BLACK MEN’S PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR STUDENT-FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Tyson Jamon Askew

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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2022
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APPROVED BY:

Dr. Susan Quindag, Ed. D, Committee Chair

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore Black men’s perspectives of their student-faculty relationships in higher education. Utilizing a qualitative research design and Noddings ethics of care theory, the findings of the inquiry are useful for institutions of higher education as they strive to facilitate effective relationships with their Black men students. The central question for this study was how do Black men describe their relationships with their faulty in higher education? The setting for this study was a social media platform that consists of 207,577 Black men; of that number, 100,000 of these men have reported being college students. From the setting, the sample was derived from a Facebook group, Black Good Men. The study was conducted using 13 participants who had experienced the phenomenon. Three themes emerged from the data: The security of Black men, desirable student-faculty relationships, and essential care all being necessary for Black men in higher education. The study concluded that Black men described their relationships with their faculty in higher education as either non-existent or a relationship built on the foundation of care. The study also concluded the effects of care was felt by Black men within personal interactions, conversations, words of affirmation, encouragement, mentorship, and acts of service from their professors.

Keywords: Student-faculty relationships, Black men, higher education, perspectives, care, retention, connection
Dedication

Proverbs 16:9 (NLT) “We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps.” To God be the glory! This manuscript is dedicated to several people who could see more in me than I could see within myself. Without their encouragement and faith in me, completing this dissertation and obtaining my Ph.D. would not have been possible. First, I would like to thank my mother and grandmother. The two of them have always encouraged my footsteps and never stopped me from striving for the best. To Gerald Pace, the man responsible for helping me restart my high school education and being my continued support. To Dr. Matthew L. Stevenson, the man who told me to “DO WELL”! You prophetically saw this time years before it happened and when it was not even a thought in my mind. I also dedicate this work to Allen Jackson, my dad. I miss you so much! You went to be with the Lord during this process, but I will never forget your prayers and dedication to seeing the greatness within me. You left me with a word that I will never forget, St. John 11:22 “Even Now”! Lastly, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to every Black male who has ever felt lost during their academic time in higher education and could not be found through the means of a student-faculty relationship.
Acknowledgments

I would like to first acknowledge God for His love, strength, and grace throughout my entire life. I am thankful for salvation through Jesus and acknowledge that without Him, I am nothing. Throughout the research, data collecting, analysis, and the entire writing process, God has answered prayers and kept my mind focused on the plan He has set for my life.

I would like to acknowledge my dissertation chair, Dr. Susan Quindag secondly. You are a fantastic gift to education, and the world should know your name. You have pulled strengths out of me that I never knew I had. You have also challenged my weaknesses to the end of making me not only a better educator but a better person. It has been an honor walking through this process with you as my guide. I believe that we have embodied the essence of this research study by developing a student-faculty relationship that I am positive will last forever! Thank You!

Third, I would like to acknowledge my committee member, Dr. Shariva White. Thank you for always being there when I needed you. When we communicated, you never left me feeling lost but encouraged me to go through the process. Thank you for your time and commitment to seeing me through until the end.

Next, I must acknowledge my very best friend, Tony Rudolph. Since we were 18, you have been there. We have walked through life together, sharing our hardships and most extraordinary moments. You have always been an inspiration to me, one of my greatest motivators, and without a doubt, my listening ear. You bring clarity to my life, and I am blessed to call you my best friend!

Finally, I would like to acknowledge every student who has sat in one of my classrooms. The truth is you have helped me to reach this point in my life by giving me insightful teaching
experiences that a book could never capture the holistic essence of. I am a better me because of the positive connections we have made. You guys keep me young!
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List of Abbreviations

Black Good Men (BGM)

Facebook (FB)

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Although Black male students have become visible in higher education, as a group, they are among the least of their peers in retention and graduation rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). To investigate this issue, relational experiences in education must be explored; specifically relationships between students and their instructors (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). These relationships are beneficial in enhancing students’ higher education experience and are a part of the purpose of education (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Unfortunately, minimal research has been conducted on how Black men perceive their relationships with instructors in higher education (Chory & Offstein, 2017; Diaz Solodukhin & Orphan, 2020). Research into this topic could offer valuable information on why Black men do not persist through higher education like their peers.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspective of Black men's student-faculty relationships in higher education in the United States. The significance of this study aimed to provide understanding of Black men's perspective of their student-faculty relationship using the ethics of care as the theoretical framework (Noddings, 1984). Chapter One presents the background, situation to self, problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, research questions, and definitions.

Background

Former U.S. Secretary of Education, John B. King Jr., said colleges and universities are means of advancement because a college degree is necessary to 21st century careers, securing a life in the middle-class or better, and the gateway to limitless opportunities (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Black men are among those who want to achieve a life that is considered to be America's middle-class and education is a requirement toward that goal (Watson, Sealey-Ruiz, &
Jackson, 2016). If education is the source for improvement, Black men who dare to strive for higher education want “better” (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015). Unfortunately, as a group, Black men are not entering college nearly at the same rate as their peers and therefore may not achieve the middle-class socioeconomic strata (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015). When Black men attend higher education, only about 30% of them enrolled in a four-year institution earn their college degree compared to 57% of White men students (Bohrnstedt, Kitmitto, Ogut, Sherman, & Chan, 2015). Furthermore, fewer than 30% of Black college men persist through higher education at the institution where they began their program (Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014).

There are several barriers that Black men experience toward achievement that include family economic problems and even fear of failure (Johnson, Brown, & Harrison, 2019). Like other men, Black men have a drive for success, a desire to support their families, and contribute to their communities (Johnson et al., 2019). However, Jackson (2018) argued that when Black men lose their sense of stability or the ability to contribute, achieve, or even understand their environment, their possible response is to retreat, deflect, or dropout. Consequently, Black men who enter higher education and do not complete studies or graduate are limited to achieving their future goals.

Relationships may be crucial to keep Black men at their choice institution, thereby retaining them as they maintain academic success until their graduation (Roberts, 2018). With diversity being a well-known topic in the higher education community, are institutions becoming aware of the term “diversity,” or are they purposely seeking to accommodate the needs of their diverse student population? Knowing and implementing methods that will assist in developing a diverse population reveals characteristics of care, compassion, and concern (Gutierrez & Gutierrez, 2019; Hawk, 2017). Furthermore, if what John B. King Jr. said about progress being
contingent on the colleges and universities in the U.S. is true, should Black men not depend on relationships from these institutions’ faculty to ensure their progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2016)? Strayhorn, Lo, Travers, and Tillman-Kelly (2015) found Black men gain confidence in higher education when they have supportive relationships with faculty who build, motivate, and impact their social and academic lives. If this is viable, then research should be conducted focusing on relationships with Black men. This study investigated the unresearched Black man perspectives on their student-faculty relationships in higher education.

**Historical Context**

To understand Black’s and faculty's relational connection historically, it is necessary to focus on education before May 17, 1954. On this date, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) that it was unconstitutional for schools to be racially segregated (Ford & King, 2014). Before 1954, Blacks attended schools and were taught by instructors who lived in their neighborhoods, knew their families, and supported their community's needs (B. M. Askew, personal communication, June 2020; Heller, 2019). These, among other factors, are what made educational atmospheres conducive to a relational environment (B. M. Askew, personal communication, June 2020; Hines, 2016). In an interview with Bertha Askew (B. M. Askew, personal communication, June 2020), she described that as a child growing up in a segregated school, it was common for her teachers to eat Sunday dinners with her family and afterward help the children one-on-one with their studies. Because of this relationship, students were comfortable talking with their teachers about personal matters that were not akin to educational matters, such as sports, friends, and hobbies (B. M. Askew, personal communication, June 2020; Heller, 2019). However, in 1954 when students were required by law to integrate into schools that had other races, Black students who were attending schools mainly attended by White
students were now in an educational environment that was unfamiliar to them and different from the segregated “Black” schools they attended before desegregation (B. M. Askew, personal communication, June 2020; Heller, 2019; Hines, 2016). The relational aspect of how Blacks would communicate with their former Black teachers was not the same with their White instructors (B. M. Askew, personal communication, June 2020; Ford & King, 2014; Hines, 2016). This paradigm was felt in all education areas, from kindergarten to higher education (B. M. Askew, personal communication, June 2020; Hines, 2016). Achieving education for many Blacks was similar to survival in the sense that Blacks were fighting to have an equal lifestyle and an academic position in society (B. M. Askew, personal communication, June 2020; Heller, 2019; Hines, 2016).

It is essential to emphasize the change of relationship between Black students and faculty from the era before Blacks were integrated into public schools in the 1950s. The Library of Congress (2020) reported from an interview with Blacks during the 1950s that integration in America was an excruciating struggle that frightened and wounded many students, teachers, and parents. Heller (2019) posed a question asking what was wrong with schools’ segregation if Blacks were achieving academically equally to other races. The response to this question is that Blacks had sufficient Black educators in their segregated schools, challenging them to accomplish even more than their peers of other races in other schools. As she interviewed Blacks, who were educated at schools before integration, one of the significant components revealed was the undoubted respect and relationship Black students had with their teachers (Heller, 2019). An interviewee mentioned the care and relational comfort Black students received from Black teachers; though the interaction might have appeared harsh and abrasive,
student achievement was the evidence that this relationship between the student and faculty was effective (Heller, 2019).

Dr. Claud Anderson, the president of PowerNomics Corporation of America, Inc. and The Harvest Institute, Inc., said in an interview on the radio talk show, *The Breakfast Club* (2019) bussing Black students from their comfort zone into an area with teachers who did not look like them broke the relational ties essential to progressive and practical education. When integration occurred in 1954, those in leadership positions in education within the Black community conformed to changes implemented by other races (Breakfast Club Power, 2019). Not all Black educators were willing to change their social structure within the Black community; nevertheless, they were faced with a new lifestyle within education (Breakfast Club Power, 2019).

Culturally, before desegregation, Black students were taught to respect their teachers; this idea of respect was valued more when the instructor could relate to the student and even further when there were physical similarities between the student and the teacher such as race (Heller, 2019; Young personal communication, March 2019). Young (personal communication, March 2019) suggested it is indeed relationships between faculty and students in which unseen progressive change was made before 1954; the period of segregated schools. Young (personal communication, March 2019) further asserted student-faculty relationships enabled students to persist through completing assignments in order to graduate. These relational connections were not quantifiable, and many cannot be explained because they were a non-observable influence of resilience based on the historical struggle among Blacks’.
Social Context

The percentage of Black students attending higher education increased from 10% in 1976 to 14% in 2016, but the 2016 percentage reveals a reduction since 2011 when Black students made up 15% of students enrolled in U.S. Colleges and Universities (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). In 2011, the Black male graduating rate was 34%, which is the lowest of both genders and all races; therefore, retention and attrition are critical for Black men (Brooms, 2018). Black students' enrollment in the United States in 2017 was at 36% (The Condition of Education, 2019), and were still behind the enrollment numbers of other ethnic groups. Knowing the perceptions of Black men as it relates to their student-faculty relationship is essential because there is a need for higher retention rates among Black men in higher education as well as while attending these institutions; they should have a sense of belonging and care from those who serve them (Parker, Puig, Johnson, & Anthony, 2016).

Financial problems are among the common issues among Black men attending and completing their college education (Wood, Harrison, & Jones, 2016). In 2019, the yearly income estimate of Black families was $45,438 compared to the yearly income estimate of White families which was $76,059 (Statista.com, 2020). Furthermore, from 2005 to 2015, budget cuts from state education funding caused universities to raise tuition, thereby impacting low-income families and making it harder for Black men to attend college and afford college (Haywood & Sewell, 2016).

Other challenges Black men face in their pursuit of higher education includes a lack of faculty support and programs that do not deliver methods or strategies that purposely aid Black men (Haywood & Sewell, 2016; Strayhorn, 2017). These challenges lead to a lack of participation in college preparatory courses, low academic achievement, emotional
discouragement from instructors, and a lack of the sense of belonging. Black men fail to seek support systems due to a lack of care and the negligence from administration (Haywood & Sewell, 2016). Because of the challenges, some Black men would instead enter the workforce with low paying jobs than enter higher education where they may feel intimidated (Haywood & Sewell, 2016). Haywood and Sewell (2016) also argued many Black men enter higher education as first-generation college students and therefore receive minimal support and understanding of the importance of higher education from their families. Consequently, these Black men may not feel comfortable with faculty because the college experience could be new (Strayhorn, 2017; Xerri, Radford, & Shacklock, 2018). However, Black men who are first-generation college students who were comfortable with faculty and staff from the institutions they attend and could benefit from the support (Covarrubias, Valle, Laiduc, & Azmitia, 2019). Without a supportive family, positive societal influence, or direct, intentional faculty and staff involvement, Black men are not likely to persist through higher education (Covarrubias, Valle, Laiduc, & Azmitia, 2019).

Although researchers are studying student-teacher relationships, there are deficiencies related to the topic that needs empirical evidence to address Black men's perspective related to their teacher-student relationship. Parker et al. (2016) suggested universities and colleges, especially predominantly White institutions (PWI), consider special efforts to grow and develop programs that foster the Black men's outlook on higher education. Strayhorn (2017) recommended more information about the experiences, which will give details about Black men's perceptions in higher education.
Theoretical Context

The theoretical framework which served as the lens to explore Black men's student-teacher relationships in higher education is Noddings’ (1984) ethics of care theory. Noddings (1984) defined care as the longing for the goodness resulting from an experience or memory from past acts of care. The ethics of care theory was developed to offer reasons to why connections between learning and achievement were possible and practical when care is perceived from the student. Noddings (1992) argued proper care from education instructors lends itself to positive results for the learner. Furthermore, Noddings (1992) found care was a deciding factor in students' development and progress mentally, emotionally, and educationally.

Situation to Self

As a Black man who earned degrees in the United States and experienced different dynamics, I have had the chance to experience different student-faculty relationships; therefore, this study was essential to me. Not only is the phenomenon of student-faculty relationships personal, but I have witnessed and am aware of interactions and connections between other Black men and their instructors. I have felt the difference in self-motivation between my interactions with different instructors. If I had allowed emotions or thoughts from negative interactions and relationships with faculty to sway my perception of education or my progression, I would not have completed my education. Other Black men have also related similar experiences to me.

In this study, I sought to understand the reality that lies within student-faculty relationships that involve Black men in higher education. These men are important to the fabric of higher education, and their viewpoints should be articulated. Having a strategy for raising
retention rates within the Black male community of higher education will lead to more degreed professional Black men in society.

My philosophical assumptions ensure reasoning to answer the question about the retention of Black men through their student-faculty relationships (Patton, 2015). Ontology is the study of reality, epistemology is the study of knowledge, and axiology is the study of values (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My ontological assumption is that reality is known best through relational experiences (Quindag, 2019; Slife, 2004). Therefore, by studying the student-faculty relationship, I gained insight into the reality of Black men’s experiences in higher education. My epistemological assumption is that knowledge is obtained from what is personally lived and experienced. I know the importance of student-faculty relationships because I have lived this phenomenon. I can relate to the known experience of other Black males who attended institutions of higher education. During this study, I asked each participant about their lived experiences to gain knowledge on student-faculty relationships. My axiological assumption is that students highly value the student-faculty relationships to the degree that students will persist through college and choose their career paths based on these relationships (Gutierrez & Gutierrez, 2019). My research paradigm was social constructivism. I believe experiences comprise a person's worldview, and no worldview is primarily dependent upon research and data (Patton, 2015). Several realities are built from experiences lived with relational experiences with others (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Problem Statement**

Although higher education is the gateway to success, there is a continued problem with Black men not attending college, and when they do, they are not persisting through degree completion (Farmer & Hope, 2015). Black men received 9% of the bachelor’s degrees in 2016.
While the percentage of Black men earning a bachelor's degree has slowly increased to 5.2% from 1977, the dropout rates of Black men in higher education continue to remain higher than those of their peers (Landis, 2019). In 2019, the dropout rate among Blacks was 30% with Black men dropping out at a faster rate than Black women (Hanson, 2021). Black men who do not persist through higher education can be subjected to emotional distress, feelings of failure, and stressors (Harper, 2009; Poulou, 2017).

These negative outcomes may be avoided if Black men and their instructors can form relationships that would produce benefits leading to retention as well as social, emotional, and academic skills (Koca, 2016). Asking Black men about their relationships with their instructors give others their perspectives on essential elements of care and provide knowledge that will help produce Black male retention (Hawk, 2017; Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019; Strayhorn, 2017). A student's lack of interaction with faculty can result in loneliness, stress, isolation, and confusion (Zahl, 2015). According to Raufelder, Scherber, and Wood (2016), students like their teachers and do not perceive an uncaring or distant feeling from them.

Researchers have found teaching is a relational concept centered on understanding academic persistence, achievement, and particularly the importance of helping college students achieve goals (Litalien, Guay, & Morin, 2015). Furthermore, Black men learn better from teachers who they sense care about their well-being and motivate them (Warren & Bonilla, 2018). Care can be viewed simply through how the instructor delivers instruction or gives guidance (Young, personal communication, March 2019). When students are instructed to be involved and maintain commitments with college life, they are likely to maintain that same type of commitment with their academic studies (Lucey & White, 2017). College is where students may attain their highest academic degree of learning and should be the place where they feel
comfortable; therefore, Black men who feel comfortable should connect to instructors who are willing to foster healthy student-faculty relationships with them (Kumah-Abiwu, 2020; Lucas, 2018). Closeness will provide comfort needed for student-faculty relationships and help the instructor to do more than just the required teaching (Ei & Bowen, 2002). Just as the instructor has to be willing, there is a level of accountability given to the student as well to be fully present and willing to engage in the student-faculty relationship (Askew, 2020; Ei & Bowen, 2002).

Retention can be the byproduct of student-faculty relationships because of these close interactions (Lucas, 2018; Lucey & White, 2017). Students and teachers can help each other gain from these mentorships and relationships (Lucas, 2018; Lucey & White, 2017). The effects of these strategic connections bring stability to the student's education and the teacher's career; this comes in the form of self-efficacy (Malik & Malik, 2015). Self-efficacy is the belief in the ability to succeed or do well and teachers are able to gain from student-faculty relationships while the student gains a higher possibility of retention (Malik & Malik, 2015).

The primary goal for education is student success. The student must remain the teacher's central focus and education without being left out of the equation. Student-faculty relationships can provide academic partnerships where teachers can identify and learn new ways to foster students' education by building on their ideas and facilitating the co-creation of knowledge. Students can participate in the production of knowledge and pursue their goals in various contexts (Zanchetta et al., 2017). Building student-teacher relationships is needed to influence students and motivate them to improve their academic work ethic.

Dropout rates, unmotivated students, academic detachment, and unsuccessful college students are all issues and problems colleges and universities face (Docan-Morgan, 2011). These deficits can be solved through teacher's outward expression of care in and outside of the
classroom through the lens of a purposeful student-faculty relationship (Docan-Morgan, 2011). These purposeful relationships are how teachers can develop and maintain a connection with students so their ability to trust may grow. Because today's classrooms are so diverse, teachers need to learn how to relate to more than one race, socioeconomic sector, gender, and students' multiple learning styles (Young, personal communication, March 2019). Teachers must take the time to develop some type of personal connection with their students (Young, personal communication, March 2019). The student should feel as though they are an individual and not like someone without a voice or governed by a taskmaster (Young, personal communication, March 2019). If a student knows their teacher is trustworthy and cares for them, the student is more willing to put forth the effort to achieve whatever is placed in front of them (Young, personal communication, March 2019).

The research is warranted to see how Black male students' experiences in their education indicate the importance of care (Jeffrey, Auger, & Pepperell, 2013). It is essential to know if Black male students work harder academically, engage in academic tasks, and are less likely to engage in health-risk behaviors if they know their teachers care about them (Jeffrey et al., 2013). Motivation is connected to caring, and students who have a caring relationship with their teachers are more inspired to learn and make outstanding achievements in their education and lives (Jeffrey et al., 2013), so finding out how this concept impacts explicitly Black men is vital.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspective of Black men’s student-faculty relationships in higher education in the United States. Student-faculty relationships in higher education will be defined as a connection between a student and instructor with social, emotional, and academic benefits and offers positive outcomes in and outside of the
classroom setting (Koca, 2016). With the elements of care, perceived motivation, and noticed effects of student-faculty relationships, the study sought to determine how Black males in higher education perceive these elements. There is a need to know what the critical factors are in order to help Black males become college students who are successful in their academics and overall life. Stakeholders in academic institutions should know this because students should be their priority, which would include Black males. The findings from this study should be useful to faculty members and institutions as they build meaningful, impactful, and effective relationships with their students, specifically Black men.

**Significance of the Study**

**Theoretical**

Various researchers used Noddings’s (1984) ethics of care theory to study the relational aspects between faculty and students, but none focused on Black men and their perception of their relationship with their faculty (Anderson et al., 2020; Bennoun, Haeberli, & Schaub, 2018; Dowie-Chin & Schroeder, 2020; Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019). Unlike other studies that focused on the ethics of care theory, this study targeted specifically Black male students (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019; Watson et al., 2016; Wilcox, Wang, & Mincy, 2018). The ethics of care theory suggests learning and achievement are possible for Black men when care is perceived, yet research has been lacking identifying the position of Black men in higher education (Hawk, 2017; Noddings, 1984; Roberts, 2018). Hawk (2017) studied the ethics of care in relation to education and made the distinction between “caring for” and being “cared about.” Most research in education has focused on “caring about” which does not imply any action to be taken place as opposed to “caring for;” which indicates specific concrete action from the instructor desiring the development and well-being of the student (Hawk, 2017). Many researchers using the ethics of
care fail to support the full range of human capabilities involved with care. Physiological, emotional, intuitive, empathetic, and imaginative are the engaging relational aspects of the ethics of care (Hawk, 2017). Studying how Black men perceive their instructors identified the usage of these qualities and determined if care in fact has been an active element used by faculty in higher education (Anderson et al., 2020; Brooms, 2020; Chory & Offstein, 2017; Hawk, 2017).

The literature for student-teacher relationships is vast in K-12 (Berchiatti, Badenes-Ribera, Galiana, Ferrer, & Longobardi, 2021; Corbin, Alamos, Lowenstein, Downer, & Brown, 2019; Mastromatteo, Zaccoletti, Mason, & Scrimin, 2021; Moen, Sheridan, Schumacher, & Cheng, 2019; Zee, Moritz Rudasill, & Roorda, 2020). Chory and Offstein (2017) explored this relationship applying the ethics of care within higher education and identified several assumptions. They contended the social distance between the student and the instructor can be definitely controlled and regulated as necessary. Both parties have control within the relational connection. Chory and Offstein (2017) went on to say that the majority of students began their higher educational experience expecting faculty to get to know them personally. The students wanted their faculty to care about their performance just as their high school teachers did (Chory & Offstein, 2017). Parents value an institution’s care for their child over the school’s educational offerings (Chory & Offstein, 2017). This particular research adds knowledge about the greater success rate, mentally and emotionally, when Black men have a sense of belonging and are cared for by their instructors (Brooms, 2019; Noddings, 1992; Peart, 2018; Poulou, 2017).

**Empirical**

There have been studies conducted on Black men’s student-faculty relationships in higher education (Brinkworth, McIntyre, Juraschek, & Gehlbach, 2018; Brooms, 2017; Chory & Offstein, 2017). There have also been studies on student-faculty relationships exploring
retention, motivation, and the sense of belonging focusing on Black men (Brooms, 2018; Cazenave, 2017; Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019). However, minimal studies have been conducted on Black men and their perspectives on their student-faculty relationships in higher education (Askew, 2020; Uslu & Gizir, 2017; Warren & Bonilla, 2018; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Furthermore, researchers suggested Black men need their perspectives to be heard (Brooms, 2018; Harper, Smith, & Davis, 2018; Jackson, 2018; Johnson et al., 2019). Tinto (1975) expressed the need for further research on the relationship between teachers and students and how these connections enable students to persist through higher education. Knowing the thoughts and perceptions of Black men is valuable in knowing how institutions of higher learning can help serve them; consequently, there is a need for further investigation (Quinlan, 2016). Therefore, this study has filled a gap in the literature.

**Practical**

Institutions need practical information and methods to use in order to accommodate the Black male population of students (Warren & Bonilla, 2018; Wood et al., 2016; Xerri et al., 2018). Studying Black men’s perspectives on their student-faculty relationships in higher education will help retain Black men through graduation (Anderson, 2019; Lucas, 2018; Strayhorn, 2008; Tinto, 1975; Uslu & Gizir, 2017). Universities and colleges should cultivate a sense of belonging for their diverse population and be concerned for their student's well-being; therefore, the need to understand how Black men perceive interactions and relational aspects from their faculty should be priority (Askew, 2020; Brooms, 2017; Harper, 2015; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Highlighting the voices of Black men and letting them share their experiences with faculty within higher education can enlighten administrators about how best to serve these students toward success (Nichols, 2016; Quin, 2017; Sointu, Savolainen,
Lappalainen, & Lambert, 2017; Strayhorn, 2008). Programs and initiatives can be developed to help faculty support and enhance their Black male students' well-being, aiding them to develop skills and earn a degree to improve their careers and life (Askew, 2020; Bennoun et al., 2018).

**Research Questions**

The central question for this dissertation was: How do Black men describe their relationships with their faculty in higher education? Additionally, the following sub-questions helped guide the study:

1. How do Black males describe the element of care in their student-faculty relationships in higher education?
2. What are Black male's expectations in their student-faculty relationships?
3. How do Black males describe the effect of their student-faculty relationships in higher education?

Black men can depict in detail their personal experiences from student-faculty relationships and give data to improve student, faculty, and institutional success (Hagenauer, Gläser-Zikuda, & Volet, 2016; Harper, 2015; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Poulou (2017) contended it is rare and doubtful that higher education institutions know their Black male students' thoughts towards their instructors. Research has been ample in K-12 related to student-teacher relationships, but there has been little focus on student-faculty relationships in higher education and minimal focus on Black men in this relationship (Carrol, 2017; Goings & Bianco, 2016; Young, personal communication, March 2019).

Noddings (1984) defined care as a feeling or perception received that arises the longing for goodness out of experience or memory of being cared for. Black men have been reported to learn better from teachers who they sense to care for them and their overall well-being.
(Noddings, 1992; Turner, 2017; Warren & Bonilla, 2018). Koca (2016) indicated students who have positive relationships are outgoing and socially competent, enhancing a more motivated learning, safe, and supportive atmosphere that reflects care. Students have addressed care as a good quality for instructors (Askew, 2020; Ida, 2017; Nichols, 2016; Strayhorn, 2017).

Once students have experienced care from people in their past, such as parents, pastors, and teachers, they tend to expect the same care feeling from their instructor (Raufelder et al., 2016). Care, protection, a sense of well-being, and motivation are a few things students, including Black men, have expected from their educational process (Landis, 2019; Tinto, 1975; Wilcox, Wang, & Mincy, 2018; Xerri et al., 2018). Black men need the opportunity to express their thoughts, concerns, and perceptions from student-faculty relationships to serve better this demographic of students in higher education (Dowie-Chin & Schroeder, 2020; Roberts, 2018; Young, personal communication, March 2019; Zahl, 2015).

Students who lack interaction with faculty may experience loneliness, stress, isolation, and confusion. In addition, Black men who may not express the relational effects of their connection with their teachers may negatively view higher education institutions, influencing the next generation of Black men (Strayhorn, 2017; Zahl, 2015). Knowing how to articulate relational aspects are essential and helpful in all aspects of education (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012; Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019). These researchers suggested student-faculty relationships help faculty gain influence for success and, as a result, influence retention among Black men (Anderson, 2019; Goings & Bianco, 2016; Long, 2012).

Definitions

1. **Student-faculty relationship** – A connection between a student and a teacher that has social, emotional, and academic benefits and offers positive outcomes in and outside of
the classroom setting (Koca, 2016). The word “relationship” throughout this research has not been with the intent to convey a relationship that is sexual nor with the intent to become sexual.

2. *A Black man* – A man who has dark or tan skin and is of African descent. They are also known as African American (Brooms, 2018).

3. *Perception* – The mode of apprehending reality and experience through the senses, thus enabling discernment of figure, form, language, behavior, and action (Given, 2008).

4. *Retention* – The act of retaining can be done using Tinto’s (1975) theory, which developed three principles for effective student retention, and therefore success: a commitment from all in the institution to serving students, a commitment to educating all students, and a commitment to integrating all students into the social and academic life of the institution (Roberts, 2018).

5. *Care* – The act of natural care, “a longing for the goodness that arises out of the experience or memory of being cared for” (Noddings, 1984).

**Summary**

Because of low retention rates among Black men, it is necessary to search for different types of solutions that could aid in the growth and sustainability of Black men in higher education, highlighting the need for student-faculty relationships. After exploring the literature concerning Black men, the problem is there has been minimal research done giving a voice to the Black men’s perspective on their teacher-student relationships in higher education (Chory & Offstein, 2017; Diaz Solodukhin & Orphan, 2020). The relationships have shown a greater value for students’ growth and development academically and holistically. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspective of Black men’s student-faculty
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspective of Black men’s student-faculty relationships in higher education in the United States. This chapter presents related literature on student-faculty relationships and how this paradigm relates to Black men in higher education. The theory used to frame this inquiry was Noddings' (1984) ethics of care theory. This theory is addressed in the first section of this chapter, the theoretical framework. The second section, the related literature, discusses the importance of student-faculty relationships, the involvement of these relationships in higher education, students' perspectives concerning teachers, and Black men’s' needs in higher education. Evidence is provided to demonstrate the literature gap regarding perspectives of Black men on their student-faculty relationships in higher education. The research was identified by linking the importance of knowing Black men's perceptions toward their teachers in higher education to the retention and graduation rate of Black men.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides grounded reasoning and justification for a thorough understanding of student-faculty relationships focusing on Black men in higher education. The ethics of care theory and previously researched literature focuses on the need to become aware of Black men’s perspectives on their student-faculty relationships. The theory and the literature discuss various solutions for Black male students' retention in higher education.
The Ethics of Care Theory

Care is defined as the longing for goodness experienced or found in one's memory of being cared for (Anderson et al., 2020; Noddings, 1984). Noddings (1984) described the ethics of care as "encounters between teachers and students in the here and now hence with what we call contact" (Korthagen, Attema-Noordewier, & Zwart, 2014, p. 24). Noddings (1992) recommended the caring and the components of caring should be included in schools and evident in all relationships and curriculum. Students should sense a feeling of community and belonging when they are a part of a group, organization, or institution, and they should be committed to the goals and values presented (Schunk, 2016). Direct contact between the student and faculty is needed. The word "contact" here is similar to the communication between close friends and family, having a mutual level of respect for one another (Carrol, 2017). Proximity, which can be known as "here and now," is another aspect of the ethics of care theory and can be expressed through the teacher's behavior in calling the student by their name, asking questions about the student's life, being concerned about their opinion, and "adding value" to the student (Korthagen et al., 2014, p. 24).

Presence and engagement are also components in the ethics of care theory. While direct contact with a student may be a part of the ethics of care theory, it does not replace nor is a synonym for presence; the actual state of being physically present (Korthagen et al., 2014). "Presence from the teacher's point of view is the experience of bringing one's whole self to full attention to give their attention to what is happening in the moment" (Korthagen et al., 2014, p. 24). Presence is defined as being fully aware and not missing the main idea or focus of an encounter; nevertheless, presence cannot be replaced with the idea of contact that the ethics of care provides. Korthagen et al. (2014) defined engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related
state of mind characterized by a passionate dedication to a teacher to their student. A requirement for communication in student-faculty relationships is engagement between both the student and the teacher in the here and now with ethical care. Noddings (1984) stated,

I do not need to establish a deep, lasting, time-consuming personal relationship with every student. What I must do is to be totally and non-selectively present to the student—to each student—as he addresses me. The time interval may be brief, but the encounter is total. (p. 180)

Care is a factor in producing positive outcomes that lead to higher retention and graduation rates (Noddings, 1992). Because care is a natural behavior among humans, faculty members should have the compassion to do all they can to ensure their students not only get through their class but also have a plan to persist through their entire higher educational experience (Patterson, Perkins, Butler-Barnes, & Walker, 2017). Care within the confines of a student-faculty relationship gives the student access to success (Patterson et al., 2017).

Despite positive outcomes in research concerning care in education, the higher education sector has placed the thought of care at a distance (Anderson et al., 2020). Hawk (2017) stated care could be seen as a problematic construct, and the aspects or terms of care can be perceived differently from either party. Thus, too much focus on the idea of care between instructors and students in higher education could lead to inappropriate relational ties (Grummell, Devine, & Lynch, 2009). Although negative stigmas regarding care attach themselves to higher education, Noddings (1992) declared care as the bedrock of educational success.

Student-faculty relationships are vital to the student's comprehensive academic and emotional support during their education and beyond. Consequently, the students' teaching mentoring process from their professor is the most critical part of their education and the
reasoning for them attending higher education (Carrol, 2017). It is possible that after a student’s successful encounter with a student-faculty relationship, they can function in their particular field of study, networking with peers and tenured leaders, building meaningful working relationships. Teaching with the mindset of student development and care is a process that focuses on the "whole student" and not just on academics (Noddings, 1992).

There is minimal literature focusing on the ethics of care and Black men in higher education (Bass, 2020). The limited research that connects Black men with the ethics of care theory deal mostly with Black men in leadership positions (Bass, 2020). Black men working in administration or teaching in higher education often feel drawn to minority students, especially Black men, with hopes of building an influential connection (Bass, 2020; Brooms, 2018). Research using the ethics of care as a theory to study Black men in administration has been conducted (Bass, 2020); consequently, there is a strong need to view this theory from the student's perspective.

**Related Literature**

The related literature presents a discussion on the importance of student-faculty relationships. Askew's (2020) Hierarchy of Student Needs are shared to express the students' educational essentials. Diverse aspects of the Black man is presented, starting with Black men’s culture then leading into concerning aspects of Black men in higher education. The related literature is summarized with important concepts regarding Black men’s perspective on their student-faculty relationships.

**The Importance of Student-Faculty Relationships**

Brooms (2019) stated student-faculty relationships are critical not only for students in high school but also by every educator who impacts a student's life, even throughout higher
education. Social, emotional, and academic skills are among the few benefits of student-faculty relationships, and these positive outcomes show in the classroom setting and in the day-to-day lives of the students who are privileged to have these connections (Koca, 2016). Koca (2016) found students who have positive relationships are outgoing and socially competent, which enhances a safe and supportive atmosphere. Furthermore, students who had relationships with their instructor developed confidence and were motivated to seek greater career challenges (Koca, 2016).

Kim and Sax (2009) explored the interaction between first-generation students and faculty at the University of California. They specifically studied student subgroups by first-generation status, gender, and social class (Kim & Sax, 2009). The sample comprised 58,281 University of California students who were administered the Undergraduate Experience Survey (Kim & Sax, 2009). Researchers believed student characteristics like race, gender, and social class affected the interaction between students and faculty (Kim & Sax, 2009). There was a positive relationship between the students and faculty; however, there was a significantly stronger positive relationship between African American students and their faculty. The relationship between Latinx or Asian Americans and their faculty were not as strong (Kim & Sax, 2009). The researchers concluded faculty interactions improve students' learning and development irrespective of their first-generation status, gender, and social class. They suggested further research to determine the effect of faculty interaction on students' educational outcomes (Kim & Sax, 2009). This study expanded on the interactions between students and faculty by focusing on Black men perspectives on student-teacher relationships.

**Characteristics of good teachers.** Teaching is an emotional practice that results in an ethical relationship with others and specifically students (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019). Poulou
argued emotions expressed by teachers form the basis for their attitudes toward students. These attitudes can then be perceived by the students and then form their opinions about their instructors. Noddings (1992) argued the care of faculty members must be seen from students. Black men particularly must know teachers care and desire to be close to them, but little is known about teachers' attitude towards their Black male students (Askew, 2020; Poulou, 2017; Strayhorn, 2017; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Ida (2017) found along with the efforts to provide a good student-teacher relationship, teachers' personality traits and professional skills are necessary. A good teacher is someone students can trust, understand, and know the student's background and culture (Ida, 2017). Therefore, understanding Black men's culture is essential and should be important to teachers (Strayhorn, 2017). Ida (2017) stated:

Developing students' personalities, developing students' personal needs, being adaptive in teaching students with different needs, being able to refresh professional knowledge and skills, seeing student results, being able to maintain discipline, punctuality with lessons, successful problem-solving skills, good standing relationships with colleagues, and willing to take up extra duties with pleasure with the heart of servanthood are the qualities and characteristics of good teachers. (p.143)

Consequently, good teachers' best characteristic is their display of the quality of care (Ida, 2017).

Care can be demonstrated by listening intentionally, making assignments sensible, and with a continued outpour of encouragement (Ida, 2017). This level of care can be seen by teachers who help students see how they can become self-reliant, build their competence, and feel a sense of autonomy (Ida, 2017; Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019; Koca, 2016; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Among other characteristics of teachers, care is expressed by students and is accepted as their authentic personal experience of that teacher (Hawk, 2017; Ida,
Lived experiences of students are valuable and will become the basis of how they define and characterize what they experienced (Askew, 2020; Hawk, 2017).

**Liking the teacher matters.** Students should like their teachers and not perceive an uncaring or indifferent feeling from them, or they will show less intrinsic motivation than students who feel that their teacher cares about them (Raufelder et al., 2016). Raufelder et al. (2016) developed the "broaden-and-build" theory, which suggests students who like their teacher will be more motivated and interested to learn. Students will also be more receptive to correction and instruction when coming from an instructor whom they like, as this helps to assure the student they are being cared for (Raufelder et al., 2016). Brinkworth et al. (2018) explored the perceptions of first-year college students to their former teachers. The researchers found the inconsistencies in student outcomes derive from the lack of student-faculty interactions and relationships. A clear pattern was associated between student-faculty relationships and what the student was able to produce (Brinkworth et al., 2018). Teachers involved in student-teacher relationships also reported the noticeable difference in the student's attitude and expressions toward their academic assignments (Brinkworth et al., 2018). The researchers concluded students are more willing to try harder and perform better academically when they like their teacher as compared to students who do not (Brinkworth et al., 2018). When the students do not like their teacher, they are more prone to having behavioral issues, show signs of low motivation, and lose interest in the class's academic component (Koca, 2016).

**Student-faculty relationships in higher education.** Karpouza and Emvalotis (2019) stated university teachers and students are always involved in student-faculty relationships no matter how they experience it or accept it. "Despite its significance, the student-faculty relationships in higher education remains an under-researched field" (Karpouza & Emvalotis,
Karpouza and Emvalotis (2019) unfortunately found only nine empirical studies focused on the phenomenon of student-faculty relationships in higher education by searching for articles that specifically addressed the relationship between faculty and students. Consequently, this current study was warranted because it adds to the research of student-faculty relationships with the focus on Black men.

Karpouza & Emvalotis (2019) conducted a study to determine what positive outcomes student-faculty relationships produced. The research question for the study was: "How does the teacher-student relationship in graduate education develop (and gradually evolve), based on the perceptions and experiences of both university teachers and students?" (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019). The researchers concluded student-faculty relationships must be mutual in value to the student and the teacher and desired by both parties in order for the relationship to be fully effective (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019). The positive outcomes of purposeful and useful student-faculty relationships were students' improved motivation, academic achievement, higher retention rates, satisfaction from studies, a greater sense of pride for the institution, faculty increased self-efficacy, and a positive learning environment (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019). The researchers concluded interactions between the students and faculty are vital, and when students have previously had positive interactions with faculty, they tend to be more comfortable around them and more willing to engage in contact (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019).

A caveat developing a student-faculty relationship could depend on the factors such as respect, approachability, honesty, mutual openness, interest, trust, care, positivity, and empathy. (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019). Karpouza and Emvalotis (2019) suggested these interactions should be monitored longitudinally to fully determine their effectiveness in higher education.
The conclusion validated the importance of continuing studies on the relational elements of student-faculty relationships (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019).

Although student-faculty relationships are important, Karpouza and Emvalotis (2019) stated boundaries should be maintained within the student-faculty relationship, such as self-disclosure, social media, touching, working, and romantic/sexual and or friendly relationships. Other researchers who studied relationships between students and their faculty encourage knowing and following the ethical standards practiced by educators (Anderson et al., 2020; Quinlan, 2016; Roberts, 2018). Despite few unethical educators, it is imperative for educators to continue developing positive ethical relationships with students to help decrease student's stress, increase motivation, and strengthen the possibilities of graduation (Askew, 2020; Eun, 2019; Strayhorn, 2017; Young, personal communication, March 2019).

Xerri et al. (2018) studied the process by which students handle the pressures of higher education and found students were less stressed and had better collegiate outcomes academically and socially when they were comfortable with their instructors as compared to students who were not comfortable and in relation with their instructors. These relational aspects continued even when the students graduated from college (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012; Xerri et al., 2018). Furthermore, students involved in student-faculty relationships are more prone to have success working with their peers and supervisors in their career fields (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012).

**Regulating students’ stress.** Students remember and value teachers who display and produce emotions of positivity (Quinlan, 2016). Positivity is the act of having and showing a positive attitude toward a situation and someone (Quinlan, 2016). When positive emotions are exhibited through effective teaching, it produces emotional strength (Quinlan, 2016). Black men in higher education need emotional strength to regulate their stress (Anderson, 2019; Brooms,
Black male students learn best when they are not stressed or have negative emotions. Sointu et al. (2017) found growth in self-regulatory and socio-emotional skills are more developed when students are involved in positive student-faculty relationships. When students have teachers, who are characterized as being authoritarian or disciplinarians but have traits of care, concern, and empathy, the students tend to gain positive emotions; giving the students strength to pursue any task (Sointu et al., 2017). Black men have tendencies to display acts of aggression, frustrations, and disappointment that stems from past failures, home life, and even educational settings (Askew, 2020; Sointu et al., 2017; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Durksen et al. (2017) found Black men need relationships with teachers who are encouraging to help maintain their stress levels.

**Askew's Hierarchy of Student Needs**

The success of every student is essential (Gutierrez & Gutierrez, 2019; Poulou, 2017). All students need to be able to have the same access and opportunity for overall development and achievement (Strayhorn, 2017; Warren & Bonilla, 2018). Students must know and feel cared for by each stakeholder they contact (Ida, 2017; Koca, 2016; Strayhorn et al., 2015). Students have needs, and meeting these needs in a focused, systematic approach is necessary for their overall sufficient growth and success (Uslu & Gizir, 2017; Noddings, 1992; Zahl, 2015). Askew’s (2020) Hierarchy of Student's Needs are shared accountability, direct attention, guided growth, skilled observations, meaningful feedback, and voiced self-assurance (Askew, 2020; Brooms, 2018; Hawk, 2017; Ida, 2017; Nichols, 2016; Quin, 2017; Strayhorn, 2017).

**Shared accountability.** The first step in assuring students have what they need is to gather those who are accountable to them (Askew, 2020). Parents, guardians, teachers, administrators, and staff are among those who have direct and indirect connections with the
students. These stakeholders must work together to form plans and strategies, ensuring their success. These strategies could include plans for improving student classroom engagement. For example, if the students ask questions, continue to be on task, and follow up with assignments, an intrinsic or extrinsic reward could be given to the student (Askew, 2020).

**Direct attention.** Direct attention is valuable and should be given to each student individually student from the stakeholders they encounter (Askew, 2020). The student should perceive the direct attention as significant and not passive. The student's perspective in this encounter should be worthful. The attention students receive leads to forms of outward expression, whether negative, neutral, or positive. Attention eventually will always navigate the student in a particular direction. An example of this would be a student who only receives praise when their assignments are completed but not corrected when they do not attend classes. This student would grow a tolerance to the negative behavior because of the teacher's negligence to redirect the behavior (Askew, 2020).

**Guided growth.** Guided growth is the third step and one of the most actively involved phases of students' needs (Askew, 2020). Stakeholders here act as a shepherd's rod directing, correcting, and protecting the student. Having wisdom and knowing what is ahead, the stakeholder cleverly needs to prepare the student for what is to come, such as academic challenges or social differences between students. The guided growth phase should equip the student with the academic and life tools needed for self-survival (Askew, 2020).

**Skilled observations.** Skilled observations are the fourth stage, and they must be deliberate and purposeful. The student needs to know they are being observed. Stakeholders should have objectives for the observation and a measurement system to assess growth from the student. The student will need the observer to have an open mind and make notes of exactly what
is being perceived, adding no assumptions or fallacies. The observer must always view the students through eyes of humility and empathy (Askew, 2020).

**Meaningful feedback.** The fifth step is giving feedback to the student from a place of the elevation (Askew, 2020). Students need feedback that will require them to reach for a more excellent version of who they currently are. The feedback should cause the student to become a better scholar and person. With the student's future in mind, the student will need guidance about their future regarding more education, workforce efforts, or being a productive asset to society. Just like the student needs feedback, they also need questions about how, what, when, and where they will give clarity for future needed attention, guidance, and observation. These questions can be centered around their upcoming plans and how they will reach their goals or make the necessary steps to become a better student (Askew, 2020).

**Voiced self-assurance.** The last step of students' needs is their awareness and ability to articulate what growth is, how they have grown personally, their need for further growth, and how to obtain growth (Askew, 2020). Being able to explain and articulate needs are essential and vital to the student and the stakeholders' relationship. Students need to voice their minds and express their emotions in a way that will explain their present and their progress (Askew, 2020).

**Black Men Culture**

In 1960, 38% of Black men were reported to be in the middle-class, and currently, 57% of Black men are in the middle-class (Wilcox et al., 2018). Black men who were considered below the poverty line have reduced from 41% in 1960 to 18% in 2016. Even though this positive statistic is accurate, Black men continue to face significant issues in public education from kindergarten throughout higher education (Brooms, 2017). However, a problem is that Black men are negatively portrayed in the media, and the deficit-based stories propagate a
description and characterization of Black men (Brooms, 2018; Strayhorn et al., 2015). The negative stereotypes and labels that have plagued Black men, such as being unlearned, uncivilized, slow, angry, immoral, unteachable, and out-of-touch with society, have become internalized for some Black men they believe and act out these behaviors (Broom, 2018; Cazenave, 2017; Cornileus, 2013; Hawley & Flint, 2016; Ikuenobe, 2018; Jackson & Moore, 2006; Kumah-Abiwu, 2020).

In 2014, Pedro Noguera published an article to make "the case that research on identity must pay careful attention to how race, class, and gender interact to frame how Black males are seen in schools and society" (p. 60). Noguera (2014) argued higher learning institutions are significant in constructing attitudes and behaviors that contribute to the risks and vulnerabilities experienced by Black men. If Black male students feel unsafe or no sense of belonging at their institutions, they are at risk of not being the best student they can be (Noguera, 2014). Consequently, it is not possible to thoroughly educate Black men without having a general understanding of their cultural backgrounds, imposed stigmas, and knowledge of the view in which society scrutinizes them (Noguera, 2014).

Young (personal communication, March 2019) conveyed the importance for teachers to know the background of men of African descent due to their historical transition in the United States. Howard (2014) argued American society seems to care less about the worsening state of groups that have been marginalized, especially Black men, which is evident when looking at the educational retention rate of these men. Racial discrimination is one of the significant cultural disparities Black men face (Brooms, 2020). The Pew Research Center conducted a survey that revealed eight out of ten (81%) Black male college students have reported facing some type of discrimination, and 17% of those who reported discrimination say that it happens regularly
(Anderson, 2019). Anderson (2019) found Black men reported racism occurs when there are "people acting as if they were suspicious of them, people acting as if they were not smart, being subjected to slurs or jokes, and fearing for their safety because of being Black." Anderson (2019) suggested discrimination among Black men in college is more than likely due to the low representation, especially at predominantly White institutions (PWI). Discrimination towards Black men may be observed in the form of mistreatments, wrong judgments, malicious acts, and even disgruntled looks or gestures (Anderson, 2019; Askew, 2020).

**Black Men Pre-College**

On average, before even entering college, Black boys emotionally and academically drop out in the fourth grade, and they physically drop out of school in the ninth grade (Long, 2012). Nationally, Black male teachers comprise only 2% of teachers while 17% of students are Black in public schools (Kena et al., 2015). Black boys need to see Black men as leaders and someone who will guide them through high school transition into college (Long, 2012). Goings and Bianco (2016) believed Black boys lose interest in their K-12 education because they do not see many Black men as teachers and leaders in their educational environment. Therefore, they conducted a study to explore pre-college Black men’s perspective of pursuing a degree in education (Goings & Bianco, 2016). The Black male instructors involved in the study saw themselves as change agents and mentors to all students but specifically to Black men (Goings & Bianco, 2016). These researchers found one reason for the lack of Black men entering and persisting through college was their feelings and mental state of being inadequately prepared for their studies (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Before entering college Black men had mentally accepted negative labels placed on them from former educators (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Goings and Bianco (2016) found that 41% of Black males began their collegiate careers taking remedial
courses at a community college. This negatively impacted their determination to finish when their peers are on target to their graduation.

Watson et al. (2016) sought to challenge schools' one-dimensional "care" model by highlighting the often-underestimated aspect of care students have for one another and their instructors in high school. The researchers found the students' perspectives on their feelings of freedom, their feelings of mutual trust, and the importance of care shown by their teachers were what mattered to them the most (Watson et al., 2016). The relationships Latino and Black men fostered with their teachers increased their vision for reaching their academic, emotional, and social goals (Watson et al., 2016). Watson et al. (2016) found male students who had relationships with their teachers also increased their desire to attend higher education institutions. The researchers concluded students, especially male students, would be more likely to look for the same aspects of care in higher education as they received from their instructors in high school (Watson et al., 2016).

Various researchers have reported Black men who are in transition from high school to college need emotional support and care despite their outward appearance of confidence (Brooms, 2018; Harper, 2015; Ida, 2017; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Integration, as it relates to active involvement in university activities, is essential, but many first-year college students need faculty motivation to encourage their involvement in university activities (Thompson, Her, Fetter, & Perez-Chavez, 2019; Tinto, 1975; Turner, 2017). Black men in higher education are more likely not to be involved in organizations not primarily made up of their race than other races unless they are motivated to do so by an administrator or a teacher (Farmer & Hope, 2015).
**Black Men in Higher Education**

According to Strayhorn (2008), the United States has approximately 15 million undergraduates in higher education, but only 5% are Black men; this number was approximately the same enrollment for Black men in 1976. One of the largest higher education institutions, the University of Central Florida, enrolled 68,475 students during their 2018-2019 academic school year, but only 2,813 of those students were Black men (College Tuition Compare, 2020). Among community colleges, Black men have the lowest graduation rate at 12% compared to all other racial and ethnic male peer groups (Wood, 2014).

There is limited research on the experiences of African American men attending HBCUs (Farmer & Hope, 2015). Consequently, the amount of information for instructors to receive professional development is limited (Pelzer, 2016). Higher education administrators should prioritize providing what training they can and professional development opportunities for their staff to understand and serve every sector of their diverse student body, including Black men (Quaye & Harper, 2014). It is crucial that Black men’s choices in academic programs are addressed and understood to cultivate an environment conducive to their learning (Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999).

Peart (2018) explored Black male students' educational experiences in college to determine the appropriate and available opportunities for optimum achievement. Peart's (2018) reason to conduct the study was because Black male students failed consistently in their academic achievements, operating as a marginalized population academically, which affected their progress, and as a result, many Black students dropped out of college (Peart, 2018). The researcher wanted to explore the following questions from the participants:
• What were Black men’s experiences in higher education, and what were their daily interactions like?

• Did they experience discrimination?
  o If so, they were asked to describe the level of discrimination they felt and the perpetrators.

• What were the academic achievements of Black males in higher education, and did these achievements resemble the same as their peers? (Peart, 2018)

The researcher concluded that higher education helped Black men escape detrimental stereotypes and provided them with the material and systems they required for academic achievement (Peart, 2018).

Consequently, education can change the life of students, especially Black men, and empower them as they gain opportunities; however, this can only be realized if institutions have a strategic plan that introduces relational and mentoring connections between students and faculty members (Goings & Bianco, 2016; Hawk, 2017; Hawley & Flint, 2016; Peart, 2018). Black men must know their worth and value within educational institutions of their choice (Harper, 2015; Harper et al., 2018; Landis, 2019; Strayhorn et al., 2015). The history of Black men in America, from the slave ships to the present day, gives the reason behind why many Black men have emotional and mental struggles even in the higher educational setting (Brooms, 2018; Cazenave, 2017; Young, personal communication, March 2019).

There is a high potential of distress against Black male students. Armstrong, Haskett, and Hawkins (2017) found there are students who need close valued relationships with their teachers due to possible suffering of social, behavioral, and academic difficulties. Black men are among students who may have suffered harm through racism, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect,
and sexual abuse. Consequently, the student-faculty relationships can foster care and support that may prevent risky behaviors (Armstrong et al., 2017). Armstrong et al. (2017) said:

Given these links between academic performance and students' relationships with their teachers, one potential path to improved school success for abused students might be through high-quality relationships. The attachment theory offers guidance in terms of understanding links between parenting and student-teacher relationships of abused students. (p. 146)

Many Black male students tend to look for a parental role from their instructors while attending college (Young, personal communication, March 2019). Students often want teachers to help provide guidance and structure to their lives and to reduce distress (Strayhorn, 2017). Educators can help students who have suffered from moments of distress and emotional concerns (Drouin, Reining, Flanagan, Carpenter, & Toscos, 2018; Thompson et al., 2019). Instructors who manage to connect with their students tended to have success with their students overcoming distress and improving their academic standing (Drouin et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2019). For example, simply giving students another perspective or outlook on a problematic academic assignment distresses the student and strengthens the relational connection with the instructor (Drouin et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2019).

**Stakeholders' interaction with Black men in college.** Stakeholders in education are individuals or groups who are devoted, participate, and contribute to student success, well-being, and ongoing progress (Warren & Bonilla, 2018). Stakeholders are directly or indirectly involved in the student's educational growth and development. “Adults may enact versions of care during their interactions with young Black men they believe communicates their genuine concern for their future, without ever confirming such behaviors align with the young man's vision of his
future self” (Warren & Bonilla, 2018, p. 15). The out-of-school influences on and aspirations of Black men who attend college could come from their parents or guardians since most of them desire for their children to do well (Warren & Bonilla, 2018; Watson et al., 2016). However, school stakeholders also influence Black men and their ambitions to attend college and maintain their academic goals while they are a student (Warren & Bonilla, 2018; Xerri et al., 2018). Black students, particularly Black aspirations, feel their interactions with stakeholders, primarily from their faculty can help them feel a sense of belonging (Strayhorn et al., 2015).

There are minimal studies that explore how the sense of belonging, personal well-being, and self-confidence, are affected by stakeholders, specifically among Black male students (Strayhorn et al., 2015). The researchers sampled Black male students’ as they transitioned through an HBCU to determine how stakeholders were involved in their growth (Strayhorn et al., 2015). The researchers found Black male college students who reported positive well-being also tended to report greater self-confidence than Black men who did not attend HBCUs (Strayhorn et al., 2015). The researchers also found proper care from stakeholders also offers a sense of belonging for Black men during their first years of college, and is vital (Strayhorn et al., 2015).

**Impact of community on student persistence.** Nichols (2016) argued when Black men experience positive aspects of community which include parents, pastors, and other leaders, their feelings of discrimination can be dismantled. This tool of community is a positive aspect that can be useful for universities to consider as a source for helping Black men to achieve at a greater rate (Nichols, 2016). Uslu and Gizir (2017) found students have a sense of school belonging when every stakeholder contributes to their success. Contributions can range from different types of motivation to tangible resources students need in order to be successful (Uslu & Gizir, 2017). These stakeholders include those in the students' learning environment, including the instructors,
administrations, parents, peers, and organizations. When students lack interaction with faculty, they tend to experience loneliness, stress, isolation, and confusion (Zahl, 2015).

**Student motivation.** A lack of motivation has been known as a barrier for Black men entering higher education and hindering their completion of a college degree (Strayhorn, 2017). Turner (2017) described extrinsic motivation as a reward, usually tangible, to recognize acceptable behavior. Intrinsic motivation is praise and a reward to one's self. It is self-related and self-motivated (Turner, 2017). External influences from student-faculty relationships give students a heightened level of extrinsic motivation because it is a reward that is tangible (Turner, 2017). While extrinsic motivation is needed, Litalien et al. (2015) found students experience achievement when their motivation is intrinsic and independent or self-reliant. Both types of motivations are needed for all students, including Black men (Strayhorn, 2017; Turner, 2017). For Black men on all educational levels, motivation has become a dominant conversation in their academic persistence and achievement and is particularly vital for Black male Ph.D. students trying to achieve their goals (Litalien et al., 2015). Without sufficient support from someone in the "relational reach" of the student, they are unlikely to be motivated to attend school and do well if they are enrolled (Strayhorn, 2017). When students leave a program, delay, or take classes every other semester without consistency, it is a sign that there is a lack of motivation (Litalien et al., 2015).

According to Raufelder et al. (2016), students' intrinsic motivation is "sparked" by their teachers and will increase if they feel secure and cared for by their teacher. Koca (2016) suggested there should be less money and time spent developing, administering, and analyzing test results and more time and money spent on motivating students. Helping students to understand that they have the needed potential to achieve is the first step to motivating students
(Koca, 2016). Faculty members teaching in higher education have the responsibility to convey academic subject matter and the idea that intelligence is a malleable quality (Dweck, 2002). Doing this should help the low rate of Black men who enter college with persistence (Litalien et al., 2015). Therefore, mentors or teachers should develop motivating students' methods, starting with encouragement and raising the student's self-efficacy (Knight, 2014). With Black male students, this can be done by fostering relationships that aim to connect the students with their potential and life's purpose (Askew, 2020; Brooms, 2017; Cheon & Reeve, 2015; Knight, 2014).

**Student engagement.** Having constant engagement with a student is a part of the student-faculty relationship (Durksen et al., 2017). Confidence, climate, contact, and connection are four elements important to student engagement when developing this relationship (Durksen et al., 2017). Furthermore, a student must have confidence in the faculty member to fully trust in the engagement of the student-teacher relationships, also known as the climate of the relationship (Cheon & Reeve, 2015). Climate also refers to the environment as it must be conducive for the production of the relationship (Cheon & Reeve, 2015). Additionally, to facilitate an ethical student-teacher relationship, it is vital for the lines of communication to remain open (Cheon & Reeve, 2015). Connections are built between the two parties as their relationship develops (Cheon & Reeve, 2015). Without a healthy student-faculty relationship, students are not likely to fully engage in any academic task because of a lack of emotional support (Durksen et al., 2017). Therefore, teachers need to make connections that are valuable to students as this will enhance the student-teacher relationship and possibly cause other stakeholders to form relationships with the student (Quin, 2017).
Retention of Black Men in Higher Education

Farmer and Hope (2015) conducted a study to determine factors that influence African American men’s retention and graduation rates at an HBCU. It was discovered that financial aid did not affect retention or graduation rates; however, residency status impacted graduation and retention rates. Students who lived on campus had a better chance of being retained and graduating than those who lived off-campus (Brooms, 2017; Durksen et al., 2017; Farmer & Hope, 2015). Farmer and Hope (2015) suggested colleges and universities should focus more on how instructors help students obtain their GPA scores during high school so college faculty can do the same. The researchers also concluded students' GPAs from high school could be useful in predicting the student's retention and graduation while in college (Farmer & Hope, 2015; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Bridging the gap between high school and higher education for Black men could be the advantage needed for achievement (Askew, 2020; Farmer & Hope, 2015; Xerri et al., 2018). The goal for higher education leaders should be to help students through their education and graduate (Strayhorn, 2017; Wood, 2014; Young, personal communication, March 2019).

Retention and students' success can be altered by faculty members who display a level of professionalism that contains care, trust, and concern towards students in the form of student-faculty relationships (Roberts, 2018). Care is a particular level of concern and trust is the ability to be fully comfortable without restraints, and the expression of empathy (Askew, 2020; Roberts, 2018; Young, personal communication, March 2019). There is a crisis concerning Black undergraduate men and their graduation rate; two-thirds start college but never graduate (Harper & Quaye, 2007). One way higher education institutions have been strategic about raising the retention rate among Black men is to influence them into becoming active in organizations and
become socially active with their teachers (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Students being active in organizations and becoming socially integrated throughout their higher education experience is the expression of Tinto’s (1975) student integration model.

The student integration model was developed by Tinto (1975) in order to offer a reason for high dropout rates in higher education. The model focuses on the interactions between the student and the institution, including faculty members. Tinto (1975) believed society views college as a social system made up of structures, forms, and values. Tinto (1975) argued students, including Black men, need a connection with their institution through social interactions with faculty and college life activities.

Roberts (2018) explored a model for the success and retention among students, focusing on how faculty members contributed towards the student's life while in college and how that influenced the student's retention (Roberts, 2018). During the study, the factors contributing to student success were derived from five categories of these contributing factors: Personal well-being, social integration, academic engagement, student preparation, and culture (Roberts, 2018). Students must be supported throughout their college years as they build relational connections with peers and faculty members (Roberts, 2018; Tinto, 1975; Wood et al., 2016). Students who were helped by faculty focused more on the total college experience (Roberts, 2018; Tinto, 1975). Student who were integrated into college did well in their classes as opposed to those who did not seek to engulf themselves into their college experience (Roberts, 2018; Tinto, 1975). Furthermore, Roberts (2018) found the various stages of a student's life cycle, from freshman to senior year, had different needs and required different approaches from their instructors (Roberts, 2018). Roberts (2018) also found student retention increased, and they benefit more from a holistic approach that supports the student’s life cycle instead of the approaches that are more
limited and only focused on supporting only first-year students (Roberts, 2018). Roberts (2018) concluded it is essential for the university or college to maintain a systematic approach to understanding their students and having resources to meet their individual cultural needs. These needs could mean providing entertainment geared more toward a specific culture (Heller, 2019; Roberts, 2018). The students must remain the focal point for all the institutions, and the institution must be concerned with students who do not remain at their institution and those who do not graduate (Askew, 2020; Roberts, 2018; Turner, 2017).

**Experiences of Black Men in Higher Education**

Culture plays a vital role in how students experience higher education, and these experiences influence their perceptions of their teachers (Nichols, 2016). However, not all Black men have the same cultural background with the same experiences, views, and perceptions (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2014). According to Nichols (2016), Black men who are culturally close to Africa or the Caribbean may experience the same racism that other Black men experienced in higher education. There are times when uncomfortable moments, such as a perceived racial act or comment, may occur within the confines of a student-faculty relationship (Harper, 2009). An example of a racial moment within a student-faculty relationship is when racist instructors show discrimination by favoring one race over another or purposeful mistreatment of a particular race or groups of people (Harper, 2009). However, if care for a Black male student's emotional well-being has been demonstrated and has been administered by the faculty member, then it is most likely that the issues of racism or discriminatory acts might be resolved through meaningful conversation (Nichols, 2016). Strayhorn (2017) suggested healthy conflict causes the relationship to grow and prevent student dropout.
Lohmann (2018) implied there will be conflicts in the classroom at some point between students and their instructor no matter if they are known or not. It is common for a faculty member not to be aware when a student has a conflict with them or is uncomfortable expressing their feelings. According to Lohmann (2018), when conflict is known, faculty members should not be in a rush to force resolution with the student but rather express their views in another way such that the student better understands their viewpoint. Once both parties can express their views about the conflict, the student should be fully aware that they can be open and honest to express their feelings (Lohmann, 2018). Faculty members should always provide a safe and comfortable atmosphere for the student to reveal feelings without negative judgment being their outcome (Lohmann, 2018). Lohmann (2018) suggested another person should assist in resolving the conflict if it is necessary. Follow-up conversations are also necessary for the development of the student-faculty relationship (Lohmann, 2018). The conflict between students and faculty should give students insight into how they should carry out conflict between their peers and other adults (Lohmann, 2018).

A qualitative study conducted by Parker et al. (2016) explored Black men’s perspective as it relates to diversity on a large campus to see how diversity-related issues were regulated at large PWI universities. The researchers identified three themes from the participants' interviews: Conflicting feelings of safety and belonging, adverse institutional climate problems, and a lack of personal and faculty accountability toward student growth. They found a lack of Black male instructors teaching in higher education; consequently, there was a lack of connection and identity, which would help the influence of Black male students at PWI institutions (Parker et al., 2016). Harper (2015) found "participants at the PWI indicated that energies that could have been invested into academics were spent on wrestling with stereotypes." Black men have also been
known to experience racism at PWIs in the form of confrontations with White students and
White teachers and staff members (Harper, 2015). In the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*
(2020), it was stated that a racial slur was written on the door of an African American resident
assistant at Southern Oregon University. Later a swastika was found at the same residence hall.
After an investigation, the university was unable to determine who committed these acts of
racism. Black men also reported their emotions were affected by the feelings of unsafety and a
sense of unwelcome at their PWI and feelings of being unsafe and not necessarily belonging to
the institution (Parker et al., 2016).

**Hurt experienced by Black male students.** Armstrong et al. (2017) found students,
including Black men, experience hurt within higher education that could be solved by valued
relationships with instructors. Due to Black men’s possible sufferings of social, behavioral, and
academic difficulties, there is a need to address emotional hurt (Armstrong et al., 2017; Landis,
2019; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Black men are among students who have
suffered harm through racism, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse.
During college, student-faculty relationships can foster care and support that may deter risky
behaviors (Armstrong et al., 2017). Armstrong et al. (2017) stated the connections between
academic performance and students’ relationships with their faculty would improve overall
educational achievement for abused students through a high-quality relationship.

Black male students tend to seek the likeness of a parental role in the higher education
setting as the teacher will help provide guidance and structure to their lives (Strayhorn, 2017).
The absence of this parental role, mentorship, or relational component leaves a feeling of
disappointment and hurt within Black men’s emotions (Harper et al., 2018). Black men who
have experienced emotional hurt during college tend to exhibit behavior that starts with
educational or faculty neglect (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015). Unless students declare where the hurt, frustration, pain, or opposition derives from, it is unclear if it directly connects to the student educational experience, but faculty and those alike can help change the student's narrative (Patton, 2016 & Howard, 2014).

Perspective of Black Men in Higher Education

Many Black men have been able to persist through higher education because of the location of the university (Strayhorn, 2017). Institutions in a highly urbanized area will have local attractions to keep students entertained (Strayhorn, 2017). However, Strayhorn (2017) found Black men still need social support from stakeholders to be persistent through their degree program. Black men in interviews described the hands-on approach to relational connections with faculty and staff at urban, public universities, especially those attending HBCUs, mentioning phrases such as “going beyond the call of duty” or “going out of their way” (Strayhorn, 2017, p. 2). Strayhorn, Lo, Travers, and Tillman-Kelly (2015) found educators' support is critical to improving Black men’s mental, physical, and emotional health and well-being. Colleges and universities play an instrumental role in Black men’s sense of belonging such as Black men at PWIs were found to have a lower sense of belonging than same-race men peers who attended HBCUs, at least in part due to the existence of a critical mass at HBCUs and distancing or unfriendly campus atmospheres at PWIs (Strayhorn et al., 2015).

Researchers found Black men in higher education need to feel a sense of belonging and the sense that a relationship with their instructors can easily be obtained (Parker et al., 2016). Uslu and Gizir (2017) defined school belonging as the feeling when students feel accepted, respected, and supported by others in the school social environment. This is obtained through the relationships between the student and other stakeholders but can be most effective if presented
by a teacher (Uslu & Gizir, 2017). These researchers contended, "the most stated indicator of highly effective schools for students is a caring environment exhibiting a homelike atmosphere in which teachers treat all students with respect and care and interact with them in relationships similar to the extended family" (Uslu & Gizir, 2017, p. 67).

Lucas (2018) conducted a study investigating the specific challenges Black men attending predominantly White institutions (PWIs) face and whether the PWIs are providing services for Black students to improve their levels of persistence and rates of graduation (Lucas, 2018). Lucas (2018) wanted to explore the challenges faced by the participants, Black male students at PWIs, especially the participants in their first year of higher education, and their perspectives on staff, their economic perspectives, and their social perspectives. Lucas (2018) stated many universities fail to respond to the decline in retention related to Black men, this is a reflection of the institution. Being aware of the retention issue will benefit Black men attending PWIs and all the marginalized groups in the university communities (Snijders, Wijnia Rikers, & Loyens, 2020; Strayhorn, 2017). Lucas (2018) argued there was a lack of proactive efforts in providing support structures that address Black men’s needs academically and culturally by the PWIs. Lucas (2018) discussed the declining number of Black men who are graduating from college and defines PWIs and their place in the lives of the Black men who attended their institutions (Patterson et al., 2017). Lucas (2018) gave insight into Black men’s challenges at PWIs and looked at the various difficulties PWIs encounter in trying to meet the needs of this specific student population (Lucas, 2018). The researcher found Black men responded well, both socially and academically with mentors, those with whom they had faculty relationships, and same race peers (Lucas, 2018). Lucas (2018) suggested interventions should consist of professional development for faculty and staff, which focused on teaching about the specific
needs of Black men and how to support them at PWIs (Lucas, 2018). Failure from PWIs to support Black men in efforts to raise retention rates with this sector of their student population, in turn, exacerbates the problem which affects the economy both directly and indirectly (Brooms, 2018; Landis, 2019; Lucas, 2018). Future research should be conducted to determine how to support Black men and how institutions can change their policies and assumptions that have failed Black men in higher education (Koca, 2016; Lucas, 2018; Tinto, 1975).

**Summary**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspective of Black men’s student-faculty relationships in higher education in the United States. This literature review revealed retention issues in higher education and the problems Black men face as they attend these institutions (Armstrong et al., 2017; Goings & Bianco, 2016; Peart, 2018; Strayhorn, 2017; Warren & Bonilla, 2018). As educators become aware of student-faculty relationships concerning Black men, strategies to help solve retention and graduation rates should minimize this problem.

Black men in higher education are the minority cohort, and they have the lowest retention rates among all of their peers (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Every interaction from a stakeholder to a Black man can influence their commitment to higher education (Warren & Bonilla, 2018). Strayhorn (2008) stated Black men, like all students, attend college to grow academically and as a person. Brooms (2019) expressed student-faculty relationships help motivate, engage, and meet students’ needs. Relationships have been known to help raise retention rates (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019); this could also be a productive method if focused on Black men. Black men have been able to persist through higher education and, like all students, have opinions about their experiences (Farmer & Hope, 2015), but these experiences have not been expressed. Even
with Black men’s expectations and the research compiled about them, there is little research done genuinely giving a voice to their perception about how they perceive their relationships with their faculty in higher education (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019).

Tinto's (1975) research suggested socially integrated students, including relational connections with faculty, at an institution perform better as an all-around student. Harper and Quaye (2007) mentioned one strategic means to raise retention rates among Black men in higher education was to keep them active in organizations and socially active with their faculty. Noticing the lack of representation of Black men on college campuses (Strayhorn, 2008), those who continued their enrollment until graduation must have had some interaction of care from at least one faculty member (Noddings, 1984).

What is currently known about student-faculty relationships is that they provide positive academic achievements for students in higher education while enrolled in their institutions and after they have graduated (Brooms, 2019; Litalien et al., 2015; Nichols, 2016; Strayhorn et al., 2015; Turner, 2017; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Particularly with Black men, they are needed to enhance not only their academic needs but also their emotional needs (Strayhorn et al., 2015). Black men feel safer, a greater sense of well-being, and gain feelings of community and support from stakeholders especially teachers who build connections with them (Strayhorn et al., 2015). Koca (2016) found student-faculty relationships are effective for Black men because they provide integration academically and socially as they progress through their institution of higher learning. These relationships also provide the ethics of care needed for Black men (Warren & Bonilla, 2018). This level of care and concern is most needed in institutions where Black men are not induced culturally and cannot find relatedness among faculty and staff (Noddings, 1992).
McGaskey, Freeman, Guyton, Richmond, and Guyton (2016) recommended Black men must have a voice concerning their student-faculty relationships and interactions in order "to expose barriers to support and socialization" between them and that "faculty might consider developing new approaches to student socialization that center on the goals and aspirations of the student rather than recreating their own experience(s)." This will come about through the cultivation of student-faculty relationships (McGaskey et al., 2016, p. 144).

There have been studies conducted on motivation (Litalien et al., 2015), engagement (Durksen et al., 2017), and student needs (Warren & Bonilla, 2018) but none of the studies addressed Black men’s perspective on their student-faculty relationships. Neither did these studies allow the voices of Black men to be heard. Again, Tinto (1975) suggested further research to be conducted on student and teacher subcultures or student-faculty relationships and students' persistence throughout higher education. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature, and this study was warranted.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspective of Black men’s student-faculty relationships in higher education in the United States. The perspective of Black men on student-faculty relationships in higher education has had little attention, and Black men’s voices are essential if positive changes are made regarding their recruitment and retention in higher education. This chapter presents the methods that were used in this study. The research design is addressed as are the questions that guided the study. The research setting, the participants, and the researcher's role are presented as well. Data collecting methods, the analysis of that data, the establishment of trustworthiness, and lastly, ethical considerations are presented to complete the chapter.

Design

This dissertation sought to understand student-faculty relationships from the perspective of Black men; therefore, the qualitative research design method was used (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Using the qualitative method to research Black men’s' perspectives on their student-faculty relationships in higher education was most appropriate because of the participants' need to describe their personal experience within the phenomenon, which was the student-faculty relationship (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). This method allowed me to ask opened-ended questions to gain a holistic and accurate perspective in order to gain understanding of the participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Unlike the quantitative method of research, which converts thoughts into numerical data, the qualitative method enables the researcher to classify the findings into themes or similar ideas common
among the participants to formulate concepts that explain the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

The qualitative method used in this study was a phenomenological approach in order, "to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and can provide a comprehensive description of it" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). Central to the phenomenological approach to research is intentionality, "noema:" to experience (Patton, 2015). Moustakas' (1994) approach to phenomenology is seen or experienced by someone as their reality and current truth. This approach would help participants describe their past everyday experiences from what they saw through collecting data from this study.

The methodological approach to phenomenological inquiry requires the researcher to be able to thoroughly capture and explain in detail how the participants of the study perceive, describe, feel about, judge, remember, make sense of, and talk about the phenomenon from their personal lived experience (Patton, 2015). The phenomenological approach has several specific forms of inquiry, bringing forth the researcher's personal experience and insights (Patton, 2015). Using the phenomenological approach in this study allowed for my personal experiences as a Black man who has attended higher education institutions to be shared within the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method also allowed for my personal experiences to be shared but bracketed into sections that did not conflict with the participants' data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As the researcher, I thoroughly captured and explained how the participants of this study perceived, described, felt about, judged, remembered, made sense of, and talked about the phenomenon from their personal experience (Patton, 2015). Using a heuristic inquiry approach, I presented my personal experiences and insights (Patton, 2015). The phenomenological approach was appropriate for the study because it is something I had
personally experienced, and I could bracket out my experience while keeping the integrity of the research and the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Specifically, the transcendental phenomenology approach was used; I focused less on myself as the researcher to examine the participants' full experiences even during bracketing sessions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My thoughts and experiences as the researcher were bracketed to express the participants' views on the phenomenon clearly. Transcendental research allows for the researcher to give a fresh perspective and focus on the matter and gather data ethically from the participants. I analyzed the data by reducing the data to significant statements or quotes and then categorized them into themes. Next, I developed a description of the participants' lived experiences combining them to suggest an overall essence of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Subsequently, I formulated a narrative of each experience and then found commonalities between the participants’ shared experiences. I decoded the data received from the participants and reduced all data to statements, quotes, and themes. This decoded data were then organized into charts. From this, an explanation was derived from the phenomenon. By using three of the qualitative data collecting methods—interviews, focused groups, and documentation—the participants described the phenomenon of student-faculty relationships from their perspectives.

I used three of the recommended methods of collecting data: Interviews, focus groups, and documents (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I conducted informal one-on-one interviews with the participants and asked open-ended interview questions (Moustakas, 1994). I asked questions that would lead to other explorations of questions that were meaningful to the overall research development (Moustakas, 1994). It was necessary that the interview environment was comfortable and welcoming for the participants; therefore, the interviews were conducted on a
secure and comfortable web conferencing platform called Zoom. The questions were designed to expose while maintaining a trusting, relaxing, and open dialogue that revealed descriptive details about the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

I also collected data through focus groups and document analysis. The data from the focus groups were analyzed in the same manner as the interviews. I led the focus groups with open-ended questions to spark a conversation that would provoke deep thought from the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Themes and common phrases were collected from the participants' documentation. Once the data were analyzed, I developed structural descriptions of the participants' lived experiences, a report of the essence of the phenomenon described, and finally, the understanding and essence of the experiences were compiled in written form (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Questions

Central Research Question: How do Black men describe their relationships with their higher education faculty?

Sub Question 1: How do Black men describe the element of care in their student-faculty relationships in higher education?

Sub Question 2: How do Black men describe motivation in close proximal relationships with their teachers?

Sub Question 3: How do Black men describe the effect of their student-faculty relationships in higher education?

Setting

The setting for this study was an online Facebook (FB) group identified as Black Good Men (BGM) with currently over 200,000 members with different educational and career
backgrounds. BGM is a pseudonym; the actual Facebook group's name is not disclosed due to participants' privacy. Because all the group members are adults and only interact with social media when convenient, the participants from the group did not need permission from an administration to participate in the study. This setting's rationale was based on its membership of Black men who come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, family structures, and education disciplines. This group of men total over 200,000 who are college graduates. There are five administrators for this group who maintain the group's postings, meetings, advertisements, and activities. Although not every Black man in the FB group has attended a college or university, this social media platform has several men. The group has live video messaging and group messaging access, which were used to collect data.

**Participants**

This study included 13 participants; this number of participants adheres to a phenomenological research approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used the criterion sampling method as all participants must have experienced the phenomenon—having a first-hand experience and willing to express their perceptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Criterion sampling is an approach to select participants in a phenomenological study that allows the researcher to hand-pick their participants based on a survey determining their qualifications to participate (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Criterion sampling ensured the Black men who would participate in the study met some criteria as this sampling method is useful for quality assurance and maintain the integrity of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Brooms (2018) defined a Black man as someone who had dark or tan skin and is of African descent, also known as an African American. From the members in Facebook's BGM, I selected 13 participants for the study (see Table 1 for participant information). These Black men
were selected according to a survey they answered outlining the participant requirements for the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the researcher, I sought participants who had cases that met specific criteria (Creswell & Poth, 2018); they had to be a Black male student who was attending or had attended a college or university within the United States. The age range for each participant was from 18-30 years of age. There was no requirement for degree completion, but the participants must have been enrolled in a higher education institution for a minimum of two years. I believed participants who did not complete their degree would add value and understanding from their perspective on student-faculty relationships; their lived experiences would not be diminished due to their lack of not completing their education. The participants must have lived in the United States for more than 10 years and currently living in the United States. Moreover, the participant must have or had a student-faculty interaction at an institution of higher education.

**Procedures**

The submission and successful defense of a dissertation proposal granted the access to apply to the institution review board (IRB) for approval to start research after the site for the research had been approved. Approval was granted from necessary entities such as the Liberty University's IRB, and I started the study (see Appendix A: Liberty University IRB Approval). No approval was needed from the Facebook group. The participants were gathered purposefully as they were identified as Black men who had been students in higher education; therefore, they should have had educational connections with their higher education faculty. There was an announcement posted on the newsfeed for potential participants to complete a survey to check participant qualifications (see Appendix B: Recruitment Post). A pilot study was conducted to ensure the validity of the research questions. Three Black men of my choosing who fit the
qualifications of the participants were interviewed using the same research questions that would be used to conduct the official research study. Creswell (1998) referred to this method of collecting participants as criterion sampling because the individuals have all experienced and know the phenomenon, therefore, meeting the criterion for the research. Criterion sampling for the purposes of finding Black men is convenient merely for choosing participants for the study and is used frequently in qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 1998). The social media FB group allowed the survey requesting Black men to join the study and from the replies, 13 men were selected to proceed with the study.

The participants who qualified and agreed to be a part of the study all signed a formal consent letter agreeing to their full participation in the study, and were given details to how the data would be gathered, which included the recordings of audio files and their assurance of confidentiality (see Appendix C: Consent Form). The data were gathered from 13 participants by conducting interviews, focus groups, and documentation in the form of a one-page written letter they were asked to write addressing their present or former professor. An email was sent to the participant after two weeks if the letter had not been written as a reminder to the participant to complete the task. After I gathered the data from the interviews and focus groups, it was transcribed by using Temi, a transcribing application (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Again, the process was recorded, and the participants had the chance to review their transcription for validity before data were analyzed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The letter, however, was not modified as it was an authentic document from the participant (Patton, 2015).

The data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) and hand-coding; using both coding systems helped to strengthen the validity of the research (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The QDAS software used was NVivo, which is used in academia to classify, sort,
and arrange information; examine relationships in data; and combine analysis with linking, shaping, searching, and modeling (Liberty University, 2020). After the analysis of the data were conducted, the findings of the data were reported.

**The Researcher's Role**

My role as the human instrument in this study connected me to the phenomenon of student-faculty relationships by being a Black man who has been through higher education. I am a Black man who has been a part of three institutions of higher education. Therefore, I have had many interactions with faculty members in higher education. Bringing my thoughts and concerns with me into the research, I am aware of the position I placed myself in. Regarding the participants, I had no prior relationship or connection with them other than we were all Black men who had shared experiences with faculty in higher education. I am a member of the social media website FB, but I am not a current member of the FB group BGM from which the participants were recruited. Although I am not a member of the group, I did have adequate access to its members. There was no malice or intent to deceive any of the participants during the study, neither did I have authority over the participants or their decision to participate during any level of the study.

My personal bias is that I believe in the effectiveness of student-teacher relationships. As a Black man who has been in several student-faculty relationships during my college education, I have found purposeful and meaningful relationships were the relationships that developed me academically and personally the most. Relationships with teachers I did not directly connect to were classes I did not do so well in.
Data Collection

The primary source for data collecting in a phenomenological study is in-depth interviews that involve no less than 12 individuals describing the meaning of the phenomenon from their lived first-hand experience with it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). With interviews as the primary source of data collecting, focus groups and letters of documentation were the other two data tools used for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The advantages of using these qualitative data collection methods were cost and time efficiency, little to no cost in travel, and efficient data retrieval and transcription (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Interviews

Fontana and Frey (2000) suggested interviews are the primary source of phenomenological research based on fully engaging in interactions with the participant to grasp their experiences through dialogue. My goal was to build confidence between myself and the interviewee to have an in-depth discussion about their student-faculty relationships in higher education. The interview questions were arranged to pertain to the interviewee's present, then their past, and finally their desires (Patton, 2015).

During the study, the interviews were conducted virtually via web-based with face-to-face camera interaction (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each interview was audio recorded using Zoom, a video conferencing app that provides quality assurance, transcriptions, and the reading of the participants' body language. Because the participants were from a social media platform, this was convenient since they were in different parts of the country. Interviews allow the researcher to understand better the participants' views on the questions asked. The questions were open-ended questions, which allowed the participants to engage in the descriptive process that qualitative research requires fully.
The following questions were asked during each interview process:

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we just met one another, giving me your age, occupation, and race that you identify with.

2. What is your highest level of education?

Questions one and two are both questions associated with identifying the participants as Black men and who attended higher education. By asking these questions, I disarmed the participants to make them feel comfortable so they would answer questions truthfully (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3. What type of institution did you attend, or do you currently attend? Describe your experience at that institution in one sentence.

Question three addresses Harper's (2015) findings that particular institutions like PWIs have been known to add stress and displace energies in areas other than academics for Black men, unlike HBCUs. These stresses would include racial tension and cultural offenses (Harper, 2015; Xerri et al., 2018).

4. How would you define "faculty-student relationship"?

Question four relates to Brooms’ (2019) research to expand the platform to understand and have the Black men’s voice heard concerning their student-faculty relationships. Knight (2014) argued for the importance of knowing what students are and their definitions.

5. What do you think about when you hear the word "community" as it relates to higher education and how did community play a role in your persistence?

Question five addressed the idea of "community" with Black men to address Nichols' (2016) statement about how Black men experience positive aspects of the community as a vital structure that helps with the feeling of being discriminated against. Asking this question helped to better understand the type of community that may be needed by Black men in order to gain a sense of
belonging or a sense of care that would allow for them to persist through college (Strayhorn, 2017; Wood, 2014; Wood et al., 2016).

6. What is your opinion on Black male integration, transition, and success in higher education?

Question six sought to understand how teachers are a part of the support Black men need for improving Black men's mental, physical, and emotional health and well-being (Strayhorn et al., 2015).

7. What are your overall thoughts about what Black males need from their professors in higher education?

8. Describe the importance of student-faculty relationships?

Questions seven and eight focus on the importance of student-faculty relationships and the needs of Black men that faculty could be able to assist with (Askew, 2020; Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019; Poulou, 2017; Strayhorn, 2017). Koca (2016) indicated students who have positive relationships are outgoing and socially competent, enhancing a more motivated learning, safe, and supportive atmosphere.

9. From your experience, identify and explain what stands out most about the student-faculty relationship in your mind?

10. How are/did any feelings of care or a sense of well-being play a role in your student-faculty relationship, and what other emotions or feelings did you experience or currently experiencing?

Questions 9 and 10 sought to understand Black men's experiences and the significance of their student-faculty relationships (Warren & Bonilla, 2018). This question also explored information
about the importance of care and the overall sense of well-being for Black men (Hawley & Flint, 2016; Noddings, 1992; Warren & Bonilla, 2018).

11. What are/were your overall class experiences like with your professors?

12. What are/were your thoughts about your professors and how they motivate(d) Black males in higher education?

13. Describe your observations of Black male faculty-student interactions?

14. Describe your visual experience regarding faculty engagement in motivating Black males.

Questions 11 through 14 deal with how students may or may not like their teachers and the perceptions of the care they feel from them (Raufelder et al., 2016). These questions also explored how motivated and engage Black men are with their faculty (Lucas, 2018; Raufelder et al., 2016; Strayhorn, 2017).

The interview questions were designed to drive the participants to a broad descriptive overview of their experiences related to them being Black men in higher education, their thoughts on Black men’s retention, their experiences as Black men, their persistence as Black men, their perception of student-faculty relationships, and the importance of understanding Black men. Having extensive and thought-provoking questions allowed the participant to go into detail concerning their experiences and hopefully lead to other questions that will reveal essence pertaining to the phenomenon (Patton, 2015).

Questions one through seven are about the participants' past, 8 through 17 addressed their present, and 18 through 21 are questions about the phenomenon's future. Questions one through four and then eight through ten were used to familiarize the participants to the interview process, gather information about the participants, and gather information based on what the participants
know about the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). These questions were formulated to document the participants’ opinions (Patton, 2015). Questions five through seven, 12, and 18-20 are all opinion and value-based questions to understand how the participants process and interpret information (Patton, 2015). These answers provided insight into the participants' thoughts about the issues and experiences (Patton, 2015). Questions 13 and 14 are sensory questions that "pull upon" the participants' feelings of sight, hearing, feelings, taste, and smell to deliver a description of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Questions 15 to 17 and question 21 are questions that concern the participants' feelings and aim to pull on the participants' emotions and deep thoughts (Patton, 2015). These questions were flexible enough to be altered when needed to fit the needs of the participants. These questions were intended to get the participants' perception on student-faculty relationships.

**Focus Groups**

Focus groups allow for multiple participants to answer and address questions in a group (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This also aids the participants to discuss and interact with each other's comments and connected lived experiences. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the focus groups should be conducted in the same room, virtually via the Internet, or from an email platform. The same 13 participants in the study were assigned into groups of three and one group of four members. The groups were organized using a sign-up sheet to make the sessions convenient for each participant. These groups participated in the video web browsing focus group sessions separately. I audio recorded each group session, transcribed the sessions, returned the transcriptions to each of the participants for accuracy, and then processed the data through self-coding and QDAS. Focus groups allow the researcher to understand better the participants' views of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). These questions were also open-ended questions,
which allowed the participants to engage in the descriptive process that qualitative research requires fully.

The following questions were asked during the focus group(s) session:

1. Please share the name of the institution where you attend(ed) college.
2. Name one thing that help(ed) you through college or currently helping you.
3. From the perspective of higher education, think of the word "teacher." What is the first thought that comes to mind, and why?

Question three addresses what students think concerning faculty. Students are more willing to try harder when they like their teacher, and as a result, they will perform better academically and socially (Brinkworth et al., 2018).

4. Explain what you observed emotionally from your professors who helped to guide you through higher education.

Question four was asked to understand how faculty helped to guide the men. Tinto (1975) contended teachers help students to integrate into higher education. The lack of integration into the social system in higher education will lead to a low commitment from students and increase the probability that students will decide to leave college and pursue alternative activities (Tinto, 1975).

5a. Describe moments when you felt cared for by your professors.

5b. Describe moments when you felt the lack of care from your professors.

Questions five (a) and five (b) center around Nodding's (1992) ethics of care that suggests the idea of caring and the components that center around caring should not be left out of education.

6. Focusing on one teacher, how well did your teacher lead you from the things that you did not know into the things you were expected to know?
Question six explored how teachers taught from proximity and how this affected the student. Eun (2019) shared the link between the proximal development theory zone and the general genetic law of cultural development (Vygotsky, 1963). These theories together suggest students need adults for learning. Afterwards, students should be self-motivated to learn.

7. As a Black man, how safe do/did you feel while attending your college or university? Question seven explored the safety the men felt as Parker et al. (2016) found that Black men reported their emotions were affected by feelings of unsafety and a sense of unwelcome at their PWI.

8. How many positive student-faculty relationships do/did you have during college, and how are/were these relationships productive and beneficial? Question eight sought to understand if the participants obtained the outcomes of student's improved motivation, academic achievement, higher retention rates, satisfaction from studies, a greater sense of pride for the institution, faculty increased self-efficacy, and positive learning environment in their student-faculty relationships (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019).

9. Describe the platforms you believe that Black males have to share their concerns and perspectives about their student-faculty relationships.

10. Describe any efforts you believe that colleges and universities should take to improve student-faculty relationships in higher education?

Questions nine and ten gave a voice to Black men in order to express their experiences with student-faculty relationships and what can be improved upon or developed based on their involvement in them (Brooms, 2019). Black men need a platform and a voice but, more importantly, stakeholders will implement the change they need (Askew, 2020; Brooms, 2019; Young, personal communication, March 2019).
Questions 1 and 2 are background questions that helped to identify the participants and warming the group up to the idea of talking and having a safe atmosphere to communicate (Patton, 2015). Question 3 gathered the participants' opinions and values on how they think and where their mind is concerning student-faculty relationships (Patton, 2015). Questions 4 through 10 are all experiences that determined the actions and experiences that the men had during college and those they had with their teachers (Patton, 2015).

**Document Analysis**

Examining personal documents such as letters is a form of data collecting in a qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants in this study were asked to write a one-page letter to a former professor focusing on their student-faculty relationship. They were asked to give notice to the spoken and unspoken perceptions of the student-faculty relationships. The letter was a document of reflection and was not seen by former teachers; therefore, the letters were addressed as "Dr. Anonymous." The participants sent these letters to me through a secure email address. These letters were hand-coded and coded using qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) to gather themes. An email was sent to the participants after two weeks if the letter had not been received as a reminder to complete the task.

**Data Analysis**

Patton (2015) stated, "Phenomenological analysis seeks to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people" (p. 573). Creswell and Poth (2018) outlined Moustakas (1994) phenomenological data analysis approach with these steps: Describe personal experiences with the phenomenon under study, develop a list of significant statements, group the significant statements into broader units of information, create a description of "what" the participants in the study experienced with the
phenomenon, draft a description of "how" the experience happened, and lastly write a composite
description of the phenomenon. Transcendental phenomenology aims to remove everything that
represents a prejudgment about the phenomenon and requires one to look at it undisturbed with
an open mind (Moustakas, 1994).

When using Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology approach, data are
collected and analyzed; interviews and focus group sessions are transcribed using Moustakas'
modification of the van Kaam method of analyzing phenomenological data (p. 121). Participants
can review the transcription assuring the validity of their statements (Creswell & Poth, 2018;
Moustakas, 1994). Significant ideas, phrases, and themes are coded using original terms, as this
phenomenological process is called horizontalization, which recognizes the critical themes from
the transcripts derived from the interviews and focuses group sessions with the participants
(Moustakas', 1994). Documents, such as those in this case, were not transcribed but accepted
because they were coming from the participants directly; however, the documents were analyzed
following Moustakas' format as well (Moustakas', 1994). After the data were collected, reviewed
by participants, analyzed, themes derived from the analysis, then the themes were used to
provide an explanation for the phenomenon and give clarity to the research questions from the
study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

The two types of data collected in this study that were analyzed—the interviews and
focus group sessions—were transcribed using Moustakas' (1994) modification of the van Kaam
method of analysis of phenomenological data (p. 121). I transcribed the interviews and focus
group sessions, then the participants were able to review their transcriptions assuring their
statements validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). After they were returned to me, I
made necessary revisions to the transcriptions as directed by the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Documents that needed revisions were sent back to participants to ensure the legitimacy of their statements. After the participant’s final check, the documents were sent back to me for analysis. The interviews were transcribed using the app Temi. The document, which was a letter the participants wrote to their instructor, had to be transcribed but accepted as is, as it is coming from the participants directly (Patton, 2015). The letters were analyzed along with the other data from the interviews and focus groups (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The analysis process was completed by hand-coding and with QDAS, which emerged significant ideas, phrases, and themes from the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

During the hand-coding process, I made a chart placing themes of like manner into categories to gather the essence of the phenomenon. This phenomenological breakdown process is called horizontalization, which recognizes the critical themes from the transcripts from the interviews and focuses group sessions with the participants (Moustakas, 1994). The letter of documentation written by the participants was not tampered with as far as bracketing or reduction in order to maintain the authenticity of the participants thoughts and the expressions of their experiences (Patton, 2015). After the data had been collected, reviewed by participants, analyzed, and themes derived from the analysis, then the themes were used to provide an explanation for the phenomenon and to answer the research questions of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

**Trustworthiness**

The qualitative research approach to establishing validity and trust in the reader is made by having a robust concrete audit trail (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The trail must show how the
data were explicitly gathered, the thorough analysis of that data, and how the themes were developed to present in order to present the findings (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Others should inspect the researchers' work and find integrity throughout the process (Merriam, 2009). Establishing trustworthiness is vital and cannot be overlooked in qualitative research; it is done by "careful attention to a study's conceptualization and how the data is collected, analyzed and interpreted, and how the findings are presented" (Merriam, 2009, p. 210).

**Credibility**

I spent ample time carefully collecting the data ensuring the questions from the interviews were heard clearly by the participants (Patton, 2015). They were also allowed to read the transcription (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I also analyzed the data thoroughly by hand-coding and using QDAS, which is a qualitative coding software (Patton, 2015). The data analysis was then returned to the participants so they can do a member check for accuracy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Subsequently, I analyzed data for a second time to ensure accuracy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Consequently, the participants checked the data again after it was thoroughly analyzed a second time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). After the data were analyzed, the participants were allowed to check the data's credibility again (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After the participants second look at the data, they saw no discrepancies and the data were accepted (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). There was also peer debriefing during the procedures by communicating with other doctoral students (Patton, 2015). By maintaining open communication about the research process with other doctoral students, a level of peer accountability helped to maintain proper procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).
Dependability and Confirmability

I maintained an audit trail by keeping notes of reflexivity and accurate data collection records (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I also allowed a qualified external researcher to review design and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Peer debriefing was also conducted during that time to review the process. Rich detail from the study context is shown, and the vast aspects of themes was addressed thoroughly (Patton, 2015).

Transferability

The study findings aimed to find their supportive role in research and connect with others who have experienced this phenomenon. The findings must be valid enough to gain others’ attention on the foundation of being trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, there were thick descriptive data from the three forms collected and reviewed by the study participants. As the data were placed into themes, the data showed how these themes and the findings can be associated with the theories presented in chapter one.

These trustworthiness methods were achieved by using triangulation, peer checks, member checks, direct quotes, and prolonged engagement. Patton (2015) wrote triangulation increases the validity of a study by combining methods; one method is data triangulation, which uses different data sources within the study. Peer checks took place twice during the collection of the data. The first check took place when the data had all been collected to ensure ethical methods were followed and secondly after analyzing the data. Member checks from the participants were conducted after analyzing their data to ensure correct meaning. Direct quotes from the literature and qualitative researchers were upheld methods of data collecting. There was a prolonged engagement spent on the data and careful coding using both hand-coding and QDAS software.
**Ethical Considerations**

After the approval was met by LU's IRB and Black Good Men administration, I started gathering participants. They were issued an informed consent form before data collection process started notifying them of their rights and requirements for participation in the study. Only with a signed informed consent form would the participants be allowed to participate in the study. Pseudonyms were given for both the group and each participant to protect the Facebook group's privacy. Security measures were in place to protect the privacy of the participants. All recordings, documents, and video messages were kept under passwords on a secure computer with security measures in place, such as password access only. Towards the end of data collection, there was a debriefing process conducted with all participants. Before the final meetings with the participants, they were given updates on the last meeting time and appreciation for their time and service to the research. Along with thanks, they were allowed to express any final feelings or emotional developments that affected the research.

**Summary**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspective of Black men’s student-faculty relationships in higher education in the United States. The method for the research was qualitative phenomenological inquiry. The phenomenon is student-faculty relationships, and the issues or problem is the lack of research conducted from the Black men’s perspective concerning the relationship. This study was critical because it had the potential to answer many questions concerning Black men and their higher education affiliations. Clarity was given concerning the method and design of the study for the reader. The research approach, the questions that guided the research, the three formats that would be used to collect the data, and the analysis of that data were all described. The site, participants, and procedures were identified
as they are in sync with the research title. In qualitative research, the researcher's role and placement are essential because, typically, they are connected to the research in some type of way and have a perspective on the phenomenon. As this section has displayed, the research process has been approved and the data collecting started, analysis was conducted, the researcher’s trustworthiness was stated. Ethical considerations were made in order for the reader to have trust in the research that had been presented.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspectives of Black males’ student-faculty relationships in higher education in the United States. Chapter Four offers a description of the participants, findings from the data analysis and answers to the study’s research questions:

**Central Research Question:** How do Black males describe their relationships with their faculty in higher education?

**Sub Question 1:** How do Black males describe the element of care in their student-faculty relationships in higher education?

**Sub Question 2:** What are Black males’ expectations in their student-faculty relationships?

**Sub Question 3:** How do Black males describe the effect of their student-faculty relationships in higher education?

Data were collected from the participants using interviews, focus groups, and a document—a letter written by the participants addressing heartfelt issues on student-faculty relationships. The interviews and focus groups for this research study were conducted using Zoom, an online platform that virtually provides face-to-face interaction. This platform was helpful due to the national Covid 19 pandemic in the United States in 2021. Thirteen participants had an individual interview session that lasted from 30-minutes to one hour. The interviews were conducted one-on-one and were recorded on a secure device with the permission of the participant. Recordings were then transcribed and reviewed by the participants for accuracy and validity of the research. I took reflective notes during interview sessions. Having memos and
reflective notes resulted in profound clarity and allow cross-analysis to ensure the data were interpreted correctly. The data were then analyzed by NVivo first and then hand-coding. Although NVivo was used to code the data, hand-coding was ideal because helped me to understand and interpret the data. The themes generated through both NVivo and hand-coding were alike. Lean coding was the type of hand-coding used to interpret the data. I started lean coding by making a list of three to six categories with labels. As the data were being interpreted, there were comments that reoccurred more often than other comments. The list was then reduced and combined to make three to six themes that are the main idea of the data. These themes are the summation or narrative that explains the participants’ viewpoint of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015).

There were three different focus groups with their average sessions lasting one hour in interview time. Three of the focus groups had three participants, while the other had four totaling all 13 participants. All sessions were recorded with the participant’s permission, transcribed, and reviewed by participants for validity. Reflective notes were taken as well during these sessions by the research to bring insight during data analysis. NVivo and hand-coding were used as well to analyze data. NVivo again was used first, and then hand-coding followed in the same manner that I analyzed the data from the interview.

Each participant wrote a letter of reflection to a specific professor (documentation); I received them through email at various times. These letters were not sent to the participants’ professors, but simply letters reflecting on their lived experiences in student-faculty relationships with their faculty for the purposes of this study. Afterwards, the participant was asked to review their document thoroughly before resending it to assure the validity of the meaning and expression within the letter. The documents were also analyzed by using NVivo and hand-coding
to gather significant themes from the data. This was done in a similar manner as the interview and the focus group data. Again, NVivo was used to interrupt the data first, while hand-coding was used second. The themes from all three data collection methods matched and gave meaning to the phenomenon experienced by Black men in higher education. Three themes emerged from the data: Security of Black men, desirable student-faculty, and essential care are necessary for Black men in higher education.

**Participants**

Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant for confidential purposes. Each of the 13 participants agreed on their individual pseudonym issued to them. Each participant in the study was a Black man who attended a higher educational institution in the United States. The Black men were between the ages of 18-30 and had significant accounts of their student-faculty relationship while in college. Table 1 presents the participants name, age, type of higher education institution (HBCU is the acronym for historically Black colleges and universities and PWI is the acronym for predominantly White institutions), number of years as a student in higher education including undergraduate and graduate studies, the participants focus group number, and degree completions status.

Table 1

*Participant Information*

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</table>

**Callis**

Callis is a 27-year-old Black man and is currently a graduate student assistant and writing consultant at a predominantly White institution in Georgia. His higher education experience started at an HBCU, where he earned his bachelor’s degree. He pursued a master’s degree at a PWI and is currently working on his Ph.D.

**Chapman**

Chapman is a 22-year-old Black man and is currently a student at a PWI in Alabama. He was scheduled to complete his degree in the fall of 2021. Even though he attended a PWI, he planned to begin his master’s degree program at an HBCU in spring 2022.

**Jones**

Jones is a 30-year-old Black man who attended a PWI. He hopes to start his master’s program at a PWI as well. He is currently working as a fifth-grade educator in Georgia.
Kelley

Kelley is a 27-year-old Black man who attended a PWI in California. He majored in information technology at his university. He is currently working as an information technology manager for a retail company.

Murray

Murray is a 21-year-old Black man who attended a PWI for his undergraduate degree in Ohio. He is currently working on his master’s degree as a full-time student and choreographer. He is scheduled to complete his graduate degree in May of 2022.

Ogle

Ogle is a 25-year-old Black man who attended a PWI in Texas. He is currently working as a registered nurse. He has no intentions of returning to higher education to obtain other degrees.

Tandy

Tandy is a 29-year-old Black man who attended two different HBCUs for his undergraduate and master’s degrees. Both HBCUs were in Tennessee. He is currently working in an administrative roll-managing a quality control department for an insurance company in North Carolina.

Morrison

Morrison is a 30-year-old Black man who attended a community college and a PWI located in Florida. He majored in business administration and graduated from both institutions. He is currently working as an athletic trainer and a substitute teacher.
Giles

Giles is a 25-year-old Black man who attended an HBCU in Mississippi. He is currently living in Kentucky and working as a logistics coordinator. He is also a graduate student in a master’s program at an HBCU.

Miller

Miller is a 24-year-old Black man who attended a community college and university. Both institutions were PWIs in New York. Miller is now working in the state of Nevada as an educator.

Garvin

Garvin is a 30-year-old Black man who attended both an HBCU and a PWI. He is now working as a medical doctor in the state of Georgia. He was also a first-generation college student—the first in his family to attend an institution of higher education.

Dickason

Dickason is a 29-year-old Black man who attended two PWI institutions. The first institution was in Alabama for his undergraduate degree and the second institution was in Florida for his master’s degree. He is currently working as a choral conductor for a middle and high school.

Long

Long is a 23-year-old Black man who attended a community college and then attended an HBCU. Both institutions were in the state of Alabama. He is currently working to pursue another degree at an HBCU and working as a social worker.
Findings

Three themes emerged from the data: Security of Black men, desirable relationships, and essential care. See below for theme and subtheme descriptions along with related research question and sample corresponding data. Table 2 is a visual representation of the themes derived from the data.
### Table 2

**Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Related Research Question</th>
<th>Evidence from Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security of Black Men</td>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
<td>Sub Question 3</td>
<td>“I’ve felt very attacked by faculty of the opposite race. I believe it was either because of my intelligence or simply because I was Black. For me, this came from observing how my White faculty would interact with White students. It was more organic, relatable, and just natural in conversation; meanwhile, my conversations with the same faculty were strictly academic and far and in-between. With my Black faculty, I felt safer simply put.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Security</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Security with Faculty</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desirable Student-Faculty</td>
<td>Parental Role</td>
<td>Central Question</td>
<td>“…it would be nice to say that I had many relationships with my professors, but I can only say that I remember having a meaningful, fruitful, deliberate, and purposeful relationship with only one…and she was a Black woman. It would have been nice to have a relationship with them all.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essential Care</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Sub Question 1 &amp;</td>
<td>“I felt cared for when my faculty actually talked to me about things that did not necessarily concern work. It was comforting to know that they cared about me as a person outside of my assignments.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Question 2</td>
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In analyzing the data from interviews, focus groups, and the letters, one primary consideration became evident from the Black men. They all wanted to know that their responses
would be secure, their identity would be hidden, and their truth could be told and made explicit for the sake of other Black men who are enrolled or will enroll in higher education. I was emphatic that their identity would be protected. For the most part, the participants answered the questions with much insight and gave a clear meaning of their perspectives and views on student-faculty relationships. The beginning of the interviews and focus groups allowed for dialogue between the participants and me in a safe place, providing a safe place for transparency. Furthermore, the letter participants wrote allowed them to express their personal inner views clearly and freely without restraints.

Themes Development

Theme One: Security of Black Men

During this study, it became evident that environmental, emotional, and physical safety is essential to the security of Black men. The participants of this study were also able to recall moments that dealt with security concerning other Black men with whom they attended college. Security in this study means safety.

Sub-theme: Physical environment. All the participants had an overall feeling of security and safety on their campuses when they described experiences involving the physical environment of the institution. None of the participants felt any fear from the cities or surrounding areas where their specific higher education institutions were located. Both Miller and Garvin agreed during their focus group session addressing how a significant number of Black men are typically raised, have been, or know of “rough environments.” In the same focus group sessions, Dickason and Long added these environments make Black men strong and capable of dealing with various circumstances and conditions. Tandy said in his interview,
“Black men are just fearless in environments of education maybe because of where they come from.”

Callis said during his interview,

My undergraduate institution felt safe especially being among other Black colleagues.

Also, the university was gated, which also made me feel safer on campus. I didn’t feel as safe on the campus where I attended graduate school because it was in the heart of downtown Chicago; I definitely felt I had to be more on guard with my surrounding, but yet I knew I could defend myself if necessary.

Further, Miller gave thanks in his letter addressing his professor’s efforts in being on the safety committee at the institution he attended. He knew his professor was on the committee because they often had personal conversations unrelated to academics. There had been issues on their campus related to car break-ins. Miller was concerned about his car because where it was parked by his dorm there were no streetlights. In his letter, Miller wrote:

We had the chance to really get to know one another and I found out that you were more involved on the campus than I really knew. You did more than just teach but you were concerned about the students and their safety. When I brought it up to you that I had to park my car in an unlit parking lot behind my dorm, you started making plans to get a streetlight placed in the parking lot. After you had two meeting with the safety committee there was a light place right behind my dorm. Thank you for caring!

**Sub-theme: Emotional Security.** Although the environmental safety of the participants at their institutions were environmentally secure, all of participants expressed their emotional security had been, “under attack” at some point during their higher educational experience.

During the interviews, the participants described clear threats to the safety and security of Black
men as it relates to their race. These threats included seeing defaming statements about Black students written on bathroom walls. Some participants even heard the “N” word shouted at them as they walked through their campuses during late afternoons. During focus group session one, Kelley told a story of how he experienced racism and how this affected the way he viewed and saw his faculty members.

Honestly, the college itself was great. It was the peers that made a difference with being a Black male at a PWI. However, when the campus was closed for the day, things could go either way, being at a college in South Georgia. Between the students and campus police, it was dangerous for Black males. There was an app called Yik-Yak that would let students speak about how they felt about the campus. However, like all social media, there is always a dark part. Screenshots were leaked from a private chat of two students planning to harm students of color at an event thrown by minorities.

According to the participants, safety on college campuses is vitally important. They believed those who authorize safety measures and implement safety need to care about the students and students should be able to trust the measures put into place. Callis said trust is important from the student’s perspective. If the student does not trust the preventative measures, they will feel a sense of insecurity that affects their well-being and sense of belonging. Care is also implied in security as Callis contended,

If I cannot trust you, then I indeed don’t believe that you fully care about me. Even professors also made Black students feel out of place, especially during the major classes.

I am sure it is evident by now that I didn’t feel safe or protected.

For Chapman, it was apparent that during the group session, the emotional trauma of racism on Black men in higher education affected him and others who had similar experiences.
During focus group session one, Chapman was holding back tears while he was emotionally describing some of his encounters with his professors, “Do they ever think we get tired of being mistreated? We don’t want to be treated no other way than normal; just do me and my people right.” Giles said in his interview, “when universities do nothing about the continuance of racism, they condone it. What you overlook, you accept! If you deal with something to bring about a resolution, show concern and your stance about it.”

Ogle said, “along with myself and most other Black men, racism affects how Black men recall, relate, and react.” Murray, Tandy, and Morrison, all focus group members with Ogle, agreed they, “have had some type of experience with racism directly and indirectly on or off my campus.” Ogle expressed during focus group session two, “as safe as I felt on my campus, I didn’t feel as safe in many of my classes. My emotions were all over the place because I was surrounded by people who did not look like me.” Dickason said in his interview, many times, I felt like an outsider. Some references and jokes would be made that the majority understood but weren’t necessarily inclusive of students of the minority. I personally did not receive the same opportunities as the more preferred students. For example, I was only called upon to share my skills when a particular genre/style of music was being performed in one set. It wasn’t until my senior year in an undergraduate choral conducting class that I recognized my ability to perform exceptionally well. In undergrad, my physical surroundings were safe. However, I didn’t always feel safe sharing my thoughts and experiences as a Black male student. I felt there were several instances in which I had to always be on guard with whom, what, and how I share my thoughts. This affected how I entreated my professors even though I wanted to “belong” and learn as much as I could from them. I wanted to be close and have my professors as mentors, but
it almost seemed impossible because there was a clear distinction between us that I did not necessarily create.

**Sub-theme: Security with Faculty.** The men mostly felt safe in their environments, but they felt unsafe emotionally or uncared for because of their race or racial issues. When it came to direct interaction with their professors, their feelings of safety varied. It was evident the men felt safe around professors who were Black. The participants felt secure with Black professors because they shared the common bond of both being Black and in the higher education space. Also, they felt secure because the Black men professors were going to take care of them, support them, and inspire them towards becoming better men. Those who were fortunate to have Black men as professors seemed to be more at peace with their safety and feelings of security. Garvin shared,

> I was able to talk with some of my professors at any time, whether while walking the corridor or in the staff room. One Black professor made me feel welcome in his space, and I really felt that he cared about me as a person. It was like he went the extra mile. Really, from both schools, this was the same feeling I received from other Black male instructors. They had my back. I didn’t have to wonder if I would be successful around them. It was these men who pushed me toward greatness and left me with tools that I could carry throughout life.

Further, Long said during his interview,

> Professors made the classes enjoyable and exciting for me to learn. They were motivating, and I was pushed to seek much of the information for myself. These were the professors I could say I did have some type of connection with, much like a relationship.

Now at my HBCU, this was very much the case! I always felt safe around them and felt
as though they had my best interest at heart. These were Black professors; they just were different in a relatable way.

While in the focus group, Garvin discussed his connections with faculty from both of his institutions. He spoke freely about how some of his professors made him feel safe as a student. Garvin mentioned how he knew the difference between being a student who was free to be totally themselves instead of being a student who was always aware not to upset his professor. These same feelings were important in how he perceived care from them.

**Sub-theme: Culture.** Unfortunately, the participants expressed that while in college, they experienced situations that affected them negatively because of their race. Long wrote in his letter, “As a Black man, I often watched what I did, where I went, and sometimes what I said because I was Black and around mostly White people.” Miller said during his interview, “There were classes that I didn’t speak in. I was one of the few Black people in the room and I knew my opinion or view would be different because of my race and culture.” From the participants view, their race and culture were factors in them standing out and being uncomfortable enough not to speak out in class. Kelley said during focus group number one,

A personal incident that happened to me was when I was leaving the library when the campus police pulled me over and accused me of having drugs in the car. Of course, no drugs were found; I just felt as though I was being harassed like other Black men on our campus had experienced. This made it hard for myself and other Black students to trust not only the police but the administration fully.

Based on the participants descriptions, Black men need security, and when offenses that deal with race occur, it is hard for student-faculty relationships to be built. This was stated by Miller that Black men, who experience racism in institutions where they are supposed to have
security, lose trust in the institution’s systems and faculty. Morrison said in his letter he could not trust his professor enough to build a much-needed relationship with her after making comments that he felt were racist and offensive to Black culture. Miller also addressed an issue of offence he had with a professor during focus group session three. He said,

I remember sitting in a class, the only Black male in the room, sitting listening while my professor horribly tries to explain why using the “N” word was not offensive to some Blacks. She even called on me, the only Black male in the room to justify what she was saying. If bad timing was ever a thing, that was the moment. Before that day, I honestly thought that she was an “ok” teacher, but that quickly went away. I had no desire to be around her at all after that day.

From the participants view, race and culture affect how Black men would perceive their experiences with their professors. They know the history of how Black men have been seen and treated in the United States and they voiced the concerns of the harsh mistreatment. Racial injustices play a significant role in how the participants perceive and view care. Their lived experience within the framework of their culture as Black men, allow them to perceive connections with their faculty from a perspective that is true to them. Long spoke of his personal experiences during his interview concerning this,

With professors who were White or wasn’t exposed to the Black male’s culture, I felt no sense of care or concern from them. I was a number or just another kid who might or might not make it in their class. Sometimes I felt like I didn’t even matter. From these professors I don’t think I would even say we had a student-faculty relationship. This was the opposite from teachers who talked to me, and it seemed as though they were trying to
get to know me as a person and be relatable with me. I felt care from them. They were not all Black either; they just took time to get to know me and my dreams.

It is important to note that Long had experienced care and relational connections from faculty who were not Black. Connecting or being aware of Black culture when teaching Black men is important, as Long expressed. Long’s point of view expresses that it is not about Black men only being taught by Black faculty, but by faculty who are willing to put in the work to culturally understand the Black man and teach them holistically. Long’s interview continued by saying,

Most of all, they had some type of connection, or at least I thought they did, to the Black experience or Black culture. This was vital and is for professors who teach Black students. Those who knew or could relate to the Black male culture were the ones who motivated me. Those who I thought prejudged me as a Black male or seen me as just another student never really motivated me. It was those classes and professors whom I did not have a relationship with or a connection with. I do believe my learning suffered because of this. It’s hard to work or do your best for someone who you don’t like, or you think don’t like you. I had professors who never talked to me. An entire semester would go by, and they never said a word to me. I think that was a lack of care, and I thought something was wrong with them personally. To me, care for the student was just not important.

**Theme Two: Desirable Student-Faculty Relationships**

After collecting the data, the second theme that emerged was that Black men strongly desire a relationship with their professors. When asked directly, every participant vocally expressed they did have a desire, hope, or strong willingness to be in a student-faculty
relationship (the word, "relationship" throughout this study does not intent to convey a relationship that is sexual nor with the intent to become sexual). The term, “relationship” to these participants refers to such interactions as mentorship, affiliation, association, and connection. To the participants, relationship implies a deeper yet common relation between students and faculty that is ethical and professional. The relationship is not driven by academics alone but by commonality.

Callis said during his interview,

student-faculty relationships are important in building community and creating legacies that carry over to sustain the integrity of an institution. From my experience, I think the student-faculty relationship is seen through the lens of mentorship, which can have varying definitions for many people, but the mentor-mentee dynamic is established.

After Callis addressed his views on student-faculty relationships during his personal interview, he also made mention of his view on relational connections with faculty in his group session with Chapman, Jones, and Kelley. “As a Black man, I wanted better relationships with my professors, and I felt as though every guy I knew wanted a bond, mentorship, or some type of relational connection with their professor,” said Callis. Kelley said, “I agree.” Along with the other two participants. Callis added in his letter,

I had a few meaningful relationships during college. Three within my department, two outside my department in my minor studies. These relationships were beneficial because they helped shape the scholar identity I now possess. I wanted these types of connections if only to better network in my career field. Having these types of relationships with my college professors really influenced me. I gained lasting wisdom and just learned so much from being around them.
As Callis mentioned, networking for college students is important for their future. Professors can serve as a resource for students to gain access to the career field in which they will soon enter. Callis wanted relationships with his professors for the additive benefits of connections and benefits. Kelley said faculty from universities and colleges will always have some type of influence over their students which will cause them to have connections that will lead to relational career benefits. Chapman said during his interview,

Having a strong relationship with faculty as a student provides several benefits to future endeavors. Pursuing higher education often requires students to present some form of recommendation. Having a faculty member write a letter based on your character and presentation in class is imperative to many future opportunities, i.e., medical school, job opportunities, and Scholarships.

In focus group one, Callis described to the group how his professor at his HBCU showed him she cared, and so this type of caring provoked him even more to want a relationship with her. This care also encouraged him to study more and helped to make her class a priority.

I was an English major; so much of what we study in English is interpretative and analytical to gain critical understanding about the world. So, with the knowledge that I didn’t know, I felt more supported in wanting to know. For instance, being at an HBCU, my African American Lit professor expected us to know various degrees of Black history and was shocked when we didn’t know or hear of many aspects she wanted to discuss. Instead of making us feel like failures, this just opened our energy to start with a foundation and build from there. Her pushing us to know our history gave or grew a longing for me to get to know her better. I wanted her to get to know me just the same.
She was a Black woman, so that connection was already there. It was as if she became our second mom.

The data revealed that Black men saw one of the purposes of higher education is to educate students for a future career of their choosing. Although institutions have programs and other departments to assist students with preparing for their after-college experience, the student’s professor would be the main resource and focal point to engaging the student both academically and practically. Chapman discussed the benefits of student-faculty relationships in connection with the faculty supporting students by assisting them with undertakings outside of academics.

Seeing how faculty demonstrate their passions for a course is the start of creating an environment that will allow the students to engage in the course and the faculty fully. Students can feel if a faculty member is not in tune with what they are teaching, and likewise, the instructor will not be entuned with the student. This dynamic can create an atmosphere where the students notice immediately and could rob the student of the willpower to start a mentorship or some type of connection with the teacher. Students do want that. As hard as that might seem to professors and time-consuming, students need and want a relationship but more so Black males like myself.

The participants stated that Black men know when professors are genuine with their approach to connecting with students. They believed connections between students and faculty members should be trusting connections with signs of care that are authentically true. From the Black men’s perspectives, true care was seen as quality time spent with professors normally outside of the academic setting, positive mentoring that holds students accountable for progress, and maintain a safe learning environment. Kelley mentioned students should not feel as though
the relationship is forced. Black men do want relationships, but they want these relationships with faculty members who are willing to engage in them. The desire for the relationship is imperative because the relationship can become time-consuming and require effort on both the student and the faculty.

In his focus group, Chapman discussed one of his professors and stated,

One teacher, in particular, had a standard of excellence that was set far above what others had years before. This was said among former students, present students, and even other faculty members. This standard was met with extreme grace and nurturing touch that all of his students felt. As a Black man, I wanted to be like him. That was not only my wish but my hope. Just to have the respect that he had among everyone he came in contact with.

Jones, in the same focus group as Chapman, said these words expressing his views on why he did not want relationships with not all but some of his professors and why he did not have a desire to be like them.

It is important that no biases are present when relationships are established. I felt like there were when some of my friends, Black males and females, wanted to be closer to a particular professor of ours. This was happening which caused friction between students of different races.

From the participants perspective, it can be difficult for faculty members to express care to a particular student or group of students. They considered the professor might see more passion or drive in a particular student or group and to cater to these students; this is where relational connection begins. The biases Chapman spoke of referred to simply the mistreatment of students. Faculty members setting standards for one or a set of students that were different
from another. Having biases, prejudices, and partialities will bring tension between students and especially those of different races.

The participants voiced and understood both parties in the relationship have needs. They explained that faculty need and want to produce quality students who are learning and preparing to be professionals. Student needs are receiving quality education from caring professors who they can co-exist with in a trusting student-faculty relationships.

The ability for the student and facility to co-exist in a way that is conducive to meeting the faculty member's needs and the student's needs is how relationships work. If it is not this way, which is what I did not see in this situation; I have no desire to be like that professor. Do I know the richness of wanting a relationship, mentorship, or guidance with a professor? Yes! I want that, but not with everyone! I have to be respected.

The participants said students should want and even desire a relationship from their professor. If the student does not have this mindset, then it is possible the professor will not be willing to pursue the relationships. Kelley, in his letter, wrote about a few professors expressing the importance of student-faculty relationships. While discussing one of his former faculty members particularly, Kelley said,

The importance of a student pursuing to build a relationship between them and their faculty shows that they are hungry for their education and willing to do anything it takes to succeed academically and through life. Although, faculty will not be willing to help if you have not built that relationship with them. I feel as though my presence shows that I want an education, but I guess there is more that is needed to make the relationship happen.
Kelley believed simply applying for college and being in classes makes it apparent that students desire to have a relationship with their professor or faculty member. Kelley implicated there is something else that could be done besides simply showing up in class; nevertheless, he is willing to do what is necessary for a relationship to develop. Building a relationship with a professor from the student’s view takes some of the weight off the professor and puts more effort on the student. This effort could simply mean having conversations; but as Kelley said, there has to be a desire from the student, being more active in lessons, and being more approachable. Nevertheless, the students are willing, and have a desire for deeper connections and relatability.

Kelley went on to say and to clarify,

My personal experience with student-faculty relationships were great mentorship opportunities. If you build a relationship with your professor, you will get the relationship that you need to succeed. I have had three faculty and two staff relationships developed over the years from college between all of my professors. They were beneficial because these five faculty members have become my lifelong mentors, and I can honestly say that I am a better man. This is not only what I wanted; it was what I needed.

For the majority of the participants to express their personal experience with positive relational connections with their faculty shows that perhaps more Black men may have the same need. Miller and Ogle said mentorship was an important component to the success of these Black men while attending higher education. The possibility of having a mentor shows that it is a promising possibility that mentorship will help throughout the life of Black men. It also suggests these relational connections mean more to the student than just simply gaining a degree from an institution. Murray said during his interview,
It is crucial to have a meaningful and loving relationship between students and their faculty. It can be intimidating being one of the very few Black males in a course, so if the professor can actually provide attention and care for you, it makes you feel respected and important enough to be on the same playing field as everyone else in the class. It has to be this way when you are the minority. I know Black males like myself who wanted this.

The participants knew having a personal connection with their professor outside of the classroom was a factor to having a quality relationship. They contended getting to know one another on a more personal relatable level is helpful when also having an academic priority. Knowing more about the student on a personal level could also give the instructor insight on how the student learns academically and socially.

These relationships between students and teachers should be professional but also have a personal sense. If there is no personal relation, then it won’t be as effective. Find out a few things the student does outside of your classroom. It doesn’t have to be much, but you need to relate on more than the topic the student is studying, and the professor is teaching.

Ogle, in his interview, said, that student-faculty relationship is crucial because it allows for the student or faculty member to openly address concerns before those concerns become a hindrance in the student’s education. It also allows for open feedback amongst both parties. In other words, relationships remove barriers. These barriers could even be barriers of prejudgments from either party.

Ogle desired to have relationships that were positive support systems for him. Ogle, like other participants said that when Black men are provided with opportunities that are unexpected and
connections that enhance them, the connection and association with the faculty become stronger. Maintaining honesty and keeping care as the center, the student-faculty relationships can be used for success.

Tandy wrote in his letter these words,

Students need honesty and care from their professors and the student should be honest and don’t miss treat their faculty’s care. To be honest and caring, both the student and the faculty member must be approachable and willing to be totally honest and helpful. I was hopeful to obtain this and had the chance to experience it.

Being approachable is a factor for relationships between students and faculty to start. As Tandy said, both parties need to be approachable. If either one of the two are not approachable then the connection will never be made. He said that being unapproachable only leaves negative assumptions for either party to begin assuming.

A Black female instructor guided me step-by-step trying to make me a better writer. All of the professors that I thought cared for me were Black instructors. I am not saying that all of the other professors did not, but I am saying that what Black professors showed me was different. I came not only to desire it but expect it from Black instructors. I felt more comfortable with professors who looked like myself; they were more approachable.

Tandy was asked in his interview, “how many professors he remembers having caring relationships with?” He responded by saying, “there were maybe eight relationships that come to mind but none of them are relationships that are productive and beneficial now.” Morrison’s perspective on student-faculty relationships was unique because he was the only one in the group who mentioned he expected relationships with his professors. He expected these relationships because he mentioned he had effective relationships with his teachers coming through his K-12
education. During the interview, he also told me the same care and treatment his teachers in high school gave him was his expectation and aspiration for his professors in higher education.

During focus group session two, Morrison said,

Student-faculty relationship can create a long-lasting effect on a person’s life, whether it be negative or positive. Generally, giving that a person or individual’s perspective can affect how they view someone or even a group of people, it’s just safe to handle others with care. If I see you treat others, particularly those how look like me, wrong or unfairly, then I will not want to be around your and the longing that I should have the want to be mentored by you for guidance would leave.

Morrison’s letter depicted much of how he felt about relationships with faculty while he was in college. He connects the reasons behind why he expected professors to care, therefore why he would have the desire to have and expect a relationship from his professors in college. Those reasons were the professors leading, care that resembles past experiences, his thoughtfulness, and his work ethic. Morrison said,

This one teacher in particular did a great job in leading me. He reminded me of the love I felt from a high school teacher. The fact that he was meticulous and thoughtful made me meticulous and actually care about what he expected out of me. His work habits became my work habits. Some of what I did not know about myself, he brought it out of me; and then it became a part of me. What I did not know became known because of this teachers’ leadership. I wanted and wished that every professor could touch my life in that way.

That was wishful thinking.

The participants remembered teachers who influenced their lives and made a difference. Teachers who made an impact on them were compared to other teachers and professors who the
students encountered. The participants believed instructors should do their best to form intentional positive student-faculty relationships. Tandy said,

For the majority of my years in college, which was six years, there were some positive student-faculty relationships. I am not sure if this is because I expected these relationships from my professors but I did have some good ones. I would like to think it was like this because I discerned when and how far the relationship would proceed. These relationships were beneficial and productive, on the base of; I took the time to see where I connected in the relationship with that particular individual. So, I would say that my mentorships and connections were not all on the professor but because of myself.

In focus group session two, Tandy said “Black males want relationships that they can connect with on their campus.” Morrison said after, “I agree!” “Even in the likeness of family connections or bonds, I really wanted a fatherly role model.” Giles said during his interview, “It would’ve been nice to really have a closeness or a connection with a faculty member that compared to the relationships I had with some family members.”

Long was privileged to have met a professor who not only taught him more about his career, but also lessons that could be used in life. This professor showed Long he cared and so Long trusted him. They had a student-faculty relationships that was much needed for his growth. In Long’s letter, he focused on a memory he had with a former professor.

I had a professor who took me on a personal field trip to help me get better with classroom management. He put me in a class and told me to handle different types of situations that arose during the class. This was the most impactful moment of my college career. He took the time to personally show me how to succeed in classrooms that were not the typical classrooms. I became better at classroom management because of it. This
was a Black male professor who yes, I did have a bond and connection with. He cared about my growth as a student and as a person.

After hearing and reading the participants desires to have relationships with their professors, I followed up by asking, “was there a longing in you for a relationship on the lines of a mentorship with your professors? Something that went beyond just the typical ‘student the learner-faculty the instructor’ type of connection?” The response from Garvin and Dickason implied they not only wanted student-faculty relationships, but also other Black men want them as well. Although Black men want caring relationships with their faculty, some participants noted, the pursuit of these connections can be difficult for Black men. Gavin described this difficulty and stated,

Black men are taught to be strong and stand-alone during their focus group. At times, this could hinder Black men from simply asking for help when needed the most. Black men never what to come off as weak. I might have wanted more of a connection, but for me to start it would have been hard for me. Could that be my fault, yes; but I am who I am.

Dickason simply added by saying,

I totally agree. At the end of the day, I just wanted a leader who could also be my friend.

There were things that troubled me outside of academics that I wish I could have truly felt close enough to a professor to speak to them about.

Dickason’s view on the position of faculty instructors is known as a position of leadership that is friendship based. The leader within a faculty member is not deniable or in a position to be contested. Within the student-faculty relationships, the faculty is still seen and understood as the leader, but their ability to become more relatable is what welcomes the student in for a relationship as Dickason insisted. The participants and other Black men understand that
as their faculty, instructors fall into the leadership role, it is also in their position to lead in facilitating the initiation of the student-faculty relationship.

Garvin said during his interview,

Student-faculty relationships help students to feel comfortable enough to sit with a professor or other member of the staff and speak freely from their heart. This can make a difference in a student’s performance. The ability to sit with a professor and have conversations not only about lectures, but also about life in general puts an increase in the drive of a student to do more. I needed this from all of my professors, not just a few.

Based on this excerpt from Miller’s letter, Black men want and need more than just professors who are focused on the academic relationship to the student. Miller knew how the desire and need for a student-faculty relationship would be effective for him. It ties this phenomenon to the concept of effectiveness and how these relationships can save time and students from failure.

Miller wrote in his letter,

If you would have known me, known the way I learned, known enough about me to care, maybe I would have graduated on time and not failed your class twice. I retook the class with a professor who took the time to get to know me. They actually seemed to care, and I passed!

Sub-theme: The Parental Role. Even though Ogle went to a four-year PWI, in his letter, he described one influential professor who gave him and his classmates personal attention. The influence appeared to be important to Ogle because of the direct attention the professor gave him and his classmates. A major reason for the growth of this relationship was that he needed a motherly bond from this professor. This was a connection that Ogle said he needed. This
professor was an African American woman who taught at a community college. Ogle said in his letter,

When I was taking chemistry at a community college during the summer, I had an African American female instructor. When we were going to have a test, she would tell us what formulas to remember. She would also point out important information that she wanted us to know. Then, she incorporated these things into the lab lecture so that we could relate the concepts we learned in class. I loved the way she taught, and she fulfilled that motherly bond that I missed from my mom while I was away at college. I needed her in more ways than one.

Professors are often seen as a parental figure for Black men just as Ogle saw his professor as one who fulfilled a motherly bond. This was a motivator for the Black men participating in this study to accomplish and achieve just as their natural mother would like them to. Just as a mother would motivate and encourage, faculty with those characteristics are able to help Black men progress using those traits much like the participants in this study. Ogle said,

I had the most positive student-faculty relationships at the community college I attended. The faculty there provided great encouragement and feedback. One instructor, in particular, helped me to enjoy statistics by being available after class hours. She understood that the subject was not the easiest and allowed for the correction of mistakes on a test. This was beneficial because she helped me to enjoy something that I thought I wouldn’t. This resulted in me exceeding in the subject. Another positive student-faculty relationship I had was during one of my clinical rotations. I had a great relationship with my clinical instructor. She helped introduce me to the ER staff and the manager and assisted me in obtaining my first nursing job in the ER. All of these relationships were
answers to prayers. I was nervous about taking these summer classes away from my main school, but the faculty took good care of me.

It is not uncommon for Black men to see in their instructors the role of a parent like Long did. When it is experienced repeatedly, the student wants to see how they can place faculty in that relational role. This is how many student-faculty relationships start. Long said during his one-on-one interview,

For the Black male, the Black male professor is important. Like myself, being a first-generation college student, my family didn’t know anything about college so talking to them was like talking to a brick wall. My father did not raise me and with hopes, I looked for strong intelligent Black men on campus that could help me navigate through education and life. I wanted that. I was needed more than anything.

During the interview, Long’s emotions were visible as he talked about the desire of having a relationship with a faculty member and more so with a Black male faculty member. This desire came from his childhood of not having a father present. He yearned for the mentorship, connection, inspiring teachings of a man whom he looked up too. Long said,

Talking with someone who gets it and are leading you could give you a sense of inspiration and hope for getting through without stopping or dropping out. I’ve felt more connected to teachers who knew about the Black experience or could in some way relate to who I am as a Black man. These were mostly Black women, but to me, I needed a man. So, to me, it’s more about relatability and empathy. I think it is important for professors to empathize with the Black male experience when they are trying to lead them. That’s what I wanted and other Black males I remember talking to this about.
From the participants perspective, the role of a faculty member can be viewed as a parental role. Even if the student does not see the faculty member as a parent, the participants said this does not take away from the elements of the parental role in which the faculty member might display. Tandy said the aspects and elements that make up the role of a parent are like those of a teacher, professor, or faculty member. The elements can be encourager, provider, protector, and even sustainer. When these elements are seen by the student, they can view these as signs of care.

Kelley’s relationship with his professor was like a relationship a parent would have with their child. Parents encourage, motivate, and care for their children, just like teachers. They want the best for them just, as Kelley described his relationship with his professor. Kelley showed sentiments of care in his letter. He wrote, “when it came to the point where I was about to give up on the class and drop it for another semester, you pulled me aside and gave me the talk that a parent would give their child.” Kelley continued,

I ended up putting my all into the class and walked away with a passing grade. If it had not been for your words of encouragement and care, I would not have stayed in the class and would have wasted time. Thank you!

**Theme three: Essential Care**

The findings of the data identified care as an essential part of the Black men’s perspective within higher education. There was an enthusiasm from the participants to discuss their views on the concept of care and it was noticeable by the excitement in their voices and their hand gestures. Each participant had their own description of care; this means there was not an exact definition for the word “care” offered by the participants. Nevertheless, the participants knew when they experienced care because they were able to vocalize expressions of these feelings.
The feelings or the effects of care were described by the participants as moments of comfort, peace of mind, enthusiasm, and inspiration. From the participant’s perception, there are various forms or attributes of care. No particular action or statement determines that care has been felt or seen. The participants expressed that an action or statement with the intent of care could only imply someone is capable of caring. It is the actions, moments, and engagements of care that are essential for Black men. The participants framework for care was synonymous to their views about well-being. Thus, if their well-being was satisfied, they would feel care. If their well-being was threatened, it would be less likely for the participants to feel care.

Callis said in his interview,

In undergrad, the sense of well-being and care is different because you are coming into your set identity as a young professional. In graduate school the sense of well-being is more like partnership with your instructors because your sense of self is most likely already established. So, in undergrad it is more mentor-mentee. In grad school, it is more professional to professional.

Callis described how Black men see the role of the professor in higher education. The role is similar to a mentor since they are leaders whose care focuses on guiding mentees into a specific learning area, even though the specifics of the connection or relationship may not be established. The participants saw mentorship as having an important component of care. Defining the roles of the mentorship process gives clarity and sets accountability for both parties. Callis continued,

In my HBCU experience, community was a strong aspect so care and well-being with my instructors, we felt like family. In my undergrad experience, professors did a great deal to amplify Black male students, giving support when needed regardless of area and field. In grad school, not much attention was given to Black males solely because we are an
oddity in many cases. It is more so you have to seek opportunities and hope you have a supportive team and staff. During my undergrad, faculty showed emotion when it came to scholars putting their best foot forward. They wouldn’t just accept the first or second time you turned in an assignment but give tools to help better the work. This made me feel as though they cared.

It is important to note that Callis, along with the other Black men in this study who attended HBCUs, spoke of their institution or faculty often using the word “family” or the idea of a close bond. Family is seen as a caring support system and Callis witnessed this type of support during his undergraduate years attending his HBCU. He specifically pointed out his institution did a great deal with supporting and amplifying the Black male student.

I also felt cared for when our faculty had kickbacks. Kickbacks were like small gatherings like a party, typically these were at a faculty members house. Of course, this was when I was at my HBCU and yes, the faculty were Black professors. This was something routine that happened outside the classroom, and we could all just relax a bit more. We seemed more like comrades and to me this was a way that they showed they cared about their students as real people with feelings and emotions. The times I felt the lack of care was in moments where decisions were completely out of the students’ hands regarding faculty hires and communication breakdowns. Sometimes I think it would be nice to know who institutions would hire to place in a classroom and attempt to put knowledge into their students.

Personal communication, such as text messages, from faculty inquiring about the well-being of their students can be seen as an act of care. Chapman expressed this as he also made it aware that care is not only seen but also felt when faculty members go over and beyond what the
typical professor would do. The passion for teaching was also observable from the participants and this passion was seen as care as well. Chapman stated during his focus group sessions, 

I observed a passion demonstrated by these instructors (Black faculty) that created an atmosphere conducive to learning. Having instructors shoot me a text about my performance in class goes above and beyond and allows for me to know I’m doing a great job! These are the things that helped me to see the care that was needed and appreciate how it was shown. When faculty go above and beyond, this allows a student to feel how much that faculty member cares about them. On the other side of that, I’ve had faculty members of other races even point out the lack of Black male students in higher education. They even pointed out the lack of Black males in faculty positions. This pushed me to pursue those roles to increase diversity. But these were the same professors who made minimal effort to motivate Black males in higher education. Many times, it appeared that work was created to be more difficult and prolonged. Now this is when I did not feel cared for.

Consequently, from Jones viewpoint, care is known by how someone shows their concern for a person or matter. Offering assistance can be seen as care also. In the letter written by Jones, he explained how disappointing some of his days were. “I was on my own, not getting emotional support at times from friends and family. I looked for care from my professors. Them simply asking me if I needed anything was a huge help.”

Just as care was seen and felt by the participants, they knew when they thought they were not cared for. Kelley expressed this when he heard his classmates complain about the lack of care from faculty. As a result, some Black students opted to leave their institution. In the focus group, Kelley stated,
You don’t realize that you need care as much until it is not there, or you don’t feel it. This was me at times. At the school that I went to, there was not much motivation for Black male students. There weren’t many Black students in the classes first of all. Actually, most Black students that I started school with ended up transferring to different schools. I remember often hearing Black students say, they don’t care about us.

The participants voiced how it is difficult for faculty at institutions to care and take notice of minority students, especially when they are not as visible as other races. Kelley was a minority at his institution and said he thought it was easier for his professors to cater to the needs of those who were the race majority in the class. Kelley believed this could have left Black men unmotivated, with a desire to leave, and seeking care. Kelley also expressed why essential care is necessary to him during his interview. He pointed out that care can also be seen through the emotions expressed by the instructor. Kelley said,

   Out of all the professors that I had, I can only recall one who showed emotions. To me, that was a sign that she cared or at least had the heart to care. She was very passionate about her craft and teaching it to others. If you did not respect the craft, she would let you know how she felt. Seeing my professor’s emotions stuck with me and taught me to value other people’s work. That taught me to care about my profession and to put my all into my career, just like my professor did.

Murray’s perspective of care was heard during his focus group session when he said, “depending on the professor, there were different levels of care. For the majority, I felt cared for and that I had a place in their classroom.” Murray and other participants said Black men need to know they have a place that is a safe place to share their opinion and views with others. Murry continued by saying,
there were instructors that I did not feel care from. They wanted me to care about the subject they were teaching but they didn’t reciprocate the same desires for me. The two of us truly caring about one another was out.

The participant here is showing that it is vital for faculty members to show care for the student in order for the student to truly care about the instruction presented.

In Murray’s personal interview, he spoke of a professor who he knew showed him care. When I had Black professors, I was pushed always to do my best and strive for greatness. There was a connection there, and when I had to move on from their courses, I was unhappy, because I felt as if the fuel to my car was depleted. I was lucky to have other professors help guide me. My other professors didn’t take the time to encourage me in the same ways. These things are important; it helps me to see the care which is important to me.

In the letter Murray wrote, he made mention of a professor who showed their care, and this enabled him to be able to express that care through this letter. “My voice professor always had a deep care for me since the day we met.” First impressions are important for faculty members when they are first meeting their students. “During a time of racial inequality and social upheaval, she was there for me and talked with me about how I felt and what music I could to sing to help relay messages I felt strongly about.” Murray expressed to me that this is how she showed care beyond the academics. The care was shown by the instructor giving the student an outlet to express themselves freely. This is vital to Murray as he told me these times were uncomfortable for him as he was one of the few Black men and many times the only Black man in his classes.
It is important for Black men to be able to vocalize their need to their faculty as Murray did. This was seen as care from Murray’s perspective. On the contrary, Ogle expressed how his sense of well-being was compromised by his professor and felt as though he was unable to freely express himself. Ogle said during his interview,

My sense of well-being at the time when I was in nursing school caused me to distance myself from faculty. Initially, I was working full time when I began nursing school; however, I had to quit my job during my second semester due to clinicals. Nursing faculty would often emphasis to us that nursing requires sacrifices. This logic pushed me away from wanting to address any of my concerns. It was like they didn’t care, and I needed to know that they cared about how I was going to live while I was trying to graduate and get a career.

When Ogle was asked during his interview if he felt as though his professors directly cared about him, his response was, “most of my professors did care about their students academically just not personally. Personally, as a Black male, I did not feel that I was individually motivated by most of my professors.” Ogle did say he believed the faculty he was taught by had the traits of care he thought was needed for teaching and for his personal success as their student. Ogle wrote in his letter,

I can recall the greatest instance of my nursing instructors conveying deep emotions when they would recall stories from their experiences in the hospital. These stories would usually bring them to tears. Most of these stories were to help us as nursing students to show compassion and sympathy. Their emotions to me expressed their heart and capability to care.
Also, in the letter, there was an account Ogle shared of a moment he witnessed another professor showing care by being personable to make the student more relaxed and comfortable. This was not one of his professors, but a professor to another student. Ogle took note of what he saw another professor doing as an act of care for other students. Ogle wrote,

I remember a nursing instructor in college that was very caring towards all her students. A friend of mine who was in her class was timid when he began nursing school. She would pull him aside during class and ask him how classes were going. She would joke with him in her attempt to try to help him relax and be more talkative. She genuinely showed concern for his education. I watched my friend come out of his shell because of her. She was all he talked about and became the model for really who he is today.

Ogle did mention during his focus group of a time he did not feel cared for by his professor. He felt care was a needed essential for professors and especially in the medical field of study. The professor’s lack of communication presence made Ogle feel as though her paycheck was more important than teaching. Ogle said,

I can only remember one of my instructors that I felt really had a lack of care for her students. She did not care if we failed a test. In her mind, it was our fault that we did not fully comprehend the material. She did not offer more of her time to assist students in learning material.

Morrison said in his interview,

Black males need care. Not only do they need care, but care should be seen and felt. If they are in college, paying their money for an education, those who are providing the education should at least care that they succeed.
According to Morrison, there should be some observable action of care and the receiver (students) should have an effective response to the experience. What can be seen, perceived, or felt can be constituted as true and real to the beholder. The participants collectively voiced that it is vital the faculty show care and that is observable. Morrison added, “my professor motivating me was powerful and showed care. They saw something in me that I didn’t see in myself, helping me to reach greatness. They were willing to offer me words of encouragement and guidance for life.”

Giles addressed one of his professors in his letters by saying,

Thank you for caring for me! Your thoughtfulness is what drove me to success and completing my degree. We grew a bond that could not easily be forgotten. The fact that you took the time out to bring me lunch to our meetings abled me to let my wall down and trust you. There is something that you didn’t know either, there were times that I didn’t have money for food. I honestly never thought that I would have made it through your class, but you gave me what I needed in order to survive and that was simply your time and your heart. You took the time to care man. I got to know you in a way that was similar to a son getting to know his dad. You will never be forgotten. Thank you!

The participants were thankful for those who showed them care. It was clear the participants appreciated the care they received. Miller said in his letter, “Me knowing that you care is crucial to me learning. Why would I fully invest myself in anything that you are saying to me when I can’t trust your heart for me?”

Black men trusting they are cared for only pushes them to know they can grow. Garvin said in his letter,
It made me want to push myself to make, not only me, but those professors proud of me. Most of the faculty members were encouraging of us and helped us to see the potential in ourselves. The feeling of care, support and positive reinforcement from those faculty members who saw potential and wanted me and my class to achieve the best possible things in life were those important things which I felt care from. I wanted and needed this.

**Sub-theme: Communication.** Callis stated relationships are bonds or commitments that take effort from both parties to work. Race is not the final or determining factor between students and faculty working together. Preference is what leads the motivation for the relationship when it comes to race. Just like it is possible for a Black male student to have a student-faculty relationships with a Black professor, it is also possible for a Black male student to have a student-faculty relationship with a White professor. Morrison said during focus group session two,

> My overall class experience with my professor was built on communication. After communication, we then found that common ground was met. After that, a relationship was built that became a mutual agreement. This was often with my White professors, but it was just easier to work with my Black professors. I didn’t have to worry as much with them as I did with White professors.

According to Miller, communication was found as a means of commonality. Communication allows for dialogue in which both parties will see the emotions, intent, and views of each other. Communication also allows for relational learning to take place. In his letter addressing his professor, Murray wrote these words:
Why were things harder on me than they were for my fellow classmates who were of another race? I wanted to feel comfortable with you, but I never did. There was never a feeling of ease with you. It was not like this with another professor who happened to be a Black guy. I do think you were more connected in the field than he was, and I wanted to use you as a resource. What I wanted from you I got from another who was of my own race. It turned out that his hard love and push for me to succeed was enough for me!

What Ogle was addressing in his response about student-faculty relationships was primarily that they provide the space for conversations that could be difficult to speak about in the company of an entire class. They allow for time to understand where both parties are concerning an issue. Just like many relationships comprise different people from different backgrounds, student-faculty relationships will take work, but they are worth it because of the positive outcomes. Ogle said,

> In my opinion, the essential aspect of the student-faculty relationship is communication.

Both student and faculty members must communicate concerns and feedback. Open and effective communication could allow for a trusting and personal relationship amongst students and faculty. These are the relationships that I know my frat brothers and myself wanted. If we didn’t find a connection with our direct professor of the class, we were taught by older brothers of the fraternity to make friends or get in good with department chairs. We just needed someone on our side.

**Research Question Responses**

This section provides concise answers from the research questions. The answers provided are narrative statements from participants’ data involved in this study. The three themes which derived from the data are the focal point of the answered research questions.
Central Research Question

The central research question was: How do Black males describe their relationships with their faculty in higher education? The theme that answered this question was there are desirable student-faculty relationships which are necessary for Black men, along with the sub-theme of parental role. Black men describe their relationships with their faculty in higher education as either non-existent or a relationship built on the foundation of care. If the relationship was not existent or non-valuable to the participant, it was apparent. It was apparent by faculty who did not connect with the student on a personal level, show care by acknowledging the students concerns, faculty who did not motivate then, or those who lacked an awareness of the culture the student derived from. These were all visible or perceived signs of a lack of care the participants received. However, if the instructor made an impact on the participant, showing the opposite of the issues restated, then they were very vocal and expressive about how they felt and viewed the faculty member. There was a relational connection made.

The foundation of these relationships between the Black men and their faculty are built on trust. There is an understanding of the Black men’s cultural background and reasonable knowledge of what Black men need. Support, encouragement, and motivation were described as elements of the relationships between Black men and their faculty. It is not uncommon for Black men to associate their parental views different from the perspective they have on their natural parents. These relationships are also described as relational connections that are gateways to success in Black men’s academics, careers, and life.

Long said, “Those who I thought prejudged me as a Black male or seen me as just another student never really motivated me. It was those classes and professors who I did not have a relationship with or a connection with.”
Callis said, “With the knowledge that I didn’t know, I felt more supported and encouraged in wanting to know and learn.”

Murray said in his interview “When I had Black professors, we talked personally. I was always pushed to do my best and strive for greatness.”

Sub-Question One

The first sub-question was: How do Black males describe the element of care in their student-faculty relationships in higher education? The theme that answered this question was theme three, essential care. It was found that care is, in fact, essential for student-faculty relationships. Black men were very descriptive about how care was perceived within the student-faculty relationship. They described the element of care by addressing their need for safety. Environmental safety, in terms of the location or community in which their perspective institutions is, did not concern the Black men as much as their emotional and security with their faculty did. Care was described as comfortability as a Black man in higher education. The act of being able to voice their perspective or option without feeling uncomfortable is felt as care. Not being judged or prejudged based on their race is also seen as care. Within the relationship with their faculty, Black men view care as understanding who they are as a Black man. This is done more than likely outside of the area of academics. Care is perceived by the Black men as connections that helped them build trust within their faculty. They also saw and felt care when their overall well-being as a student was tended too. Comfort, security, and peace in a classroom is vital and seen as care from the perspective of Black men. In their student-faculty relationships, Black men describe the element of care as trust, understanding, respect, honestly, motivation, and encouragement that drives them to success.
Miller said, “When I brought it up to you that I had to park my car in an unlit parking lot behind my dorm, you started making plans to get a streetlight placed in the parking lot?

Giles addressed one of his professors in his letters by saying, “thank you for caring for me! Your thoughtfulness and care is what drove me to succeed and completing my degree.”

Sub-Question Two

The second sub-question was: What are Black males’ expectations in their student-faculty relationships? The theme that answered this question was essential care. Black men expect to be heard, treated fairly, have honest connections with their professors, trust them, and be cared for in their student-faculty relationships. Black men have felt as though their voices are not heard. They are hesitant to speak their opinions during classes and to their professors out of the fear of being judged or misunderstood. Black men expect to be treated with respect, just like their peers. They assume honestly and trust will come from their professors and will be common attributes of their relationships. Black men mostly expect to be cared for when they make connections with their professors. They expect not to be harmed emotionally or physically by their faculty or even the institution itself.

Having a sense of belonging is essential for Black men and another vital part of their expectations within their student-faculty relationships. Black men want to be a part of the institution, so to have a sense of belonging with their professor, the most common face they will see on campus, is vital. Knowing they have a place, a voice, a chance to succeed just as other students is expectation of Black men.

Tandy wrote, “Students need honesty and care from their professors, I was hopeful of obtaining this and had the chance to experience it.”
Chapman said in focus group session one “Do they ever think we get tired of being mistreated? We don’t want to be treated no other way than normal; just do me and my people right.”

Sub-Question Three

The third sub-question was: How do Black males describe the effect of their student-faculty relationships in higher education? The theme that answered this question is the first theme, security of Black men. The sub-theme, security, with faculty exposes more about the effects of student-faculty relationships. The effects of Black men’s student-faculty relationships were described as feelings of thankfulness, achievements, of being cared for, motivation, and safety in being authentically themselves. Black men are grateful to encounter relationships with their professors and see them as meaningful connections where they can be fully themselves. The effects of these relationships are not only beneficial in the moment while the student is in college but the effects last even after the student’s time in higher education.

Participants who were no longer in college and working in their career were appreciative of the relational connections they had with their professors. Learning how to effectively operate in their new profession was an outcome of the mentorship and relationship the Black men held with their faculty. The Black men also contributed their success and personal growth as men to these healthy relationships. These effects were expressed without restraints from the participants.

Black men expressed feelings of gratitude because of the relational connections with faculty. This mindset of thoughtfulness provided the effects of care for the Black men. Feelings of care was a major effect from Black men’s connections with their professors. Effects of care were felt by personal interactions, conversations, words of affirmation, encouragement, mentorship, and acts of service from their professors. Although these effects of the Black men’s
student-faculty relationships were positive, there were also negative effects of not having relationships with faculty.

In the negative effects of not having a student-faculty relationship, Black men described them as feelings of discomfort and anxiety. Black men not having a sense of belonging at their institution or with their faculty members made them feel unease and did not allow them to have a voice to express themselves freely. These negative effects could make Black men feel invalid or wanted.

Long said,

Professors made the classes enjoyable and exciting for me to learn. They were motivating, and I was pushed to seek much of the information for myself. These were the professors I could say I did have some type of connection with, much like a relationship.

Garvin said,

They had my back. I didn’t have to wonder if I would be successful around them. It was these men who pushed me toward greatness and left me with tools that I could carry throughout life.” Garvin also said, “One Black professor made me feel welcome in his space, and I really felt that he cared about me as a person. It was like he went the extra mile.

Again, it was Garvin who spoke during a focus group about his professors making him feel safe as a student while knew the difference between being himself and speaking freely as opposed to not doing so out of fear of upsetting his professor. Callis added in his letter,

These relationships were beneficial because they helped shape the scholar identity I now possess. I wanted these types of connections if only to better network in my career field. Having these types of relationships with my college professors really influenced me.
Chapman, in his interview, came from the viewpoint of the benefits and importance of the desire, especially for Black men in having student-faculty relationships. Chapman said, Having a strong relationship with faculty as a student provides many benefits for future endeavors. As hard as that might seem to professors and time-consuming, students need and want relationships but more so Black males like myself. I was able to lean on the academic teachings from my professor but also the personal teachings of how to stay in my profession. I was taught how to have self-control and monitor my life and be productive in my field of study because of my relationship with my professor. This is how I knew they cared about me.

Summary

Through interviews, focus groups, and letters of documentation, the findings and related themes derived from the data were: The security of Black men, desirable student-faculty relationships, and essential care being necessary for Black men in higher education. The first theme, security of Black men had four sub-themes: Environmental, emotional, physical safety, and the knowledge of Black male culture is important to Black men. The second theme, desirable student-faculty relationships, implied a deeper yet common relation between students and faculty that is ethical and professional. The sub-theme that derived was parental role. The final theme was essential care which was described by the participants as feelings or the effects of care in moments of comfort with their well-being, peace of mind, enthusiasm, and inspiration. The sub-theme that derived was communication with allows for personal relational learning through the form of dialogue and the understanding of a working relationship between the student and the faculty.
These themes and sub-themes addressed the central research question: How do Black males describe their relationships with their faculty in higher education? The 13 participants answered questions related to the central research question and subsequent questions to reveal their perspectives on student-faculty relationships in higher education. The answer to the central research question was that Black men describe their relationships with their faculty in higher education as either non-existent or a relationship built and centered on the idea of care.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspectives of Black men’s student-faculty relationships in higher education in the United States. Chapter Five presents the conclusion of this study. A summary of the findings is presented, a discussion of the literature is reviewed, implications are presented, delimitations and limitations are discussed, and recommendations for future research are presented.

Summary of Findings

There were three themes that emerged from the data. The first theme was the security of Black men which is the awareness of their safety. Within the first theme, there were four sub-themes that emerged: Physical environment, emotional security, security with faculty, and culture. The second theme was desirable student-faculty relationships for Black men from their faculty in higher education. Parental role was the sub-theme that derived from the second theme. The third theme was essential care for Black men in higher education. Communication was the sub-theme that emerged from the final theme found in the data. The findings answered the central research question: How do Black men describe their relationships with their faculty in higher education? The ethics of care theory connects with the findings to provide explanations on how Black men perceived their relationships in higher education.

The security of Black men was the first theme that emerged from the research, which includes their environmental, emotional, and physical safety. The data revealed the safety of Black men in higher education is important. When considering the environment of colleges and university, Black men just wanted to be safe. Emotionally, Black men felt unsafe because of racial trauma they experienced at college. Black men’s security with faculty was based upon how
they perceived care from their professor. The second theme that emerged from this research is that Black men desire relationships from their faculty members. The participants voiced clearly that they not only wanted a relationship with their faculty but also desired a connection. Kelly, referring to his professors and his expectation of relationship stated, “I am saying that what Black professors showed me was different. I came not only to desire it but expect it from Black instructors.” These men knew the effects of having a student-faculty relationship and the effects were positive gains for the students during and after college. The last theme that emerged from the research was essential care for Black men in higher educational institutions. From the Black men’s perception, care was perceived as feelings, actions, or affirmative words that came from their faculty. Care, when not felt by the student, often gave them a negative sense of belonging.

The central research question for this study was how do Black men describe their relationships with their faculty in higher education? The study revealed the answer to the question was that Black men describe their relationships with their faculty in higher education as either non-existent or a relationship built on the foundation of care. For some of the participants, this type of care was perceived much like how a parent would care for their child. Kelley wrote in his letter of reflection, “when it came to the point where I was about to give up on the class and drop it for another semester, you pulled me aside and gave me the talk that a parent would give their child.”

Sub-question one was how do Black men describe the element of care in their student-faculty relationships in higher education? The participants described care as an essential component for student-faculty relationships in higher education. Jones said during his interview, “I was on my own, not getting emotional support at times from friends and family. I looked for care from my professors. Them simply asking me if I needed anything was a huge help.” The
direct and indirect communication was the element of how the participants described care from their student-faculty relationships. Sub-question two was what are Black men's expectations in their student-faculty relationships? The participants revealed they expect to have these relational connections and to have them constructed based on care and trust. The participants expected their student-faculty relationships to have an overall sense of belonging. Morrison said during his interview,

For the majority of my years in college, which was six years, there were some positive student-faculty relationships. I am not sure if this is because I expected these relationships from my professors, but I did have some good ones.

Sub-question three was how do Black men describe the effect of their student-faculty relationships in higher education? The participants described the effects of their student-faculty relationship in higher education as feelings of thankfulness, achievements, and gratitude. The participants said the effects of care from their relationships were felt by personal interactions, conversations, words of affirmation, encouragement, mentorship, and acts of service from their faculty. The participants concluded the effect of having a student-faculty relationship helped them with providing a sense of security in their physical environment, emotional security, feeling secure with their faculty, help with their future career, and providing their faculty a better understanding of their culture. Giles wrote in his letter of reflection, “Thank you for caring for me! Your thoughtfulness is what drove me to success and completing my degree.”

**Discussion**

This study confirms and corroborates both the theoretical framework and the empirical literature presented in Chapter Two. The findings revealed the importance of care from the Black male’s perspective linking the findings to the ethics of care theory (Noddings, 1984). The
literature reviewed in Chapter Two centered around the relational connections between students and the faculty who instructed them. The data yielded themes that exposed the importance of Black men having student-faculty relationships in higher education.

**Theoretical discussion**

The ethics of care theory is defined as the longing for goodness experienced or found in one’s memory of being cared for (Anderson et al., 2020; Noddings, 1984). One of the major applications of this theory is the, “encounters between teachers and students in the here and now hence with what we call contact” (Korthagen et al., 2014, p. 24). The sense of belonging and feelings of community should be felt by the student at institutions and within relationships in order for care to be perceived by the student. Noddings (1992) contended care influences retention and graduation rates at institutions. Care is a critical part of the educational process and the bedrock for students’ overall success. When students are aware of the care displayed by their instructor, their motivation to progress through academics and eventually graduate is more likely to accrue (Hawk, 2017; Lucey & White, 2017; Noddings, 1992).

In this study, Black men recognized care because of how they perceived it from their previous educators, mentors, and parents. Actions such as personal conversations and vocal motivation helped the participants to have a worldview of what care was to them. The men not only wanted positive relational experiences with their faculty, but they also longed for these experiences. For some of the participants, relational connections were expected because of previously experiencing care from former instructors. For other participants, relationships were observed and they desired to have a relational experience with their faculty as well. Noddings (1984) referred to this contact in the “here and now,” both parties being fully present and
engaging in conversations of influence. These moments were perceived as care by the Black men and inspired them towards successful measures in their educational goals.

The study also found that Black men felt care based on their perceived sense of belonging not only with their perspective higher education institutions but also within the classroom environment lead by their instructor. Black men felt safe when they could express themselves in these spaces without the fear of being discriminated against. Care was important to the make-up of their community and relationships. Growth and success of Black men were found in the care they perceived from their faculty, hence the connection to retention and graduation rates. The Black men in this study saw the encouragement and close connections with their faculty helped them to better manage decisions that would affect their education. Student-faculty relationships were vital and seen as relational connections of care.

What the participants expressed during the research process, correlated with the definition, principles, and concepts of the ethics of care theory developed by Noddings (1984). Much like the definition of care provided by Noddings (1984), the participants described care as an observable act that could be felt emotionally while holding worth in the memory of the perceiver. For this study, Long stated, “teachers who talked to me, seemed as though they were trying to get to know me as a person and be relatable with me. I felt care from them.” For Long, it was the act of his professor getting to know him personally that allowed him to perceive care and value his professor. Noddings (1984) contended care is the explanation for effective learning and achievement from the student’s point of view. In the letter Giles wrote to one of his professors, he stated, “your thoughtfulness is what drove me to success and completing my degree. We grew a bond that could not easily be forgotten; thank you for caring.” Furthermore, Noddings (1984) argued care was a component that could lead students to success and
graduation. In the interview for this study, Miller stated he believed he failed a class because his professor did not care about him or his success in the class. Once he retook the class with a professor he thought cared about him, Miller was successful at passing the class and graduating.

Essentially, Noddings (1984) and the participants of this study agreed care is a necessary component of student-faculty relationships. They also agreed essential care is necessary for the success of students in the educational environment. Essential care is received by Black men as their personal life’ experience. What Black men see as care comes from their reality and is their personal truth. According to the participants in this inquiry, student-faculty relationships are necessary, and care is the grounding truth that makes these relational connections possible (Noddings, 1984). Student-faculty relationships can lead to Black men becoming successful and graduating college, but it is vital to have care at the center of these relationships. Care is not only necessary, but it is expected from Black men as students in higher educational institution. Table 3 clarifies these findings.
### Table 3

*Correlation between Noddings (1984) Ethics of Care Theory and the Participants Perspectives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation between Noddings Ethics of Care and the Participants Perspectives</th>
<th>Noddings</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
<td>Care is the longing for the goodness resulting from an experience or memory from past acts of care (Noddings, 1984).</td>
<td>Care is an observable act that can also be felt emotionally, holding value in the memory of the receiver of care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application</strong></td>
<td>Care offers reasons to why connections between learning and achievement are possible and practical from the student’s point of view (Noddings, 1984). Care is a process that focuses on the “whole student” and not just on academics (Noddings, 1992).</td>
<td>Care is connected to trust and neither cannot operate alone. Care is related to safety. If safety is a concern, then care is in effect. Essential care is necessary for student-faculty relationships. Care is the concern for more than simply academics but the student’s wellbeing and sense of belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concepts</strong></td>
<td>Care is a factor in producing positive outcomes that lead to higher retention and graduation rates (Noddings, 1992). Care is experienced by students and is excepted as their authentic personal experience (Hawk, 2017; Ida, 2017; Noddings, 1984).</td>
<td>Essential care is necessary for Black males in higher education which leads to successful educational outcomes and graduation. Motivation is seen as an act of care. Because of perceived care from past educators, Black males expect care from faculty members in higher education. Care is seen as truth because of personal reality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Empirical discussion

This study focused on Black men’s perspectives on their student-faculty relationships in higher education. The related literature included studies that focused on Black male culture, Black men in higher education, Black men’s retention and graduation rates in higher education, and the importance of student-faculty relationships faction in higher education. Researchers found it is important for faculty to know the background of men of African descent and their culture so they can better educate them, and for the student to feel as though they are a part of the learning experience (Harper, 2009; Lucas, 2018; Strayhorn, 2017; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Miller, a participant in this study, agreed with the researchers premise by saying in his interview, “There were classes that I didn’t speak in. I was one of the few Black people in the room and I knew my opinion or view would be different because of my race and culture.”

Ida (2017) found a good teacher is someone students can trust, understand, and know the student's background and culture. Several of the participants concurred with this finding and said trust was not only a good quality for faculty members to have but also a component in them forming a student-faculty relationships. Therefore, understanding Black men's culture is essential and should be important to teachers (Strayhorn, 2017). Racial discrimination is one of the significant cultural disparities Black men encounter; nevertheless, researchers found understanding Black men 's culture is essential and should be important to faculty members in higher education (Brooms, 2020; Strayhorn, 2017; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Kelley, Jones, Chapman, and Murray support the findings of the research as they were participants in the study who expressed moments of racial discrimination from being called the
“N” word to injustices with campus police. These were moments the participants said made them feel a lack of the sense of belonging and care.

Conclusions from previous studies determined that understanding Black men and relating to them in the form of care can only help to raise the retention rate of Black men, which will lead to their success and graduation (Askew, 2020; Quinlan, 2016; Roberts, 2018; Warren & Bonilla, 2018; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Miller and Garvin were two participants who concurred with the findings from previous research since they were appreciative of their professor’s student-teacher relationships and expressions of care as it encouraged them to graduate. Hawk (2017), Goings and Bianco (2016), Hawley and Flint (2016), and Peart (2018) found education can change the life of Black male students and give them opportunities not otherwise available to them; however, this can only be realized if institutions have a strategic plan that introduces relational and mentoring connections between Black men and the faculty who serve them. Garvin, a participant in this study, supported this research when he said, “My Black male instructors had my back. I didn’t have to wonder if I would be successful around them. It was these men who pushed me toward greatness and left me with tools that I could carry throughout life.”

Strayhorn (2015), Harper (2015), Harper et al. (2018), and Landis (2019) are researchers who said Black men must know they are worthy and valued within educational institutions. Many of the participants in this study, such as Morrison and Dickason concurred with the research by saying their sense of well-being and belonging mattered to them as well as being valued at their institutions, otherwise their educational process would be stressful. Howard (2014), Hawk (2017), Brooms (2017), and Anderson (2019 discovered Black men in higher education need emotional strength to regulate their stress. Participants Ogle and Miller from this
study agreed with these researchers as they stated they learn best when they are not stressed or have negative emotions.

Sointu et al. (2017) found growth in self-regulatory and socio-emotional skills are more developed when students are involved in positive student-faculty relationships. I found this conclusion consistent with the findings of my study. Callis is one example of a participant who developed socio-emotional skills within a student-faculty relationships he was involved in. He said in his interview he felt cared for when his faculty had “kickbacks;” small gatherings typically at a faculty members house. Connections such as these outside of the educational setting helped Callis to build a student-faculty relationship with his professors. These relational connections can also assist in controlling the stress of students.

Xerri et al. (2018) studied the process by which students handle the pressures of higher education and found students were less stressed and had better collegiate outcomes academically and socially when they were comfortable with their instructors as compared to students who were not in a relational connection with their faculty. Miller and Long, two of the participants in this study, agreed with the researchers as they shared moments when they were stressed while attending college; however, it was there relational connection with their faculty that helped them to maintain their stress levels.

Wood (2014), Strayhorn (2017), and Young (personal communication, March 2019) said the goal for higher education leaders should be to help students through their education and graduate. Noddings (1992) contended care influences retention and graduation rates at institutions. Retention and Black men’s success can be altered by faculty members who display a level of professionalism that contains care, trust, and concern towards students in the form of student-faculty relationships (Roberts, 2018). Several of the participants, one being Tandy, said
they believed their faculty’s job was to assist them to reach their graduation. Long, one of the participants, said he felt as though he graduated due to the care he received from his faculty members. Tandy and Long’s statements both concur with the research (Strayhorn, 2017; Wood, 2014; Young, personal communication, March 2019). Many of the participants said they were able to succeed through their programs in college due to the care, trust, and concern displayed from their professors. Turner (2017) and Roberts (2018) said Black men and all students must remain the focal point for institutions, and the institution must be concerned with students who are not retained and do not graduate (Askew, 2020). Ogle said about his professors, “It was like they didn’t care, and I needed to know that they cared about how I was going to live while I was trying to graduate and get a career.”

Care was perceived by the participants in the form of a parental role, which was not only found in this study but also in the review of the literature. Armstrong et al. (2017) said:

Given these links between academic performance and students' relationships with their teachers, one potential path to improved school success for abused students might be through high-quality relationships. The attachment theory offers guidance in terms of understanding links between parenting and student-teacher relationships of abused students. (p. 146)

Young (personal communication, March 2019) also said that many Black male students tend to look for a parental role from their instructors while attending college. This coincides with Callis and other participants who said there were many times their professors felt like family to them. Callis formed this perspective by the times he was able to be common with his faculty as they shared meals, personal conversations, and moments of encouragement which all bring positive outcomes in a student-faculty relationships.
Karpouza and Emvalotis (2019) conducted a study to determine what positive outcomes student-faculty relationships produced and they were improved motivation, academic achievement, higher retention rates, satisfaction from studies, a greater sense of pride for the institution, faculty increased self-efficacy, and a positive learning environment. Many of these positive outcomes agree with the presented experiences and outcome from the participants in this study. Tandy and other participants said they felt motivated in their academics and over all well-being as a result from being in student-faculty relationships while in college. Chapman said having a strong relationship with faculty as a student provides several benefits to future endeavors such as networking and connecting with others. Callis agreed by saying, “As a Black man, I wanted better relationships with my professors, and I felt as though every guy I knew wanted a bond, mentorship, or some type of relational connection with their professor.” Miller concurred with the researchers that the positive outcomes of student-faculty relationships helped to keep him retained and subsequently graduate.

Karpouza and Emvalotis (2019) contended student-faculty relationships are a phenomenon rarely researched in higher education. Nevertheless, Strayhorn (2008), Tinto (1975), Turner (2017), Young (personal communication, March 2019), and Askew (2020) all have said relationships in higher education are simply beneficial to Black men and provides memories for them. Kelley agreed with these sentiments by expressing them in his letter to a professor, “when it came to the point where I was about to give up on the class and drop it for another semester, you pulled me aside and gave me the talk that a parent would give their child.” Kelley continued,
I ended up putting my all into the class and walked away with a passing grade. If it had not been for your words of encouragement, care, and simply the relationship that we build, I would not have stayed in the class and would have wasted time. Thank you!

A concept not found in the literature but was found in this study the specific race of the professor within student-faculty relationships. The participants in this study addressed the race of the professor was not a major concern for them when looking to develop a positive relational connections. The participants noted care, encouragement, and safety were among many elements of their student-faculty relationships with their Black faculty members. There is a need for future research to determine specifically how student-faculty relationships function with Black men and faculty members of the opposite gender and races.

Askew’s (2020) hierarchy of student needs supports this research and addresses its effectiveness through the literature. The components of Askew’s hierarchy of student needs are shared accountability, direct attention, guided growth, skilled observation, meaningful feedback, and voiced self-assurance. Black men must know and feel cared for by each stakeholder they are in contact with, holding them accountable for their educational success (Askew, 2020; Ida, 2017; Koca, 2016; Strayhorn et al., 2015). Black men desire direct attention and guided growth and as a result, their confidence and self-efficacy is elevated (Askew, 2020; Gizir, 2017; Noddings, 1992; Zahl, 2015). Within student-faculty relationships, faculty are able to observe Black men closer in order to perceive what educational needs or life principles could be implemented for the student’s success (Askew, 2020; Brooms, 2018; Nichols, 2016; Strayhorn, 2017). After Black men have received meaningful feedback from their faculty, they should be able to voice their self-assurance in their learning and the learning outcomes (Askew, 2020; Hawk, 2017; Ida, 2017; Quin, 2017; Young, personal communication, March 2019).
Implications

Theoretical Implications

Noddings’ (1984) ethics of care theory has been applied previously in research studies connected to K-12 and general education (Anderson et al., 2020; Bennoun et al., 2018; Dowie-Chin & Schroeder, 2020; Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019). Despite past research focused on this theory, this study is unique as it applies the ethics of care theory exclusively on Black men and their perspectives on their student-faculty relationships in higher education. This theory was viable for this study. Hawk (2017) was a researcher who used the ethics of care theory in relation to education and found there is a distinction between “caring for” and being “caring about.” Being “cared about” does not suggest any action to be done as opposed to “caring for;” which indicates specific concrete action from the instructor desiring the development and well-being of the student (Hawk, 2017). One of the major themes in this study was essential care, and many of the participants saw care as action. From personal conversations to meetings outside of the educational settings, the participants of this study felt and believed to be cared for by their faculty members. Therefore, other researchers will be able to use the ethics of care theory to examine more about student-faculty relationships on other demographics, settings, and geographic locations.

Empirical Implications

This study aligns with the related literature three ways: the importance of student-faculty relationships, Black men in higher education, and the retention and graduation rate among Black men. First, Koca (2016) reported social, emotional, and academic skills are benefits of student-faculty relationships and students who are privileged to have these positive connections have better outcomes throughout their education and life. Brooms (2019) shared student-faculty
relationships are not only needed but they are also critical to every student’s education. Kim and Sax (2009), along with other researchers, implied care displayed within student-faculty interactions improves student learning and development irrespective of their first-generation status, gender, and social class (Askew, 2020; Hawk, 2017; Ida, 2017, Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2017; Poulo, 2017; Strayhorn, 2017; Young, personal communication, March 2019).

Secondly, Farmer and Hope (2015) reported there was limited research on the lived experiences of African American men attending institutions of higher education. Pelzer (2016) stated the amount of information for instructors to receive professional development is limited concerning Black men in higher education. This study adds to the limited information and research. Brooms (2018) implied education can change the life of students, especially Black men, and empower them as they gain opportunities; however, this can only be realized if institutions have a strategic plan that introduces relational and mentoring connections between Black men and their faculty members (Goings & Bianco, 2016; Harper et al., 2018; Hawk, 2017; Hawley & Flint, 2016; Landis, 2019; Peart, 2018). Lastly, Xerri et al. (2018) and Strayhorn (2017) both said the goal for higher education leaders should be to help Black men through their education, being strategic in retaining them and ultimately seeing them graduate. Roberts (2018) implied retention and students’ success can be altered by faculty members who display a level of professionalism that contains care, trust, and concern towards students in the form of student-faculty relationships (Heller, 2019; Tinto, 1975; Turner, 2017; Wood et al., 2016). These three major arguments within the empirical literature support my findings of the study, which show Black men desire relationships in higher education, Black men provided and add to the evidence of their lived experiences within higher education, and relational connections assist in retention
and graduation rates among Black men in higher education; therefore, this study supports and adds to the findings of the previous empirical literature.

Evidence from this study has demonstrated the gap in the related literature regarding Black men’s perspectives on their student-faculty relationships in higher education. Karpouza and Emvalotis (2019) said, "Despite its significance, the student-faculty relationships in higher education remains an under-researched field" (p. 121). Because I found only nine empirical studies focused on the phenomenon of student-faculty relationships in higher education, this current study was needed and relevant in the research of student-faculty relationships while specifically focusing on Black men (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019). This study adds to the existing literature by addressing the vital component of care within education but is unique in applying the ethics of care theory on Black men in higher education.

**Practical Implications**

This study provided a voice for Black men to be heard and offers support for why Black men need their voices to be heard. Allowing them to share their experiences about their faculty in higher education will enlighten administrators about how best to serve these students toward success (Nichols, 2016; Quin, 2017; Sointu et al., 2017; Strayhorn, 2008). Programs and initiatives can be developed to help faculty support and enhance their Black male students' well-being, academic skills, and persistence through graduation (Askew, 2020; Bennoun et al., 2018; Roberts, 2018). These programs or initiatives could be as simple as having a mentoring leadership program that focuses on partnering Black men with administrative leaders at their perspective institutions. Creative programs such as these could enhance Black men’s well-being and increase their leadership skills all while cultivating a student-faculty relationships. Care being essential was a major theme in this research study and the implications from the research
suggest faculty members need to be aware of how they implement and show care towards Black men (Anderson et al., 2020; Noddings, 1992; Patterson et al., 2017).

Another practical implication would be to evaluate universities and colleges diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs for data on effectiveness, relevant to their institution, and accountability measures. “The re-examination of DEI at many colleges and universities has included a particular focus on antiracism, or the actions that should be taken to ameliorate interpersonal, institutional and systemic racism and promote racial justice at all levels” (Vesely, Baily, Ambegaonkar, Klee, & Woltz, 2021). There were several participants in this study who experienced some type of racism as it was noted in the sub-theme of emotional security. Universities and colleges not taking full accountability and applying the teachings from their DEI programs could allow Black men from their institutions to suffer a lack of emotional security just as some participants in this study.

Chapman had to hold back tears during a focus group session when he emotionally talked about how he experienced institutional and systemic racism at his institution; “Do they ever think we get tired of being mistreated? We don’t want to be treated no other way than normal; just do me and my people right.” Giles said in his interview, “when universities do nothing about the continuance of racism, they condone it. What you overlook, you accept!” If DEI programs are held accountable to produce data that show the effectiveness and relevance of the program to the university and their accountability measures it is possible Black men would not have to experience moments of racism and suffer a lack with their emotional security.

In conjunction with this practical implication also comes the thought of implementing DEI programs that strictly focus on student-faculty relationships. Because relationships involve more than one party, this program or training would be utilized by both the faculty and the
student. With the focus of DEI precisely on the relational component between the student and the faculty member, both parties would share in learning about the divers needs and background of the other party. Both parties would learn what is culturally fair to each other. Then the parties will understand how they both fit and can adjust to the relational connection between one another. The phenomenon of student-faculty relationships in higher education does not need to go unnoticed, as this research clearly shows the desires that Black men have for these relational connections and the successful gains these connections produce for Black men.

Askew’s (2020) hierarchy of student needs is composed of six elements (shared accountability, direct attention, guided growth, skilled observations, meaningful feedback, and voiced self-assurance) that are practical in building effective student-faculty relationships. This method can be used by any educator who is passionate and willing to build effective relationships with their students. The success of every student is important. All students need to be able to have the same access and opportunity for overall development and achievement. It is vital students know and feel cared for by each faculty member they come in contact with.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

The considerations for this research were limited to achieve a focused purpose to explore the perspective of Black men’s student-faculty relationships in higher education in the United States. The 13 participants were selected diligently to obtain Black men who attended public, private, two-year, four-year, PWIs, and HBCU institutions. These institutions were also not from one geographical location in the U.S. but spread abroad and represent several states within the U.S. The following delimitations were place upon the study:

1. Participants had to be a member of the Facebook group Black Good Men
2. Participants had to be a Black male between the ages of 18-30.
3. Participants must have attended a higher educational institution in the United States for at least two years.

4. Participants had to be a U.S. Citizen.

These delimitations ensure the Black men could give a full account of their personal experience within a student-faculty relationship and so the participants would have common traits and characteristics. The FB group was chosen because of the large quantity and quality of Black men who would add value to this study and conveniently fit the criteria. The age limit constitutes the closest ages range of Black men who would have current or present memories of the phenomenon. Knowing the participants had at least two years of experience in higher education would give clarity on their perspectives on how their personal student-faculty relationships were.

There are limitations of this study but two that are significant and warrants attention. One being the limitation of researching Black men and their relationships in higher education in general. Being more specific, as it relates to Black men in undergraduate studies verses those who were in graduate school, could have opened a more focused approach to the research. It is possible graduate students could be more mature in their thought process and relational connections to faculty as opposed to undergraduates who are entering higher education directly from high school. Another limitation is studying only the lived experiences of 13 participants; a number not allowed to generalize the entire population of Black men. Although Black men represent the lowest population of students in higher education, a larger number of participants could have given a better representation of Black men within higher education.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

There are several recommendations for future research regarding Black men and their perspectives on their student-faculty relationships in higher education. I believe understanding
the faculty perspective on student-faculty relationships is important and should be investigated. Having the viewpoint of the student as well as the faculty will provide information that can be used in developing strategies and frameworks for implementation in higher educational classrooms. This study should also be replicated; however, the setting of the study should be devoted to one university from each sector that include HBCU, PWI, or even a two-year community college. Having a more direct perspective on institutions could give insight on the culture in which the institution provides and how this relates to the connections between faculty and students.

This study was conducted with a qualitative methodology; therefore, it focused on lived experiences of 13 individuals. This methodology allowed the participants to vocally express themselves and share their experiences with the phenomenon. If this study was conducted with a quantitative methodology, it would have provided a numeric description of the data which could also lead to a different perspective to the institutions who would use the data. It would also allow more participants to be a part of the study.

Another recommendation for future research could be on Black women’s perspective on their student-faculty relationships. Understanding views from Black men within this study and looking forward to the perspective of women would give clarity to culture of Black students in higher education. Black women are also among the lowest minority student groups in the higher education sector (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Allowing them to share their perspectives on their student-faculty relationships would add to the study of the phenomenon and perhaps expand the knowledge of Noddings’ (1984) ethics of care theory.

Researching types of student-faculty relationships also could produce more knowledge about what is needed for students. Different students could need different types of connections
with faculty; for example, a student who might need more financial advice or mentoring could not necessarily need emotional assistance or extrinsic motivation to reach educational goals. Every student is different; nevertheless, to determine what students need there must be some type of relational connection for the need of the study to be met effectively.

The concept of parental role was a sub-theme in this research; therefore, some of the participants viewed their faculty as someone who could be seen as a parental figure in their lives. This concept is worthy of more research and development to possibly understand how Black men could relate to their faculty, seeing them as a parental figure. Having future research on this topic from the perspective of the faculty could give insight on how they view student-faculty relationships as it relates to the parental role concept. These recommendations for future research could cross racial and ethnical boundaries to gather more insight on student-faculty relationships.

The final recommendation for future research I suggest would be to study Black men from outside of the United States. This study focused on Black men who lived in the United States. These men brought to the research their past cultural experiences, worldview, and emotions all filtered through the lens of the history of Black men living in the United States. It would be interesting to know if Black men have the same or similar perspectives on their student-faculty relationships in higher educational institutions outside of the United States. Having that data and the current data from this study would enhance the knowledge of the needs of Black men everywhere. Having this knowledge could also assist in more Black men attending college, remaining at an institution, and finally graduating.

**Summary**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perspectives of Black men’s student-faculty relationships in higher education in the United States. As the researcher, I
understand perspectives are different for everyone, but common elements are able to connect people and align perspectives. In this study, the commonality between the participants was their race of being Black men who attended institutions of higher education and were involved in student-faculty relationships. This study focused on how care influenced the perspectives of the participants during their experiences with student-faculty relationships in higher education.

The need for this inquiry came from studying the problem that Black men are not attending college at the same rate as their peers and when they do, they are not persisting through degree completion (Farmer & Hope, 2015). Black men have the lowest retention and graduation rate among their peers; nevertheless, this study brings an awareness to the problem by focusing on the relationship between Black men and their faculty (Askew, 2020; Hanson, 2021; Landis, 2019). Faculty represent the institutions in which they serve and for the student, faculty are the epitome of the institution because they are the person the student will become most familiar with (Hawk, 2017; Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019; Warren & Bonilla, 2018; Young, personal communication, March 2019).

This study showed how students and faculty members at institutions of higher education enter student-faculty relationships willingly or unwillingly and how perspectives are formed from the students based off how these interactions occur or do not occur. The central research question for this study was: How do Black males describe their relationships with their faculty in higher education? There were three major themes that emerged from the data collected from the 13 participants in this study. Utilizing Noddings’ (1984) ethics of care theory, the first theme found was Black men need to be secure in their physical environment, emotions, with faculty, and feel safe being themselves within their culture. The second theme was the desirable student-faculty relationships Black men want with their professors in higher education. Lastly, essential
care is not only a necessary component within student-faculty relationships but also for the holistic success of Black men. The participants in this study participated in interviews, focus groups, and wrote letters which were documents of their sentiments about their involvement within the phenomenon of student-faculty relationships. Their first-hand lived experiences bring awareness that institutions of higher education should consider strategies to assist Black men in reaching their educational goals. This data also provide possibilities of the retention and graduation rates of Black men increasing.

Despite the under researched field of student-faculty relationships in higher education directly related to Black men, there are implications that can assist in future developments of how care can improve the necessary outcomes of Black men (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019). Universities can invest in their faculty to learning more about diversity, equity, and inclusion. To really serve a diverse group of students, it is imperative to understand what is needed from the students. The understanding of the student’s culture and background will also lead to a better understanding of who they are as a person and how they learn. This may require time outside of the academic setting but the benefits of personal connection for the student would be worth it. It is vital for all educators to remember the words of James Comer, “No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship” (Askew, 2020).
REFERENCES


Askew, T. J. (2020). Neglected prospects: Developing the lost are of teacher-student relationships. Detroit, MI: University of Moguls.


Brooms, D. R. (2020). “I didn’t want to be a statistic:” Black males, urban schooling, and educational urgency. Race, Ethnicity and Education, 1–19.


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LIBERTY UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL

April 28, 2021

Tyson Askew
Susan Quindag

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY20-21-715 BLACK MALES’ PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR STUDENT-FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Dear Tyson Askew, Susan Quindag:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: April 28, 2021. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office
APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT POST

ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctor of philosophy degree at Liberty University. The purpose of this study is to explore the perspective of Black males on their student-faculty relationships in higher education in the United States. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a video-recorded interview and one hour for the focus group. All interviews and focus groups will be conducted virtually by using Zoom. Participants will be allowed to review the interview transcripts for accuracy. The transcripts will be sent through secure email to the participants and returned after the review is completed. After that, you will be asked to write a one-page minimum letter. The projected estimated time to complete the letter is between fifteen minutes to one hour depending on the participant. If you would like to participate and meet the criteria below, please click the link provided at the end of this post and complete the screening survey. A consent document will be given to you prior to the interview through email.

To participate, you must be a male between the ages of 18 to 30 years old, a U.S. Citizen, a member of the Facebook group Black Good Men, and currently attending or have attended a college or university for a minimum of 2 years.

To take the screening survey, click here: https://forms.gle/5sqhLkHQBLbB3WSr9

Thank you!

Tyson J. Askew, M.Ed.
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

Consent

Title of the Project: BLACK MALES’ PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR STUDENT-FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY
Principal Investigator: Tyson J. Askew, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a Black male between the ages of 18-30 years old, a U.S. Citizen, a member of the Facebook group Black Good Men, and currently attending or have attended a college or university for a minimum of 2 years.

Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?
The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the perspective of Black males’ student-faculty relationships in higher education in the United States.

What will happen if you take part in this study?
If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a 1-hour minimum video-recorded interview on Zoom.
2. Complete a 1-hour minimum video-recorded focus group session with other research participants on Zoom. Each group will have 3 to 4 participants. These groups will be randomly formed.
3. Consent to write a one-page minimum letter addressed to a present/former instructor concerning your student-faculty relationship. These letters should be reviewed for accuracy then sent through email.

Participants will be able to check the transcripts from their interviews for accuracy. The transcripts will be sent to the participants through secured email and returned through email.

How could you or others benefit from this study?
Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

With this study's findings, the desire is that the data collected will be useful for faculty members and institutions as they build meaningful, impactful, and effective relationships with their students, specifically Black males.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?
The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.
How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews/focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Tyson J. Askew. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. Susan Quindag.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.
I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

____________________________________
Printed Subject Name

____________________________________
Signature & Date
## APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Table 1

*Participant Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>HBCU/PWI/Community College</th>
<th>Years in Higher Ed.</th>
<th>Focus group #</th>
<th>Completed degree program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Callis</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>HBCU &amp; PWI</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chapman</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>PWI</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>PWI</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Kelley</td>
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<td>PWI</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>PWI</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ogle</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>PWI</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tandy</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>HBCU (2)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Morrison</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Community College &amp; PWI</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Giles</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>HBCU (2)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Miller</td>
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<td>Community College &amp; PWI</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Garvin</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>HBCU &amp; PWI</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Dickason</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>PWI (2)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Community College &amp; HBCU</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX E: THEMES

Table 2

**Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Related Research Question</th>
<th>Evidence from Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security of Black Males</td>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
<td>Sub Question 3</td>
<td>“I’ve felt very attacked by faculty of the opposite race. I believe it was either because of my intelligence or simply because I was Black. For me, this came from observing how my White faculty would interact with White students. It was more organic, relatable, and just natural in conversation; meanwhile, my conversations with the same faculty were strictly academic and far and in-between. With my Black faculty, I felt safer simply put.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Security with Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desirable Student-Faculty Relationships</td>
<td>Parental Role</td>
<td>Central Question</td>
<td>“…it would be nice to say that I had many relationships with my professors, but I can only say that I remember having a meaningful, fruitful, deliberate, and purposeful relationship with only one …and she was a Black woman. It would have been nice to have a relationship with them all.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I felt cared for when my faculty actually talked to me about things that did not necessarily concern work. It was comforting to know that they cared about me as a person outside of my assignments.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential Care</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Sub Question 1 &amp; Sub Question 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

Correlation between Noddings (1984) Ethics of Care Theory and the Participants Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation between Noddings Ethics of Care and the Participants Perspectives</th>
<th>Noddings</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Care is the longing for the goodness resulting from an experience or memory from past acts of care (Noddings, 1984).</td>
<td>Care is an observable act that can also be felt emotionally, holding value in the memory of the receiver of care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Care offers reasons to why connections between learning and achievement are possible and practical from the student’s point of view (Noddings, 1984).</td>
<td>Care is connected to trust and neither cannot operate alone. Care is related to safety. If safety is a concern, then care is in effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care is a process that focuses on the “whole student” and not just on academics (Noddings, 1992).</td>
<td>Essential care is necessary for student-faculty relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Care is the concern for more than simply academics but the student’s wellbeing and sense of belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts</td>
<td>Care is a factor in producing positive outcomes that lead to higher retention and graduation rates (Noddings, 1992). Care is experienced by students and is excepted as their authentic personal experience (Ida, 2017; Hawk, 2017; Noddings, 1984).</td>
<td>Essential care is necessary for Black males in higher education which leads to successful educational outcomes and graduation. Motivation is seen as an act of care. Because of perceived care from past educators, Black males expect care from faculty members in higher education. Care is seen as truth because of personal reality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>