting participants to discuss their experience with the phenomena explored in the research study. Nine interview questions encouraged participants to describe their experience at a PWI. The overall responses from the data collection process provided answers to the central research question. In short, this study

may benefit colleges and universities by building a diverse environment that creates a sense of inclusion and equity (Delgado, 2012; DeCosmo, 2018). Critical race theory (CRT) helped shed light on participants' storytelling, gave voice to their experiences, and provided additional insight regarding their barriers. The participants' interview responses were used to analyze descriptions of this data analysis and emerging themes. More importantly, the emerging themes allowed me to describe the lived experiences of the Black male participants attending a predominantly White institution (PWI). The findings highlighted the perceptions of Black men at PWIs. In short, chapter four contained my study findings that capture Black men's experiences at PWIs. Finally, I trust that this chapter or study aimed to gain insight into the experiences of black male students at PWI and identify ways to improve their success and well-being.

In Chapter 5, I investigated the findings from the participants' one-on-one semi-structured interviews to develop strategies and recommendations for students' academic and social success, particularly Black male students. I also analyzed each participant's experiences related to the literature review and challenges faced attending PWIs; more importantly, I discussed recommendations for social change.

Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter summarized the findings from in-depth interviews with twelve Black male students currently enrolled in and attending predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). This study aimed to explore the perceptions and challenges of Black male students attending PWIs. The participants responded to questions about resources provided by the institution that were instrumental to their academic success. The study consisted of third-year volunteers who answered nine questions about their perceptions and experiences at a PWI. They exchanged their perspectives on challenges encountered in their pursuit of educational goals. In addition, they expressed their viewpoints on the challenges they faced.

This study also aimed to examine the support and resources available at PWIs. The twelve participants were millennials between 19 and 25 years old who attended a PWI across the United States. I conducted one-on-one Zoom interviews to collect data. From the findings of this study, I identified similarities between the participants' college experiences and perceptions addressed in the literature review. I also discovered that some participants had different obstacles not revealed in the literature review. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to answer this central research question:

RQ: What are the perceptions and experiences of third- and fourth-year undergraduate Black males at predominantly White institutions (PWIs)?

Interpretation of the Findings

Higher education institutions throughout the United States are still grappling with the challenge of enhancing the academic achievement of Black men at their campuses. Turner (2020) asserted that Black males, like other students, face struggles to persist in college. Wilson (2018) found that black men have the lowest rates of completing undergraduate degrees relative to all other genders and racial or ethnic groupings. Before COVID-19, Black males in the United States faced challenges completing their degrees. A persistent issue faced by black male college students is the absence of adequate financial help, a sense of inclusion, access to campus resources, and the ongoing racial disparities that hinder their pursuit of a college degree. Brooms and Davis (2017 reported that racial separation is a problem across all levels of PWIs

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Black men have the highest unemployment rate of civilian non-institutionalized Black, White, and white women over the age of twenty (Reeves et al., 2020). This study explored perceived barriers that could affect black males' educational journey. As outlined in the literature and problem statement, Black male students have low retention and graduation rates compared to their counterparts at PWIs. The study findings extended to the body of knowledge regarding this critical research topic. Research shows that in higher education, Black male students received only 9 % of bachelor's degrees, and White male students received 62 % in 2020-21.

In this study, Black males' responses provided insight into their academic and social experiences and why they continue with their respective PWIs. Their responses produced recurring themes that helped me address the central research question, which sought to discover Black males' perceptions and experiences in their third year—why they stayed at a PWI. The participants' responses produced the following recurring themes: (1) financial support, (2) a lack of belonging, (3) a lack of support or resources, (4) mentorship, (5) racial disparity, and (6) self-determination.

The participants who participated in mentorship programs felt accepted by their colleges and universities. However, a few participants who did not have mentorship programs struggled academically and socially. Higher education organizations should integrate mentors, tutors, and peer mentoring into their programs and make them available to students throughout their college journey, not just during the first year. Campus resources and services may help Black male students' educational success if made available.

I discovered that a few Black male students felt their academic majors, Black Male Initiatives (BMIs) programs, and leadership opportunities helped them persist throughout their college journey. I also discovered that Black male students with access to financial resources, acceptance, self-determination, mentors, and peers in higher education persist more than those who do not. These participants validated that having a mentor and being actively involved on campus were reasons they continued their higher learning at their institution. Many also confirmed their feelings that having supportive

advisors, mentors, peers, leaders, and counselors made a difference in their first three years in college. I found that community and personal belonging are crucial for postsecondary students. Not having access to social support can challenge many students, particularly Black men. In short, campus mentorship and leadership opportunities are critical for Black students' success. It is valuable for Black male students to see campus leadership like themselves, which might help them imagine their academic success (Turner & Grauerholz, 2017).

Experiencing a sense of belonging was a common theme that emerged from the data analysis. This research showed that the Black Student Union (BSU), Black Male Initiative Program (BMI), and Black fraternity organizations were valuable and provided leadership opportunities for them. These organizations have helped students tell their stories, increase engagement, build a community of learners, create supportive student experiences, and provide a fair and culturally responsive classroom environment. In short, creating a positive community in higher education will benefit students, faculty, and staff. The campus climate or community benefits when stakeholders join and help those confronting obstacles, barriers, and challenges. In short, higher education institutions must improve diversity and inclusion policies and curricula to serve all undergraduate students. Campus diversity allows students to engage with others and helps them communicate effectively with people of different backgrounds. Higher education's primary focus and goal should be to create college campuses that promote equal opportunity and fair access for all students.

Studies show that Black male students still face unique challenges at predominantly White colleges and universities, including feelings of invisibility, microaggressions, and a shortage of Black staff and faculty on their campuses. Turner (2020) found that Black male students enrolled in predominantly White colleges (PWIs) continue to face challenges in their ability to persist and successfully graduate from college. An analysis of the literature reveals that Black men exhibit much lower rates of college graduation compared to those of other races. Additionally, they frequently meet detrimental stereotypes and experience microaggressions inside the academic environment. The literature analysis also indicates that numerous mainly White institutions (PWIs) still face a scarcity of both Black male students and Black faculty and staff in leadership positions. Black men residing in impoverished communities may encounter limited access to social networks and financial assets that could support their enrollment and achievement in higher education.

In addition, the literature shows that social integration and Black male students' involvement in the campus culture are crucial. Engagement with peers through campus activities, clubs, sports, and various organizations is vital for strengthening students' sense of belonging, raising self-confidence, and encouraging academic and personal success.

In this study, in-depth narratives allowed me to gain insight and better understand what this population group may need to persist and overcome the tremendous challenges they still face while attending a PWI. In short, there is still a need for continued support

and actionable research related to the success of Black men in higher education, including other minority students.

Common themes concluded that cultural beliefs, racism, discrimination, lack of financial and family support, lack of role models, leadership, lack of inclusivity, lack of equity and diversity, emotional distress, support system, academic advising, incarceration, institutional or campus resources, and sense of belonging have all affected Black men's success in higher education (Nelson et al., 2020; Phillip, 2011; Heitzer, 2009; Hall & Rowan, 2000). In short, Black men at PWIs, despite their unique challenges, continue to overcome obstacles they face at PWIs and continue to succeed in their academic and social pursuits.

Discussion

I examined the reasons for Blacks' low retention and graduation rates at PWIs. The research question guided this discussion: What are the perceptions of experiences of third- and fourth-year undergraduate Black males at PWIs? I discovered what influenced Black males to persist at the institution. When looking at this fundamental question, the participants shared their experiences freely, which provided great insights related to previous research. Most of all, this study gave me a deeper understanding of perceived challenges in higher education.

Challenges Faced by Black Male at PWIs

A recent study on Black males has shed light on the numerous difficulties, impediments, and hurdles this group encounters due to low retention and completion

rates (McElderry, 2022). In subtle ways, Black male students still experience overtly hostile campus environments, and they rarely experience the freedom of emotion (Thompkins-Jones, 2020). Past and present studies continue to show these unrelenting challenges Black males faced in higher education, especially first-generation college men: academic and social barriers, pre-enrollment, post-enrollment, psychosocial, and social factors. However, recent research suggested that more stakeholders should take action to support Black male students in completing college (Calhoun, 2021).

According to recent research, Black male students have encountered the most significant difficulties during the COVID-19 epidemic (Calhoun, 2021). Black men have reported several persistent obstacles on college campuses, including the need for financial assistance or support, a sense of not belonging, insufficient support systems, limited access to institutional resources, and issues relating to race. They reported these challenges in the classrooms, student organizations, and on and off campus. Black male students also reported that campus diversity and inclusivity were essential to thriving in the real world. They noted that having good campus representation has helped them feel welcome. This study unveiled several obstacles that Black males continue to face in higher education: Insufficient financial resources, inadequate preparation, limited community support, and a lack of a sense of belonging contribute to the academic challenges faced by Black pupils. I classified and discerned these issues into distinct groups and themes. The challenges related to a sense of belonging in higher education

significantly contribute to Black males' difficulties in staying enrolled and completing their degrees.

Financial Struggles

College students continue to face financial challenges in higher education. Literature shows that financial resources and paying for college tuition emerged as significant barriers for all groups. Black students depend on financial help, such as the Federal Pell Grant system and scholarships, to help pay for their higher education. Studies suggest socioeconomic challenges affect students' academic performance. Students who achieve higher grades originate from privileged socioeconomic circumstances, have more substantial support from their parents, family members, or friends, and have previous exposure to preschool education.

Strayhorn (2010) asserted that upon entering college, adverse socioeconomic circumstances and unwelcoming campus cultures that lack support and empathy immediately confront Black males. Research also suggests that socioeconomic status substantially influences students' academic performance and educational accomplishments. First-generation and low-socioeconomic students face extra challenges when pursuing higher education, especially if their parents did not get a four-year or bachelor's degree in the United States.

According to Patterson (2021), young Black men exhibited a lower rate of educational achievement compared to their peers. Many students face a discrepancy between the costs of education, including tuition, housing, course materials,

transportation, and other miscellaneous fees, and their financial capacity to meet these expenses. Research indicates that students from low-income households and minority groups face significant obstacles in attending higher education due to their unfulfilled financial requirements. According to Benjamin (2023), there is an inequitable allocation of educational excellence in higher education, particularly for students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, to ensure fairness and equality.

Participant 3 discussed the need for scholarships and other resources to be made more accessible to Black students. Participant 7 discussed the challenges that Black males face in White institutions. He emphasized the need for social changes in the institution to support Black males better academically and socially. Participant 8 reported that he is a full-time student receiving financial aid but no scholarships. According to him, the economic struggle he is going through has been his biggest challenge. He said college tuition and fees were so high that he almost dropped out of college because he ran out of funds. He sighed. "My mom is struggling financially, and I worked part-time to help my family." Later, he admitted he wished the institution would make the financial burden easier for Blacks and provide more scholarships for minorities. In short, financial stress or struggles often impact participants' pursuit of earning a degree.

Participant 10 is a 24-year-old full-time undergraduate attending the West Coast in his third year and majoring in computer science. He said that he is a first-generation college student. What does being a Black male at a PWI mean? "To be during White students. I stand out because I am a black sheep among white sheep." Participant 10

explained how he came to decide to attend a PWI. His father wanted him to attend such a

school to groom him in a highly competitive environment. He showed he has faced

difficulties and challenges as a Black male student. I also asked Participant 10: What

challenges have you faced at this PWI? What has been the biggest challenge of being a

Black male attending a PWI, and what other challenges or barriers have you experienced

since attending a PWI? "I have experienced racism; it is not a friendly campus climate,

there is no excellent financial funding, and I am not fully represented; however, the

biggest challenge is not having mentorship. The school has been facing a persistent issue

of a deficiency in effective mentorship.

Participant 10 shared his experiences and challenges, including the lack of

attention from White students, the unfriendly campus climate, and the lack of mentorship.

He emphasized the importance of overcoming challenges and providing support to those

who need it, including mentorship programs that are accessible to everyone, irrespective

of race, disability status, or gender.

Through this study, I found that socioeconomic status (SES) significantly impacts

the academic performance of those attending a four-year college or university. Inside

Higher Ed (2023) revealed that low-income students and students of color have

substantial barriers to obtaining higher education due to their unfulfilled financial

requirements. Research indicates that most students face a discrepancy between the costs

involved with attending college, such as tuition, accommodation and meals, course

materials, transportation, and other miscellaneous fees, and their financial capacity to

meet these charges. The presence of economic stress and worry can have a detrimental impact on a student's capacity to achieve success in their college education.

According to Thompkins-Jones (2022), race-conscious financial support is a strategy to ensure fair allocation of the university's resources, specifically for students facing financial difficulties. According to Lucas (2020), the financial capacity to afford college plays a crucial role in determining the achievement of Black men. Black men frequently have additional financial burdens within their families, which exacerbate the difficulties of obtaining school. There is an absence of equilibrium between work and personal life; individuals must engage in employment to sustain themselves and thrive. Black men struggle to maintain academic persistence from one semester to the next because of difficulties effectively managing their households. Black men face economic challenges that result in lower income, making it difficult for them to support themselves and their families. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rise in financial obstacles for minority students, particularly Black guys. Therefore, unmet needs are part of a larger cycle of financial stressors that may prevent a student from earning a college degree and experiencing a sense of belonging.

Lack of Belonging

Higher education frequently prioritizes individual accomplishment rather than collective goals. Research shows colleges and institutions prioritize individualism over collectivism (Jarrells, 2024). Other aspects of higher education, such as admissions procedures, internship prospects, and scholarship applications, foster a rivalry among

college students (Jarrells, 2024). An environment with a more significant adverse effect on underrepresented and marginalized pupils can gradually reduce the feeling of belongingness and create a hostile atmosphere for learners (Jarrells, 2024). Participant 2, a third-year student living on the West Coast, felt unease and alienation upon commencing their participation in 2022. He disclosed his challenges, experiencing a sense of cultural isolation and a lack of understanding from his mentors, instructors, and staff. He emphasized the need for more diversity and cultural comprehension on campus to foster a sense of welcome and belonging among Black students. In addition, he conveyed that, notwithstanding the difficulties, he persisted and achieved a triumph through his resolve and the help of his colleagues. Participant 3 revealed that his challenges stem from his racial complexion, facing exclusion from certain activities, and the importance of support networks like counseling and mentorship. According to Participant 10, the campus environment at his university towards Black students is sterile, with a noticeable lack of representation. Participant 10 reported they had only encountered a Black professor over their tenure at the primarily white institution (PWI).

Participants revealed that seeing and connecting with professors from their racial group is essential for their development and persistence. Studies have shown that faculty and staff-student support fosters a sense of belonging. Studies also show that college students who feel a sense of belonging and community are more likely to succeed academically and socially by engaging and persisting through challenges.

Participant 2 is a 24-year-old full-time undergraduate attending (on the West Coast) in his third year of studying mass communication. He revealed he was the first person in his immediate family to attend or graduate from college. I asked a few identified questions, such as: What made you choose to attend a PWI? I also asked, "Did the institution play any significant role in alleviating your challenges?" How did you handle the challenges that came your way? He said, "There was cultural deprivation and cultural isolation, and I did not fit in. No, the institution did not help, and there was limited mentorship. What do you believe helped you overcome these challenges, and what did you do to succeed? Participant 2 also responded, "Friends and social groups supported me!" How has the institution tailored your college experience to make you feel welcomed or have a sense of belonging? "Well, they allowed Blacks to have group meetings," he said. Last question: What would it be if I gave you a magic wand and you could change one thing about your experience at a PWI? Participant 2 replied that he would change exclusivity and include Blacks in everything.

In summary, Participant 2 shared his experiences as a Black male student at a predominantly white institution. He discussed the challenges by creating groups with other Black students. He stated he believes the campus needs more inclusivity and cultural understanding.

Evidence indicates that Black men continue to have challenges related to a sense of inclusion and a deficiency in self-identification inside the realm of higher education. NBC (2021) said that Black and Latino men may discontinue their education due to

feelings of exclusion or isolation. A significant number of participants reported feeling a sense of identity loss on college campuses, leading to psychological distress. Facilitating a sense of inclusion and recognition through fostering belonging and representation can benefit Black students by enhancing their feelings of acceptance and worth.

Jarrells (2024) demonstrated that an environment that promotes individualism can have a detrimental impact on black male students, particularly in educational institutions that are mostly or historically attended by white students (Jarrells, 2024). According to Jarrells' research, Black male students accounted for only 9 % of the bachelor's degrees awarded to men in the academic year 2020-21, while White male students obtained 62 %. One factor contributing to this issue is the problem faced by numerous Black students, particularly males, in experiencing a sense of value and belonging within their educational institution's community (Jarrells, 2024). Educational leaders must maintain a discerning attitude towards the detrimental impact of White supremacy culture on the experiences, perseverance, and retention of Black male students (Thompkins-Jones, 2020). Institutions must reestablish and cultivate a sense of belonging for Black men. In short, today's institutions and educational leaders must invest more resources in supporting Black male students on college campuses.

Lack of Resources

Black males attending predominately Caucasian universities encounter difficulties frequently in accessing the support networks to thrive in higher education. Johnson (2023) suggested that a lack of resources and opportunities specifically designed to

support Black students and a lack of understanding among non-Black classmates and teachers may contribute to this phenomenon. When Black males choose to attend a predominantly white institution (PWI), they promptly encounter potential obstacles, animosity, and a lack of help (McElderry, 2022).

Research shows that Black men respond more positively to support when provided with sufficient resources. Participant 10 is a 24-year-old, full-time, first-generation undergraduate student living on the West Coast. Currently, in his third year of study, he is pursuing a major in computer science. He discussed his difficulties, including the absence of guidance from mentors, limited representation of diverse perspectives, restricted availability of academic materials, and inadequate funding for Black students. He also shared the unfriendly climate for Black students and the lack of representation. Participant 11, a first-generation and third-year undergraduate, talked about feeling deprived of academic advice and support but appreciating the mentorship program and financial help he received. Supporting Black males on college campuses is essential for educational and social integration.

Participant 3 is a 24-year-old full-time undergraduate attending the East Coast in his third year and majoring in philosophy. He showed he was a second-generation student. For example, he stated that his mom and dad attended college. Some questions asked again in the interview guide were: What made you choose to attend a PWI? He explained, "I am avidly exposed to resources. I have an excellent education." What does being a Black male at a PWI mean to you? It means being with Black people like me."

Participant 3 stated the challenges he faced at this PWI. His most prominent challenge of being a Black male attending a PWI, and other challenges, he said, "were racism and microaggression." Did the institution play any significant role in alleviating your challenges? How did you handle the challenges that came your way? "I got to meet with counselors. I try to avoid Whites so I will not get into trouble."

Participant 3 expressed his difficulties because of his skin color, including being excluded from various activities. He emphasized the significance of having support networks like therapy and mentorship. He underscored the importance of enhancing the accessibility of scholarships and other resources for Black students. Ultimately, he expressed his views regarding the inclusiveness of school events and the problem of racism on campus, along with his aspiration to alter the thinking of white students.

Egan (2019) examined the inequitable encounters faced by Black males and minority faculty members in college settings, which contribute to the perpetuation of inequality in higher education. According to NECES (2020), the literature consistently shows that Black men have the lowest graduation rate during six years compared to other gender and racial groupings in higher education. Based on the literature, Black male undergraduates face both overt racism and subtle forms of contempt on specific college campuses, which impede their integration into the academic system. Several interviewees emphasized the limited resources and insufficient assistance provided to Black students on campus. Participants from the Midwest region reported cultural inequalities but indicated satisfaction with the aid and initiatives provided by the university.

Participants concluded they could not attend or be involved in most perceived White organizations. Campbell et al. (2019) found that Black students at PWIs spent considerable energy and time dealing with feelings of alienation, frustration, and a lack of campus support. Financial, family, community, and campus support are crucial for belonging.

Participant 5 is 24 years old and a full-time undergraduate attending (at a Mid-West institution) in his third year, majoring in psychology. He said that he is not a first-generation college student. He answered this interview question: What made you attend a PWI? Boris said he attends to challenges and expectations. "What does being a Black male at a PWI mean to you?" I like being mixed with White students and having new experiences. What do you believe helped you overcome these challenges, and what did you do to succeed? "Meeting with a school counselor and therapist helped me overcome challenges," he said.

Participant 5 discussed Black males' challenges in his institution. For example, he emphasized the need for social changes in these institutions to support Black males better academically and socially. Overall, the interview shed light on addressing Black males' challenges in predominantly White institutions and the need for better support systems to ensure their success.

Participant 11 is a 23-year-old part-time undergraduate attending West Coast in his third year and studying computer engineering. He identified himself as a first-generation college student. What made you choose to attend a PWI? Participant 11

responded, "My college is a fantastic university, and there is support." What does being a Black male at a PWI mean to you? He said, "It means a lot to me, and I get encouragement." I asked Participant 11: What challenges have you faced at this PWI? What has been the biggest challenge for a Black male attending a PWI? "There is a lack of belonging, feeling invisible, and not having funding to complete my education. The biggest challenge is not having a mentor." What do you believe helped you overcome these challenges, and what do you do to succeed? He responded, "I am assigned to an advisor, and I work to fund my education." How has the institution tailored your college experience to make you feel welcomed or have a sense of belonging? He said that being treated equally was great. What resources and support services are available at this PWI, and what other support did the college provide or not provide for your success? Participant 11 stated that he has mental health support and scholarships available. What would it be like if I gave you a magic wand and you could change one thing about your experience at a PWI? He wants an even distribution of scholarships and equal access for all students.

Participant 11 highlighted his challenges, including the lack of academic advice and support, but acknowledged the positive impact of having an advisor and financial assistance. He also discussed the institution's availability of mentorship programs, scholarships, and mental health support services. In short, he emphasized the need for accessible scholarships for all students, regardless of race, and expressed his thoughts on the inclusivity of campus events.

Participant 12 is a 24-year-old part-time undergraduate attending the West Coast in his third year studying mass communication. Are you a first-generation college student? He said, "Yes!" What made you choose to attend a PWI? He revealed, "To have a better opportunity. I chose it because of educational programs." He also said, "It has been tough being a Black male at a PWI." He explained, "I have experienced social challenges and am trying to prove myself; however, the biggest challenge is cultural isolation, and no, the institution has not yet eased my challenges." What do you believe helped you overcome these challenges, and what did you do to succeed? "Well, I am showing people what I can do, and I am in small study groups; we come together." Do you feel the campus events include Black male students? Why or why not? He replied, "I don't feel they are not inclusive. They don't include Blacks, and White students dominate it." I asked, What resources and support services are available at this PWI?" He said, "I have mentorship programs, but they are ineffective. I have a mentor, but the mentor has no affiliation with the school. The last question I asked this participant was, What would it be if I gave you a magic wand and you could change one thing about your experience at a PWI? Participant 12 stated, "I want to create a friendly environment and connect with everyone."

In summary, Participant 12 discussed his challenges, including social isolation, a constant need to prove himself, and a lack of a supportive and familiar environment. He also mentioned that the mentorship program is not as effective as he would like it to be and that he has access to academic advice but not mental health counseling. Participant

12 suggested that the school conduct surveys to better understand the needs of students of color and improve their experiences at the institution.

Jarrell (2024) observed that many universities have addressed the unequal achievement rates of Black male students by providing help and promoting specific, culturally inclusive organizations such as Developing Men of Color at Virginia Commonwealth University. According to Jarrell (2024), these clubs, primarily composed of Black male students, have effectively offered mentorship opportunities without worrying about cultural responsiveness and involvement.

Although campuses provide students with many resources, including academic coaching, tutoring, career services, mental health help and counseling, financial services, advising services, and physical health resources, navigating institutional resources on campus can be a significant challenge for all students (THEC, 2021). For Black males to be successful in their postsecondary programs of study, they need connection, community, and support (Brooms, 2020; Harper, 2012). Jarrells (2024) stated that institutions must invest more extensively in building community throughout their curricular and extracurricular offerings. Jarrells also noted that investment would benefit not only Black male students but also many other students with various backgrounds, identities, and intersectionality—including those who may fall through the cracks without notice.

In short, institutions must strive to end a hostile environment on campuses that negatively affects underrepresented and marginalized students, notably Black male

students. They must also provide better support and resources to Black males on college campuses. In short, institutions of higher learning must provide students with access to mentoring, tutoring, and mental health services for academic and social success.

Mentorship

Starting classes, learning to acclimate to a new academic environment, and building connections with other students, faculty, and staff can be enormous challenges (THEC, 2021). For Black men, the literature emphasized that the connection challenge extends to underrepresentation and a lack of diversity among campus staff and administrators. Recent studies showed that focusing on successful mentorship programs, college retention, and graduation strategies among Black undergraduate men may lead to persistence. According to THEC, there is inherent value in having leaders who share a similar appearance to oneself. Earlier, Participant 2 expressed the belief that colleges should allow every student to avail themselves of mentorship, tutoring services, healthcare, and leadership opportunities while attending college. He described the need for mentors with whom he could converse regarding his living circumstances.

Participant 4 disclosed that the university library is the sole resource at their disposal. Participant 2 mentioned that the university offered mentorship services, but they were only available to a limited extent. He preferred Black mentors who could empathize with and comprehend his life's difficulties. He asserted that White mentors could comprehend his displeasure and daily stress. Participant 2 observed a state of "cultural isolation" and a scarcity of Black mentors at their institution, expressing a desire for

greater inclusion. Participants specifically showed a deficiency in leadership, with a

shortage of exemplary figures, academic mentors, and peers to guide the process.

Participant 8 suggested that the institution could enhance its academic performance by

providing tutoring services. Research shows that many educational institutions implement

mentorship programs to cultivate student relationships.

Tolliver and Miller (2018) stated that mentorships foster students' growth and

self-fulfillment. The researchers showed that mentorship could benefit students during

their first years of attendance. Peer mentoring and mentorship programs may help

students navigate academically and socially. These mentoring programs take many forms,

including peer mentoring, pairing students with community partners, or providing

campus mentors, such as faculty, staff, or administrators. College-based mentorship

programs can facilitate the establishment of a feeling of belonging and camaraderie

among Black males within the college community. Postsecondary schools, particularly

mostly White ones, should also consider implementing retention initiatives to tackle

minority faculty and staff being underrepresented (THEC, 2021). Participants expressed

their sentiments regarding the significance of counter-cultural venues, such as the Black

Student Union, Cultural Center, mostly Black student clubs, and Black Male Initiative

Programs.

Racism/Microaggression

Black male students on college campuses continue to face racial inequality,

racism, microaggression, and discrimination. Recent research shows that Black males and

minority faculty members in higher education are still grappling with racial inequity and injustice on college campuses. According to Johnson (2023), Black men at PWIs continue to encounter significant difficulties in countering unfavorable stereotypes and microaggressions. Brooms' (2018) study observed that faculty members often hold low expectations, biases, and prejudice against students' intellectual capabilities. Participant 1, a 24-year-old full-time undergraduate, reported being enrolled in a PWI on the West Coast, where he is pursuing a double major in art and psychology. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the unjust treatment he received and expressed a desire to rectify the ratio of prejudice at his institution. As an illustration, he said, "Because of my ethnicity and occasionally and because of my religious convictions, I experience discrimination."

Participant 3 had comparable views regarding the impact of skin color as a difficulty in his educational institution. He recalled how his colleagues would mock him for his dark complexion and "thuggish" looks, suggesting that he resembled a criminal. Participant 1: He is a 24-year-old full-time undergraduate attending (on the West Coast) in his third year and is an art and psychology major. He said that he is a first-generation college student. The interview guide included a few questions, one of which was: What does being a Black male at a PWI mean to you? He said, "Being Black makes me feel different from Whites, and I am not treated fairly." What challenges have you faced at this PWI? What has been the biggest challenge of being a Black male attending a PWI? And what other challenges or barriers have you experienced since attending a PWI? Participant 1 revealed, "There is discrimination; people recognize my skin or ethnic

color. The biggest challenge is the unfair treatment we receive, with people recognizing our skin or ethnic color."

In addition, Participant 1 talked about his challenges as a Black student in a white institution, including discrimination and ethnic disparity.: Despite everything, he still believes that self-belief and high self-esteem have helped him overcome these challenges. Moreover, he mentioned that, despite the institution's progress in tackling discrimination, some people continue to face the problem. He also showed the resources and support services available at his school. He said, "There is lunch for students and good academic counselors. They asked the final question of the interview: "If you were given a magic wand and could change one thing about your experience at a PWI, what would it be?" He said, "Well, I will change racial discrimination because it is a major challenge at this school."

Participant 3 is a 24-year-old full-time undergraduate attending the East Coast in his third year and majoring in philosophy. He showed he was a second-generation student. For example, he stated that his mom and dad attended college. Some questions asked again in the interview guide were: What made you choose to attend a PWI? He explained, "I am avidly exposed to resources. I have an excellent education." What does being a Black male at a PWI mean to you? It means being with Black people like me." Participant 3 stated the challenges he faced at this PWI. He said, "My biggest challenge as a Black male attending this PWI is racism and microaggression. I face it every day. Did the institution play any significant role in alleviating your challenges? How did you

handle challenges that came your way?" I got to meet with counselors to talk about my

frustrations and anger issues, and what seems to help me is that I try to avoid Whites so I

will not get into trouble."

Further, Participant 4 stated that he was 23 years old and attending a PWI on the

East Coast. He noted that the most common challenges were discrimination and racism.

Although he did not identify as a first-generation college student, he stressed that

supporting diversity and racial equality on campus could be better. Participant 9 is a 21-

year-old full-time undergraduate attending East Coast University in his third year and

majoring in International Relations. He stated he was a first-generation college student. I

asked him, What does being a Black male at a PWI mean to you? He said that it means

many things, especially my skin color. What challenges have you faced at this PWI?

What has been the biggest challenge of being a Black male attending a PWI, and what

other challenges or barriers have you experienced since attending a PWI? Did the

institution play any significant role in alleviating your challenges? He responded, "There

is an emotional imbalance, and the biggest challenge was the inability to control being a

Black student at a PWI. He also said, "I experienced racism and racial abuse from

individuals, not the institution." What do you believe helped you overcome these

challenges, and what did you do to succeed? "I can walk away and not look at what is

happening around me." How has the institution tailored your college experience to make

you feel welcomed or have a sense of belonging? I also asked Participant 9, What would

it be if I gave you a magic wand and you could change one thing about your experience at

a PWI?" He said, "I would change how others treat me and other Black people because we still feel undervalued."

Finally, Participant 9 shared his experiences with racism and emotional imbalance and the resources and support services that have helped him succeed. The interview provided insight into the challenges faced by Black male students at predominantly White institutions and the need for fair treatment and respect for Black people. Participant 9 reiterated the importance of treating Black people equally. In short, the participants identified tokenism as a microaggression.

Research shows that Black male undergraduate students encounter explicit racism and more covert forms of discrimination in specific college environments, which persist as obstacles to their full integration into the higher education system (Egan, 2019). Egan (2019) thoroughly documented the recording of inequitable treatment of Black undergraduate students, specifically in predominantly White educational institutions. The literature shows that a significant number of Black college students encounter elevated levels of mental discomfort compared to their non-White counterparts. According to Benjamin (2022), students belonging to racial or ethnic minority groups are only half as inclined to seek help for mental health concerns throughout their academic experience. Benjamin reported that suicide was the third most prevalent cause of death among African American males between the ages of 15 and 24. Benjamin (2022) found that among the Black community, Black men aged 20 to 24 had the highest suicide rate when compared to other age groups and genders.

The National Academies Issues Report (2023) reported that gatekeepers' stereotypical, biased, prejudiced, and discriminatory practices often perpetuate racism unconsciously. These automatic and ambiguous practices make them difficult to monitor and identify. Many participants showed that racial disparities and stress affect their mental health. Also, many participants expressed that they have encountered microaggression and racial fatigue, or the toll of living with racism, and they have used it as motivation to persist. In short, institutions should address discrimination and racism through policies and support systems. Institutions also should provide additional resources and support services for academic and social success. Campbell et al. (2019) concluded that campus climate and race still matter for Black college students. Institutions would benefit from enrolling and keeping people of color, particularly men, by providing additional support through these programs, such as peer mentoring, mentorship, or Black Male Initiatives (BMI) programs. Therefore, the interviews shed light on addressing the challenges faced in predominantly White institutions and the need for better support systems to ensure Black male students' success. It also sheds light on the fact that colleges and universities must do more to help students, particularly Black males, weather financial storms and navigate the complexities of college life.

Self-Determination

Self-determination entails maintaining an unwavering focus on a specific aim. Resolute commitment is an essential element for achieving success. Participants 1 and 6 expressed their steadfast determination and commitment to their education, regardless of

obstacles. Participant 3 highlighted the importance of dismantling barriers and dispelling

misconceptions as practical strategies to tackle his issues. In addition, he emphasized that

his intrinsic drive had a significant role in surmounting the obstacles associated with

attending a predominantly white institution (PWI). Participant 6 claimed that he did not

possess an innate disposition towards failure. Although Black males face obstacles in

college, they remain determined to succeed and obtain their degrees. This population is

resilient.

Participant 4 is a 23-year-old full-time undergraduate attending the East Coast in

his third year and studying computer engineering. He did not identify himself as a first-

generation college student. However, I asked these questions: What made you attend a

PWI? Participant 4 said that he chose a PWI for "higher education standards." What does

being a Black male at a PWI mean to you? He said, "I want to get the best for myself. I

asked Participant 4 about the challenges he faced at this PWI, the biggest challenge of

being a Black male attending a PWI for him, and any other challenges or barriers he has

experienced since attending a PWI. Did the institution play any significant role in

alleviating your challenges? How did you handle the challenges that came your way? He

explained that discrimination, racism, isolation, and a lack of culture have been his

challenges at his institution. In his description, he explained how the institution played a

crucial role in alleviating his challenges. He said that students can address it. I have

friends to support and try not to get into trouble. My self-drive continues to help me

succeed, and more importantly, I want to make something of myself." Like Participant 2, they try to avoid trouble at their PWIs.

Participant 4 shared his thoughts on the accessibility of scholarships and mental health support services and expressed his desire to eliminate discrimination to create a more balanced environment. The interview highlighted the importance of inclusivity and support for Black male students at predominantly White institutions. Several participants reflected on their motivation, desire, and faith to attend college. They also reflected on their family members, who sacrificed for them to have a better life.

Participant 6 is a 20-year-old full-time undergraduate attending Mid-West in his third year and studying agriculture. He said that he is the first person in his immediate family to attend or graduate from college. This participant shared his perspective on being a Black male at a PWI. He replied, "It is difficult. It takes a lot of courage." Participant 6, what challenges have you faced at this PWI? He said that racism and feeling uncomfortable." What do you believe helped you overcome these challenges, and what did you do to succeed? Participant 6 said he believes in himself and turns a blind eye to the situation. He also talked about how his mother gave him wisdom about overcoming obstacles. How has the institution tailored your college experience to make you feel welcomed or have a sense of belonging? He answered that the school has embraced Blacks, allowing him and others to be heard. What resources and support services are available at this PWI, and what other support did the college provide or not provide for your success? He said that students have counselors and the library." Last

question: What would it be like if I gave you a magic wand and you could change one thing about your experience at a PWI? "I would change the perceptions people have regarding Blacks. We are all humans. People should change their perceptions regarding Blacks and treat us with respect.

In summary, Participant 6 discussed the college's efforts to make Black male students feel welcome, including measures to prevent discrimination and provide access to resources and support services. If we change people's perceptions, he believes we can eradicate racism, bigotry, prejudice, and biases. He shared positive experiences with the school's counselors, library, and healthcare providers. He also shared his thoughts about changing people's perceptions regarding race and treating all races with respect and dignity, emphasizing the need for social change and advocating for a more inclusive and fair society. Participant 6 concluded that it is crucial to provide support, resources, and services to minority students to help them succeed.

Participant 7 is a 22-year-old full-time undergraduate attending the East Coast in his third year and studying computer science. He is not a first-generation college student. I asked him, "What made you choose to attend a PWI? He responded, "I want to experience life and to learn from others, and my mother was my biggest motivator when I applied to college." What does being a Black male at a PWI mean to you? He said that it means many challenges. For example, Participant 7 said, "There is racism and rejection of Black people at my school." What do you believe helped you overcome these challenges, and what did you do to succeed? He stated his zeal to make it: I was born to

succeed. He also showed that racism is the biggest challenge at his institution. What resources and support services are available at this PWI, and what other support did the college provide or not provide for your success? He acknowledged, "There is a lack of full-time scholarships for Blacks and limited services such as academic advising." I also asked him what it would be like if I gave you a magic wand and you could change one thing about your experience at a PWI. He said, "I want racism to be eliminated because then all races will have equal rights."

In summary, Participant 7 discussed his challenges, including racism and rejection. He believes the institution has not done enough to ease these challenges and lacks support. However, he suggested full-time scholarships and mental health services. He also discussed his efforts to promote equality and socialization with others.

Participant 8 is a 22-year-old full-time undergraduate attending the West Coast in his third year and majoring in computer science. He does not identify himself as a first-generation college student. What made you choose to attend a PWI?" He stated, "I want to attend an excellent school." What does being a Black male at a PWI mean to you? Participant 8 replied, "It is an issue. The Whites are more favored." What challenges have you faced at this PWI? What has been the biggest challenge for a Black male attending a PWI? And what other challenges or barriers have you experienced?" At this PWI, he maintained that there is discrimination and bias. In addition, Participant 8 reported his most significant challenges at this school are the lack of financial help (money for books) and racism. Then I asked him about the resources and support services available at this

PWI and what other support the college provided or did not provide for his success. He said that they provided a library and mental health services. What do you believe helped you overcome these challenges, and what did you do to succeed? He said, "I got help from other people, such as friends and family. What would it be like if I gave you a magic wand and you could change one thing about your experience at a PWI? He responded, "I would try to make college easy for Blacks and provide more scholarships for all Black students."

In summary, Participant 8 shared his experience as a Black student in a PWI, including financial struggles and racial discrimination. He talked about inclusivity and the support services available at his school. More importantly, he also brought up potential changes that could improve the experience of Black students at predominantly White institutions, such as making financial costs easier and offering scholarships specifically for Black students. He also shared his experience with academic advising and mentoring, including tutorial services and study groups. However, this interview did not specifically mention mental health counseling.

Strayhorn and Terrell (2010) stressed the significance of family involvement in supporting Black students during their educational journey, which may increase persistence. More importantly, increasing self-motivation may give students the tools to overcome obstacles and guide them. However, many participants revealed that setting goals, avoiding trouble, and having the willpower to prove themselves positively affected their academic and social success. Also, many participants showed that constant family

support has made a difference in staying in school. The participants concluded that family, internal motivation, and campus involvement were keys to finishing their college degrees. Black male students who have friends and family support tend to perform better academically and socially. Sledge (2012) also emphasized that family involvement, self-determination, and constant support during a student's higher education journey can increase opportunities for persistence. Overall, participants discussed families as critical players in their determination and motivation to remain enrolled at their institutions. Participants talked about how their involvement on campus and in various sports, colleges, and social organizations helped them overcome isolation and racial disharmony. In short, participants emphasized that self-determination was critical to earning their degrees.

Conclusion

Mills (2020) argued that Black undergraduate students experience a distinct college experience, especially if they enroll in or attend PWIs. Studies show that higher education institutions do not sufficiently cultivate a feeling of inclusion that would benefit black male students. Jarrells (2024) reported that Black male students comprised a mere nine % of the total number of bachelor's degrees conferred to men during the 2020-2021 academic year by colleges and institutions. Thompkins (2020) asserted that colleges and universities must take on the role of removing barriers. In short, to assist Black male students on campus, educational institutions must enhance their support by using a comprehensive approach throughout their college experience. The recommended strategy

is crucial for the social integration, psychological welfare, and preparedness for post-college life of Black males (Fairfax, 2022).

Modern students necessitate access to social networks, exemplary role models, and academic authority to aid them in traversing unfamiliar territories. Several predominantly White schools are already grappling with the harsh reality of decreasing enrollment, retention, and poor graduation rates among Black male undergraduates. Analysts anticipate that this pattern will escalate much more in the upcoming years. Black men face unique challenges in pursuing higher education, frequently experiencing inequities, microaggressions, and institutional hurdles throughout their academic path (Fairfax, 2022). Fairfax emphasized many individuals may encounter familial and monetary obligations that persistently jeopardize their ability to focus on scholarly pursuits. Institutions should prioritize allocating additional resources toward implementing initiatives to enhance enrollment, retention, and graduation rates, specifically for Black men.

Previous and current research has highlighted the importance of resilience in navigating PWIs, particularly for Black college students who must confront the dangers associated with racial microaggressions (Mills, 2020). Identifying these students' obstacles or difficulties is paramount for schools that aim to assist the Black student population (Mills, 2020). According to the literature, researchers consistently confirm that Black males in the United States have the lowest six-year graduation rate compared to all other racial demographic groupings (NCES, 2019). Educational leaders should

strive to enhance their efforts by offering supplementary help, resources, and services to address all students' difficulties, particularly Black males pursuing higher education. In short, I think predominantly White institutions (PWIs) can do more strategically through institutional policies and leadership to support Black male students' success by increasing diversity and creating an inclusive environment.

Limitations of the Study

This study explored the perceptions and experiences of third- and fourth-year undergraduate Black males at PWIs. Although I followed proper procedures and protocols in this research study, I acknowledged my biases to ensure trustworthiness. During the interviews, I saw repeated responses. The collected data had reached saturation. As a Black male attending a PWI, I have learned that every student's college experience is unique. I have learned that this study's small number of students may not allow for generalization to larger college populations. I know every campus has different socioeconomic demographics, and the size of the Black population may affect the involvement and inclusivity of this group at a PWI.

Participants may embellish some of their responses to make the interview vibrant. Most importantly, not all students face the financial pressure of college, a lack of belonging, racial disparities, and a lack of support systems. Therefore, the study's findings were limited to 13 participants; they may not represent the entire Black male community, and the results will be specific to PWIs, social experience, and regions of the United States.

Recommendations

Based on this study, institutions of higher learning can better support Black male students by implementing policies that represent all students, practicing continued actionable research related to the success of Black men in higher education, including student focus groups, promoting summer bridge programs for Black men, encouraging mentorship programs for Black men, and providing dedicated financial support for Black men (TNHigherEd, 2021). Cross-campus staff must engage in a dialogue with this demographic group about the range of feelings they experience throughout their time on campus, support social integration, which may provide space for men to process acute or chronic trauma, and help others understand the root causes that impede their success. These recommendations may also help Black men prepare for life after college and set a path for increased postsecondary success for Black men across the United States.

As a Black male scholar, I hope that the raised awareness in my research will forever change the lives of Black men, recognizing this as a national crisis. Quantitative studies can examine Black male students' persistence and graduation rates from predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Therefore, these recommendations may pave the way for increased postsecondary success for Black men nationwide. Navigating institutional resources and support on campus can be a significant challenge for all students, notably for Black males. In short, promoting the success of Black men is an investment in the global economy, and making educational opportunities accessible will benefit our society. There are some strategies for breaking down barriers.

Black Men's Strategies for Success

- Higher education should assign academic advisors throughout the educational journey to ensure Black male students are connected to campus, seek supportive communities, connect with Black alums, and access peer mentoring and college counselors. Improving services and resources may increase retention and graduation rates.

- Higher education should provide mentorship programs for first-generation and incoming Black male students. Upper-class students (juniors and seniors) should also pair up with new students, providing them with information about services and resources to help them navigate the college maze.

- Higher education should offer support services on how to navigate college life. These student support services should include information on financial resources, scholarships, mental health, and counseling services. Higher education should also offer tutoring services, time management, and degree completion. Offering support services to students and their families would benefit black male students.

- Higher education should incorporate cultural competency training for faculty, staff, and college students in the curriculum and policies, such as diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Information and training may ensure students feel better connected to campus life and help other underrepresented students navigate the educational journey.

- Higher education should provide dedicated financial support for students, particularly Black men.

Future Research

While my college experience was pleasant primarily, PWIs must acknowledge and tackle the distinct barriers and difficulties encountered by Black male students in higher education. Despite persistently striving, the United States higher education system inadequately represents historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups, including Black, Hispanic, Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander communities, both among undergraduate students and in faculty and staff leadership positions.

Black male students at predominantly white colleges often encounter distinct obstacles, such as experiencing sentiments of being unseen, undervalued, and subjected to microaggressions. Existing literature, both recent and historical, suggests that a deficiency in faculty diversity significantly affects the academic achievements and graduation rates of students belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups (Fairlie et al., 2014; Llamas et al., 2021). In the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, stakeholders and education leaders must evaluate their choices carefully and challenge traditional beliefs to effectively support this marginalized group in the twenty-first century (Fairlie et al., 2014; Llamas et al., 2021). Finally, it is imperative for educational leaders to actively dismantle obstacles and enhance the availability of superior resources and support structures to ensure the success of all students, as a well-educated society is a valuable investment.

Suggestions for Future Research

The suggestion of this topic was based on the findings of this study and the current literature. However, this study was qualitative and may not reflect the entire population of Black students, particularly males, in the United States. Current research could also benefit community college or transfer students seeking to complete their four-year college degrees. This research could also benefit first-generation Black females. Additionally, researchers should replicate this study for historically Black college universities (HBCUs). Replicating this study will allow other researchers to see if these challenges, barriers, and factors are consistent with the current literature (Simmons, 2020).

Implications

Supporting Black Male College Students

Black male students face a unique set of obstacles when it comes to navigating PWIs, such as stereotypes, microaggressions, a lack of representation, and support systems. The substantial findings of this study provided a critical understanding of the importance of continued financial resources, mentorship programs, and student service support for third and fourth-year undergraduate Black males at PWIs. Research shows that most college students do not graduate in four years but within six years. Black males in the United States still have staggeringly low retention and graduation rates in higher education. Nationally, White students at public colleges were two and a half times more

likely to graduate than Black students and 60 % more likely to graduate than Latino students (NBC, 2021).

According to research, about 1.6 million Black men in America do not have college degrees, which keeps them from enjoying economic prosperity (Maciolek, 2020). The United States continues to present this dark reality that Black men are less likely to access resources and services, less likely to continue in their studies, and less likely to graduate, according to research. Many still deem Black men as endangered, uneducable, dysfunctional, and dangerous—these terms often characterize this demographic group (McElderry, 2022). Colleges must develop effective methods and strategies to support the success of undergraduate students, especially Black males, at PWI. There are three ways to support Black male student success: 1. Provide a holistic approach across the college journey. 2. intentionally focus on social integration and mental health, and 3. assist Black men in preparing for life after college.

In this study, participants expressed the importance of counter-cultural spaces such as the Black Culture Center, the Black Student Union Center, predominantly Black student organizations, and the Black Male Initiative programs on campuses. McElderry (2022) indicated that these spaces would allow students of color to see themselves reflected in leadership positions and create a sense of community on campus. The findings correlated with past and recent literature on the Black Male Success Initiative's crucial role at PWIs, which is vital to improving the campus climate, providing academic and social support, and facilitating identity development.

Intentional Leadership

Today, it is imperative for higher education institutions to be conscientious and guarantee that they do not contribute to a deliberate and organized assault on vulnerable communities. Studies show that there is still a lack of minority faculty members at American higher education institutions. Egan (2019) asserted that the unfair treatment of Black males and minority faculty members in college settings contributes to the persistence of inequality in higher education. Black male undergraduates encountered inequitable treatment on many college campuses because of insufficient faculty representation, impeding their integration into the college system. Intentional leadership provides help and guidance specifically to Black males attending college.

To foster a more inclusive and fairer atmosphere, experts in higher education should make efforts to establish or endorse successful Black Male Initiative programs (BMIs). Research shows that the underrepresentation of Black academics has been associated with problems related to the overall atmosphere on campus and the sense of being socially disconnected experienced by Black male students (Parker et al., 2016). Deliberate leadership has the potential to enhance pupils' educational achievements.

Many Black males at college institutions are at risk of racism, bigotry, and exclusion due to structural factors (Brooms, 2021; Brown & Sacco-bene, 2018; Kurashige, 2016; Robinson, 2014; Toliver et al., 2016). Black guys continue to be underrepresented in postsecondary education environments and frequently face many obstacles to pursuing higher education (Hines et al., 2021). The current body of research

comprehensively records the negative consequences of the underrepresentation of minority faculty and the benefits of having a diverse faculty in higher education. A deficiency in faculty diversity significantly affected academic outcomes and completion rates for students of color, as concluded by researchers (Fairlie et al., 2014; Llamas et al., 2021). However, the absence of Black men in the teaching profession continues to harm the academic achievements of Black male students, presenting a persistent problem in the United States (Jeter & Melendez, 2022). According to Turner and Grauerholz (2017), campus leaders who share the same racial background as Black male students may contribute to their ability to envision their academic achievements. Significantly, minority staff and teachers positively affected both educational and social integration. Therefore, having a variety of campus leaders is helpful for Black male students (THEC, 2021).

Conclusion

Before the COVID-19 crisis, Black male students faced significant challenges in higher education. This study examined the challenges and needs of undergraduate Black male students in their third or fourth year of attending PWIs. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these challenges and created new ones. During the pandemic, evidence in the literature suggested that lower-income students were 55 % more likely than their higher-income peers to persist or delay graduation (McKinsey & Company, 2020). McKinsey and Company (2020) noted that colleges and universities must use conventional wisdom to attract students and maintain competitive national rankings.

Johnson (2023) stated that attending a PWI can be difficult for Black men. Still, with determination and support, it is possible for all students, particularly Black men, to overcome the challenges and succeed. It takes a team effort to support Black male students in developing a sense of belonging and to create a more inclusive and welcoming atmosphere that appeals to all students, including providing the tools necessary for college success. These supports and resources will help students confidently navigate their educational journey.

For Black men to succeed in their postsecondary education programs, they require community, connection, and support (Booms, 2020; Harper, 2012). Implementing effective strategies, making policy changes, addressing the racial stress experienced by Black undergraduate students, and reevaluating the distribution of campus resources can influence social change. Education leaders should consciously include diversity, equality, inclusion, and antiracism (DEI) in their practices and policies. Finally, today's institutions and leaders must keep up their coordinated efforts to create equal access.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study titled Challenges Black Males Face at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). This form is part of the "informed consent" process to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to participate.

This study seeks 12-15 volunteers who are:
- Men who identify as Black.
- Black men are pursuing their bachelor's degrees.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Jerrell L. Starling, a doctoral student at Walden University. N/A

Study Purpose:
This study investigates the perceptions and experiences of third—and fourth-year undergraduate Black males in predominantly White institutions.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview that will last approximately 30-45 minutes.

Here are some sample questions:

- What are the perceptions and experiences of third and fourth-year undergraduate Black males at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)?
- What challenges have you faced at this PWI? What has been the biggest challenge of being a Black male attending a PWI? What other challenges or barriers have you experienced since attending or graduating from a PWI? In your opinion, did the institution play any significant role in alleviating your challenges?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Research should only be done with those who freely volunteer. So, everyone involved will respect your decision to join or not. This interview is voluntary; you can withdraw or stop participating any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Participating in this study could involve some risk of minor discomforts encountered in daily life, such as sharing sensitive information. However, with the protections in place, this study would pose minimal risk to your well-being.

If this telephone interview causes anxiety, stress, or triggers, please get in touch with the

National Mental Health Hotline for free and confidential 24/7 Assistance/Referral. Text

HOME to 741741 to reach a trained Crisis Counselor through Crisis Text Line, a global

not-for-profit organization.

This study offers no direct benefits to individual volunteers. This researcher will not be known in any dual role relationship to the participants, nor will the researcher receive direct financial benefit from the study. This study aims to benefit society by understanding Black male students' challenges when completing their degrees. Most importantly, this study will help institutions, educational leaders, and minority students, notably Black males. Once the analysis is completed, the researcher will share the overall results by emailing a summary.

Payment:

The researcher will email the first ten volunteers a $20.00 Visa Credit Card once they complete the interview**.**

Privacy:
The researcher is required to protect your privacy. Your identity will be kept confidential within the limits of the law. The researcher can only share your identity or contact information with Walden University supervisors as needed. The researcher will not use your personal information outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. If the researcher were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the dataset would contain no identifiers, so this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. Data will be kept secure by a password-protected computer-stored flash drive in the researcher's home safe, using codes in place of names and storing names separately from data on a password-protected flash drive. Data will be kept for at least five years, as the university requires.

Contacts and Questions:
You can ask the researcher questions at Jerrell.starling@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant or any negative parts of the study, you can call Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB, which will enter the approval number here**. It expires on **IRB and will enter an expiration date.**

You might wish to retain this consent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy using the contact info above.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer, please indicate your consent by replying to this email with the words: I consent.

RECRUITMENT FLYER

Research Participants Needed

Black Men who are pursuing a bachelor's degree at a

postsecondary level!

- This research will gather a Black Male's narrative on experiences at a postsecondary level of education.
- This study seeks 12-15 volunteers.
- This research study will consist of nine open-ended questions.
- Time Commitment: 30-45 minutes.
- I will email a $20.00 Amazon gift card to the first 15 volunteers once they complete the interview.
- All participation is voluntary and confidential.

Purpose

This qualitative study is part of the researcher's doctoral education program at Walden University. The study aims to understand how Black male students describe their experience pursuing a four-year degree at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI).

Who can Participate

Inclusion Criteria:

- **Men who identify as Black.**
- **Black men are pursuing a bachelor's degree.**

Please get in touch with Jerrell Starling at Jerrell.starling@waldenu.edu.

Appendix C: Demographic

1. Are you a Black male aged 19 or above?

2. What is your age?

3. Are you enrolled in a Predominantly White Institution (PWI)?

4. What year in school?

5. Did you graduate from PWI?

6. What is/was your major?

7. Are you the first person in your immediate family to attend or graduate from college? Explain.

8. Are you a full-time or part-time student

9. Do you work in addition to attending school?

10. Did your parents or legal guardian attend college?

11. Are you familiar with the term First-Generation/First-Gen college student?

12. What is your GPA?

13. What are you involved in on campus?

14. What resources, student services, or programs can help you academically and socially attending this PWI?

15. Did you receive the support of Academic Advising Mentoring during your time as a student?

Appendix D: Zoom Interview Questions

1. Are you a first-generation college student?

2. What made you choose to come to PWI?

3. What does being a Black male at a PWI mean?

4. What challenges have you faced at this PWI, what has been the biggest challenge of being a Black male attending a PWI, and what other challenges or barriers have you experienced since attending or graduating from a PWI? In your opinion, did the institution play any significant role in alleviating your challenges?

5. In your opinion, did the institution play any significant role in alleviating any present challenges you face, and what do you believe helped you to overcome these challenges?

6. How has the institution tailored your college experience to make you feel welcomed?

7. Do you feel like the campus events are inclusive to Black male students? Why or why not?

8. What resources and support services are available at this PWI, and what other support did the college provide or did not provide for your success?

9. What would it be if I gave you a magic wand and you could change one thing about your experience at a PWI?

Appendix E: Theme

Theme	Category	Participant's Response (PR)
Financial Assistance	Lack of Scholarships or Grants	PR2: "I think grants and continuing working could help me stay in school. It will give me a chance to finish. Participant 2 said that he is not receiving any grants or scholarships. In other words, he had no funding from his institution."
		PR3: "There are no scholarships. These resources should be scholarships for people like me who are involved in basketball. You want to venture into it and get exposed, like playing for the international leagues. They are not accessible to me right now. I do not get the opportunity to find some scholarship easily."
	Books, Materials, & Supplies	PR4: "Okay, firstly, we need access to more textbooks because they are quite expensive. It is like a challenge for us to walk in and school."
		PR4: "Having resources, such as money to buy a laptop, books, and materials, is a huge need

		for me." Access to all of the materials. Yeah, scholarships could also help, you know, help reduce some financial burden."
	Finances Aid	PR8: "I am getting financial aid but no scholarships. I have been struggling financially. It has been my biggest challenge because my mom is struggling financially. I am doing a part-time job. I have to save up money to buy some books. However, my sibling (brother) is helping me with the financial cost of getting my education."
		PR8: "I wish the institution I attend would make the financial cost easy for our blacks and try to give us some scholarships."
Sense of Belonging	Lack of Identity	PR1: "The campus events are not inclusive for Black students. It should be open to everybody. It is not the institution excluding Blacks, but some set of people practiced who do not believe in togetherness. Okay, the challenge I faced a lot, I would say, is cultural isolation. I feel like I

		force myself, and I force my identity. Today, I have not been myself; I have to prove myself more. I am Black, and yeah, I guess that is just it. As I said, my biggest challenge was cultural isolation. Yeah, I felt like I did not fit in."
		PR2: "I think cultural activities probably can help with diversity. Um, community building, maybe.
		PR3: "I am the only one dealing with stereotypes and biases, so I do not find anything more than these challenges. If I can overcome the biases and stereotypes, the institution will be a good place to study and stay comfortably. I need financial, social, and academic support to ensure my success. Lastly, my institution needs to address racism."
	Feeling Isolated	PR4: "I feel isolated sometimes because there were few Blacks. Friends are my social circles but are limited to just Blacks. I feel isolated because there are no Black History Month days or stuff like that. There is no equity or diversity; sorry, there

		is no diversity. I am sorry. I mean, there is no diversity in school. Whites tend to want to hang around themselves more than someone that's Black or someone that is Asian or Latino. We have different groups, like clusters of groups with different races everywhere. It is crazy. There are also some times when you experience this microaggression where someone White is like. I am trying to be aggressive to you for no justifiable reason or when you picked on because you are Black and stuff like that.
	Academic/Social Struggles	PR5: "Activities are not inclusive to Black male students. There is a negative vibe from the institution."
	Feeling Rejected/Ostractracization	PR6: "I wish for a safer environment because this institution is uptight. It creates and makes the whole palace a difficult learning environment for us. I told my mom that I was not being treated well and I was not treated like a human being."
	Racism/Discrimination	PR6: "My number one challenge is rejection, and my number two

		challenge is racism. I have experienced both at this institution. The biggest challenge is racism. PR8: I wish that I could change everyone who is White to Black so that they could experience discrimination."
		PR9: "Well, sometimes one of the barriers is, should I say, mixing. Getting in time with the White is also a barrier. You know, because some of them do not want to mix with the Blacks. This barrier grips me like an emotional imbalance."
	Campus Climate	PR9: "I have experienced a negative campus life. I do not feel valued, accepted, or overlooked often." PR10: "There is an unfriendly campus climate for Black students, and there is a lack of representation. I only had one Black professor throughout my years at the PWI."
Mentors/Advisors/Programs	Limited Institutional Resources	PR1: "I got the question, however. I was trying to explain some things to you. So I was, I was like saying, for one too, to try, for a Black student, a Black male student like me to thrive in a

		White, in a White institution like mine, you know, I have to, I have academic advisor, to succeed. Participant 1 stated that students get free lunches, one of his institution's major resources. He revealed that he also gets academic counseling and that resources are accessible." PR8: "We must feel welcome and be treated equally, regardless of race or ethnicity. Most importantly, we need culture and gender equality in higher education."
	Lack of Mentors/Mentorship Programs	PR2: "At my school, there is limited mentorship and limited health care. I wanted mentors that I could talk to; they were also white, so they probably did not (really) understand me and the cultural isolation. I was not myself at all." Participant 2 said that the institution provided mentorship, but it was not enough for us because it was limited.
	Campus Resources	PR3: "Well, I guess the resources should also be available for Black folks in the college because it would be important.

		They should post many important occasions, or should I put it this way: they should host activities. We have the library as a service that helps." Participant 3 indicated a lack of Black mentors at his institution."
		PR4: "As I said earlier, the lack of mentorship programs, our culture and sensitivity, and all the fewer support networks will be cold people and stuff like that."
		PR6: "One of the resources I have access to is the library. Yes, I have support from the academic advisor and receive academic advice through mentorship programs."
	Lack of Tutorial Services	PR8: "Yeah, for me, some of the resources that could make me perform academically, I think, maybe give me a good tutoring service. Many schools offer tutorial services for students who need extra help with their work. Sometimes, online resources are helpful. You know, there are so many, um, online resources that are available for students,

		which really support academic activities and sometimes writer resource incentives as well. I mentioned it because it is a great resource for students."
	Mental Health	PR8: "Sometimes, I do not realize I am alone. I feel the emotions when I am going through depression. Yeah, they do give um, some, health support, because um, have um, mental health issues in school, so um, they do have un, health services which support this and also give um, counseling."
		PR9: Yes, I said, having access to seminars and libraries has been an excellent resource."
		PR10: "At my PWI, there is a lack of mentorship programs, access to academic resources, and funding for Black students' educational goals."
		PR12: "Basically, I'll say that the biggest challenge is social media. I have not had a chance to connect with almost anyone, so I have been trying to prove myself over and over again."
Support Systems	Lack of Support	PR1: "I get commercial support"…stable

		support system. So yeah, I believe the institution has done enough and made such counseling and social services available."
	Friends/Group Supports	PR2: "Well, I felt the institution, for one, allowed us to create those groups. They did not disband the groups, so they allowed it. So I guess that is one thing I would thank them for. Okay, I would say it was not (really) inclusive."
		P4R: "I had friends with me. So, for each, we talked about these things and tried to be pillars of support for ourselves. I am just trying to impress these people, like trying to make them see that because we are Black persons, we are not humans, and we are not smart and cannot challenge them."
		PR5: "Most of the discrimination has not been from the institution. The institution has tried its best to eliminate it. To my knowledge, it has tried to find solutions to these challenges."
	Lack of Equal Rights	PR6: "Although we (Black Students) do not have equal rights, they did enough in admitting

		Black students into the school. This school has given us hope that, maybe, soon, racism will be eliminated in this school."
		PR11: "I would change one thing about my institution: the scholarship program should be accessible to our students regardless of race. I want an even distribution open for all to access so that Blacks can benefit from it."
Racism/Discrimination	Racial Inequality	PR1: "That is, uh, like you said, a (really) loaded question. One of the major challenges is discrimination; sometimes, you are unfairly treated. You know, because of your color, because of ethnic disparity, sometimes because of your belief. So, my biggest challenge has been discrimination. The ratios of discrimination have (actually) been high on me." He said, "I want to change the discrimination ratio at his institution." PR2: "I desire to see the issue of racism addressed at my school because it is still a problem."
	Inclusivity/Exclusivity	PR2: "I desire greater acceptance and

		inclusivity on campus, and my difficulty is feeling heard and valued in class. Despite my challenges, I remain committed to my education and determined to succeed here." PR3: "Well, my challenge is skin color. I found races a lot more disturbing. I get bothered a lot because I do not get the opportunity to access or be included in other activities that most White Folks are involved in."
		PR4: "Okay, the most common is discrimination and racism. I will say that discrimination has been the biggest challenge of being a Black male attending a PWI. If discrimination is eliminated and everybody is on the same level, everything will be balanced."
		PR5: "It is, you know, being a Black in a White institution. Most of the challenges we face, you know, racial discrimination and racism; the ratio of discrimination is high, so the Black folks. These are some of the

		many challenges I encounter. He said discrimination and racial discrimination were his biggest challenges. As I said, the institution is fighting, trying its best, you know, to eradicate discrimination from the institution. I would like to see Blacks and Whites have equality. I would love that to exist."
	Family Support	PR6: "My mom said I must move beyond the challenges. I know that I cannot avoid it. Rather, I use these challenges to strengthen myself. I have learned to embrace my mother's wisdom to turn negatives into positives."
		I have experienced both rejection as a Black man and racism at this institution. The biggest challenge is racism. I try to make sure that everyone can exist together. However, you know, racism is from the mind; it has to do with different individuals. I felt they were superior to others because of their skin color."
	Financial Aid/Funding	PR8: "Forms of racial discrimination usually cause many to drop out of school or not enroll in

		the first place. It has been our biggest challenge because we (Black Students) are not getting financial aid. Yeah, because, um, if we are not giving financial aid or scholarships, many people of color drop out. They are not able to afford their education."
		PR9: "I have faced much racism and some racial abuse. There is much racial abuse in my institution. However, the institution itself is not promoting it. It is White students. These individuals perpetuate it on campus, and the institution cannot control it."
Self-Determination/Resiliency	Internal Motivation	PR1: "Well, number one, I firmly believe in myself. You know, having to enroll in a White as a Black man, you have to have a wide range of knowledge to surpass some of these challenges we face as Black men when mixed with Whites. But so I believe, I believe Self-belief and high self-esteem have helped me cope with these challenges."
		PR2: "Okay, so like I said, I met a few of my

		friends. We created some groups. We had to talk. Well, we caught up on different things. So, I guess that was the thing that pushed me to continue whatever I was doing. So yeah, just a few of my friends were there where I could talk, feel better, and relate to people. I felt understood by them."
	Stereotypes	PR3: "For me, breaking down these barriers, challenges, and stereotypes will help improve a way for future generations and allow them to bring diverse perspectives and contribute to the environment. Overcoming these challenges has helped me to navigate through college. The way I handled these challenges was that firstly, I tried to avoid the White folks in order not to get into trouble. Then, I interact with my fellow Black people, even if we have few. I am there. We know we engage in self-care practices and seek resources to help support and give counseling services for us as Black people. This self-motivation was a

		big help in overcoming these challenges. As Black folks, we have the strong mentality that we can handle anything. So, I think this helps me push harder to become what I am. So, being Black, the skin color is everything. At least, that is the motivation. Moreover, when I look at the historical background, I think this gives me hope that I can push and become a bigger person."
	Endurance/Persevere	PR4: "I think it is probably my drive to become someone. I do not just want to end up on the streets, like how everybody sees Black Americans. I mean, I want to make a name for myself. I want to become someone. So, I think that drove me to continue passing and overcoming the challenges."
		PR6: To succeed in life is one thing that has kept me going forward. To make it against all odds as a Black man has helped me persist. I am not born to fail, but I am born to succeed and make my mom proud.
	Setting Goals	PR8: "Okay, I always have some things I do. I

		try to create a plan for everything I do in school and also try to get help from people."
	Mental Health	PR9: "One of the things I have done to succeed, you know, is to walk by myself and not mind what happens around me and my environment. It has been a great motivation to me, you know, not being able to allow the racial abuse to get to me. I do not allow these challenges to get to me because it is very detrimental to my mental health."