Exploring the Lived Experiences of Black Males Who Have Participated in a Black Male

Initiative Program at a Historically Black College or University

by

Jenard Darrell Moore

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological was to identify and understand how Black Male Initiative programs contributed to the completion of an undergraduate degree for Black males at HBCUs. The study's central research question was: What role does the Black Male Initiative (BMI) play in Black male undergraduate degree completion at HBCUs in the U.S.? Shaun Harper's anti-deficit achievement framework (ADAF) served as the conceptual framework for this study. Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (SCT) served as the guiding theoretical framework for this study. The design of this study was a transcendental phenomenological design with multiple units of analysis. The sample consisted of 10 Black males who participated in a Back Male Initiative and graduated from a US-based HBCU. I collected data using individual interviews, focus groups, and a journal prompt. The data was analyzed through phenomenological reduction. Findings from this study revealed the experiences of Black males throughout their educational journey and their persistence toward an undergraduate degree. The research revealed the importance of Black Male Initiatives, mentors, and support systems needed for Black males to succeed and be successful on their educational journey. Recommendations for future research include expanding the study to Black males who have successfully graduated from Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) and employing quantitative methods to explore Black male graduates.

Keywords: *Black Male Initiative, Black male, HBCU, Mentor, anti-deficit, success, transcendental phenomenology, support programs, self-efficacy*

Copyright

Dedication

First, this dissertation is dedicated to God, my ultimate source of faith!

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my beautiful wife and two daughters! Destiny, Madison, and Harper, you all have supported me every step and allowed me to retreat to my man cave to work for hours on end! You three are the fuel and motivation that keeps me striving for greatness! This is for you! I love you all dearly!

I dedicate this work to my mother, Alicia, who has always pushed me toward excellence in everything I have done! You were my first educational advocate, motivator, supporter, and faithful friend! Thank you for constantly pouring into me and preaching the importance of education, even when it seemed as though I was not at all interested in school! Momma, We Made It!

I dedicate this work to my family for all your support and encouragement! You all have also motivated me to push through the tough times during this journey! Thank you for the encouragement and encouraging words! A special dedication to my grandfather Dr. H.L. Moore (Pop), the ultimate theologian and educator! You set the bar high, and as I promised, I would one day get my Ph.D. so I can be just like you! Well, Pop, I did it, and there hasn't been a day that goes by that I do not think about the legacy you left for me to follow!

Finally, I dedicate this work to all the Black males that I have mentored over the years, the Black males who have paved the way for me, the Black males who risked their lives for me to receive a quality education, and to the Black males who have been overlooked or forgotten. This is for you, Black Man; you can achieve anything you put your mind to; you are destined for success!

Acknowledgments

I want to thank God for all that He has done and for guiding me every step of the way! I want to thank my dissertation chair and committee member, Dr. Wheeler and Dr. Hernandez, for pushing me and for the constant feedback, encouragement, and support toward my Ph.D. pursuit. I would also like to thank my dissertation coach Dr. James Hairston for your guidance and motivation throughout this journey; without your help, my topic would still be all over the place on my notepad!

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List of Abbreviations

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

Black Greek Life Organization (BLGO)

Black Male Initiative (BMI)

Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The rate of Black males attending post-secondary institutions is alarmingly low compared to Caucasians, Asians, and Latinos (Flennaugh et al., 2017). The National Center for Education Statistics ([NCES], 2022a) noted that 18,991,798 undergraduate and graduate students were enrolled in post-secondary American institutions during the Fall 2020 semester. Among those enrolled, Black males only accounted for 11.2% of the Fall semester total enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). There are many contributing factors as to why Black males are not attending college and why they are not as prepared as other races may be when they do attend.

Persistent systemic disparities, inequitable K-12 school conditions, and policy trends, such as the repeal of affirmative action, are some of the primary factors influencing the college-going rates for Black males (Flennaugh et al., 2017). Countless Black male students have never been allowed access to educational programs that will help prepare them for college or a proper support system. Black males need opportunities and experiences to develop social, academic, cognitive, and vocational competence (Kramer, Wilcox, Lawson, 2020). Although Black males may not have the same educational opportunities as other races, some persevere through multiple obstacles and still attend college, graduate, and succeed.

Despite the many challenges Black male students face, some have been able to navigate critical barriers and achieve academic success (Young, 2020). Adelman (2002) suggested that Black males' success in college has been linked to academic preparation, involvement, and social support. Harper (2003) examined data from 32 Black male students and found that purposeful engagement in campus leadership activities and the development of personal

connections and practical skills promoted student success. Black males need resources that recognize the uniqueness of their experience and needs while offering potential solutions to promote academic success (Robinson, 2016). Wright & McCreary (1997) postulated that Black male college persistence and success are not due to a lack of ability but the failure of institutional systems because many Black males desire to attend and succeed in college. Postsecondary institutions have been challenged with identifying factors that will best serve Black male students to ensure they persist and succeed in graduating (Goldsmith, 2020).

Harper & Quaye (2009) argued that many colleges have taken positive steps in creating environments that foster academic growth and success for Black males by creating Black Male Initiative (BMI) programs. Several Historically Black colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have begun implementing BMI programs to assist Black males in being academically successful, connecting to the campus community, and ultimately providing them with the tools to graduate.

Black Male initiatives are any program that is designed to increase the retention, graduation, engagement rates, and overall success of Black males by addressing various scholastic and social challenges through academic engagement, mentoring peer connection, and student involvement (NC State University, 2022; University System of Georgia, 2022; University of Louisville, 2022). Black male initiatives have also been known as Black male mentoring programs at some institutions; however, for this study, they will be referred to as Black male initiative programs.

The largest HBCU in the nation, which is North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NCAT), hosts a BMI program entitled "Aggie Men" that is designed to help students overcome any obstacle that could keep them from progressing to a four-year degree (North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, 2022a). Winston-Salem State

University (WSSU) has also established a BMI called the WSSU Male Experience. Its mission is to empower Black males to achieve academic success, build character, and provide activities that promote academic and personal growth (Winston-Salem State University, 2022).

Chapter one of the study provides background information for the research, including historical, social, and theoretical concepts and how the researcher relates to the study. The researcher will introduce the problem and purpose statements and the significance of the study within chapter one. Chapter one concludes by highlighting the research questions, essential definition explanations, and a chapter summary. An in-depth analysis is vital in researching how and why some Black males persevere despite encountering situations and circumstances that possibly hinder other Black males.

Background

In the United States, Black male students continue to be plagued by problems associated with access, retention, and low post-secondary achievement rates (Allen, 1992). The images created of Black men in society often confine them to environments shaped by drugs, crime, athletics, and academic failure (Harper and Davis, 2012). Leath et al. (2019) noted that numerous Black male students have, at some point, experienced some form of racism inside and outside the classroom. Often the racism inside the classroom comes through implicit biases, and in other cases, it can be blatant (Leath et al., 2019).

Black males have been historically and disproportionately racialized, silenced, marginalized, segregated, isolated, and deemed invisible in schools and society (Pane & Salmon, 2009). Black males have also been inundated with messages that disaffirm their intellect or cause them to second-guess their ability to be intellectual (Styles, 2017). For some Black men, the fear of excelling academically has become a real trauma. It can be caused by witnessing other Black

students succeed and being ridiculed by their peers or society. The fear of living in debt and not being able to afford a quality education may also hinder Black male students who may consider attending a four-year institution. These factors and other contributing factors indicate why some Black male students persevere and others do not (Harper, 2012; Hawkins, 2010; O'Brien, 2012).

Historical Context

Former United States Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Taney stated in the infamous 1857 Dred Scott v. Sanford case, "Black people are not included and were not intended to be included under the word 'citizens' in the Constitution and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States" (National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2022). The Scott v. Sandford (1857) Supreme Court Case established that Blacks were not legally allowed to be declared as United States citizens. For many enslaved Black people at the time, it pushed freedom and equality back even further. Many historians have considered this the worst ruling, the worst Supreme Court decision ever, and it was one of the factors that directly set the country on the path toward Civil War (Crash Course, 2021a, 7:54:00).

The iconic Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) case ruled that segregation was acceptable if the public spaces and facilities were equal to the areas White Americans occupied (Crash Course, 2021b, 1:26:00). Powell (2021) noted that segregation was not just about separating people by race physically; it was primarily about preserving White supremacy and as an opportunity to get ahead. The ideology "separate but equal" provided validity to those in power because it gave them the false impression that Blacks had the same access and opportunities as their White counterparts; however, education was nowhere near equal (Bishop, 1977). Decades later, the United States Supreme Court overturned Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) in the landmark *Brown v.*

Board of Education of Topeka (1954), in which they ruled that racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional (Balkin & Ackerman, 2001).

Schools slowly began to move toward racial integration; however, educators and politicians were concerned about how to close the achievement gap between White and Black students (Hope et al., 2015). Goldsmith (2020) suggested that previously segregated institutions caused the achievement gap among Black students, who were not afforded the same funding and academic access as White students. In 1957, nine Black students, famously known as the Little Rock Nine, attended Central High School in Arkansas, which was initially segregated. The Little Rock Nine attempted to access the high school they could now legally attend; however, the Arkansas Governor had National Guard Troops block the entrance not to integrate the school (Strauss, 2008). These confrontations were broadcast nationally, and as a result, many Black students were afraid to integrate due to the potential threat they may face while attempting to attend school (Ware, 2013); however, they faced the same racism and bigotry outside of the classroom.

The Civil Rights movement took place during the 1950s and 1960s. Despite the passing of Brown v. Board of Education (1954), society was still segregated, and Blacks did not have many of the same social or legal rights as Whites. Even with legislation to desegregate and attempt to provide access to Blacks, they continually had to endure devastating racism, violence, and death (Ware, 2013). Black students fought through desegregation and racism but faced an uphill battle to close the achievement gap. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which again brought education into the national spotlight and provided a landmark commitment towards equal access to quality education (Paul, 2016; Jeffrey, 1978). Wrabel et al., (2018) noted that the ESEA was responsible

for funding elementary and secondary education while holding schools accountable for student outcomes.

Over the years, the ESEA saw several changes and attempts to ensure that access and funding were equal for all students; in 2001, the ESEA was reauthorized and transformed into the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (Lee & Reeves, 2012). The NCLB Act was developed because there was a growing concern that the American education system was no longer internationally competitive, and it required states, school districts, and school staff to take greater responsibility for the academic progression of their students (Dean, 2016). President George W. Bush signed the NCLB Act into law on January 8, 2002 (Dean, 2016). The legislation mandated that states administer an annual test in mathematics and English Language Arts in grades 3 through 8 and once again in high school; in addition, the legislation also mandated that all students be "proficient," as defined by the state, and that every school must make adequate yearly progress towards meeting this goal (Murnane & Papay, 2010).

According to Whitney & Candelaria (2017), the NCLB Act of 2001 was the first national law to require consequences for U.S. schools based on students' standardized test scores. A significant amount of pressure and responsibility was placed on teachers, administrators, and individual school districts (Dean, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Dean (2016) noted that some state policymakers and citizens opposed NCLB based on their concerns that the quality of the public education system that served low-income and underrepresented students did not have the proper tools to meet the federal mandate. States were required by the NCLB legislation to segregate low-achieving groups of students into subgroups and to report their test scores separately, and lower-income Black males were often placed into one of these subgroups (Dean, 2016). Historically, Black male students' test scores have lagged behind those of their

more affluent White counterparts (Stiefel et al., 2007).

Carnoy et al. (2001) suggested that mandated testing to "improve" schools and student learning does not promote real academic improvement, and the fear of losing funding resulted in teachers "teaching to the test" rather than subject content (Patrick, 2013). Muller & Schiller (2000) found that the state-mandated NCLB test resulted in higher dropout rates amongst Black and disadvantaged students. Glennon (2002) argues that despite the benefits of Brown v. Board of Education*'s (1954)* statistical data, Black males have not experienced equal education opportunities, and the passing of NCLB placed Black males at a more significant disadvantage. Patrick (2013) pointed out that some states found loopholes in the NCLB legislation. They bypassed federal rules and regulations by omitting data and not accurately providing access to performance data.

One of the most significant drawbacks to the NCLB is that Black male students were sometimes cheated out of being provided quality education and obtaining the proper support they needed. Spencer (2010) noted that the NCLB failed to improve Black male student achievement as a whole or in racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps. The NCLB assumed that the one test fits all model would work for all students and produce results that would deem all students proficient; however, the standardized test scores only provided limited information about how children were performing (Gwenda, 2021). Black male students have been historically and disproportionately racialized, silenced, marginalized, segregated, isolated, and deemed invisible in schools and society (Pane & Salmon, 2009).

Social Context

Flennaugh et al. (2017) suggested that many Black male students who enter college are not fully prepared academically to be successful college students. Flennaugh et al. (2017) also

noted that Black male students continue to attend college at a much lower rate than their White, Asian, and Latino counterparts. Many factors can be considered as to why Black male students are not prepared and not attending college at the same rate as other races. Persistent systemic disparities, inequitable K-12 school conditions, and policy trends, such as the repeal of affirmative action, are some of the primary factors influencing the college-going rates for Black students. (Flennaugh et al., 2017). It is not uncommon for students who are economically disadvantaged to receive fewer advanced courses, fewer resources, and minimal college preparation compared to those who are advantaged (Prospero & Gupta, 2007).

Researchers have also found that Black males who attend college have more challenges than obtaining a degree; many must overcome racism, negative stereotypes often portrayed in the media, and self-doubt (Harper & Davis, 2012; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Wood, 2011). Brown (2016) argued that Black males are often profiled as "thugs" or "criminals," which can result in educators operating from implicit biases and preconceived notions about Black male students. It is easy for Black male students to disconnect from their educational environment when they experience being wrongly profiled by a teacher or peer, which can cause them to lose interest in education altogether. Sue (2010) defined racism as any attitude, action, institutional structure, or social policy disparaging a person or group because of their skin color. The history of racism that Black men have faced for many decades has resulted in an economically and racialized disadvantaged class system where quality access to educational, political, and social welfare programs has been challenging (Angel, 2018; Majors & Gordon, 1994). Majors & Gordon (1994) also noted that Black men have been miseducated by the educational system, mishandled by the criminal justice system, and mislabeled and mistreated.

Black male students are often faced with a significant difference in the educational

achievement gap compared to other ethnicities, which results in a lower number of Black male students having access to a quality education system that will help them succeed at a post-secondary institution (Same et al., 2018). Researchers have recently examined factors contributing to a lower completion rate amongst Black males (Harper, 2009; Harper, 2012; Palmer et al., 2010; Strayhorn, 2010; Wood, 2013) to combat those factors to help Black males become successful college graduates. Naylor et al. (2015) suggested that it is difficult for Black males to become successful in the modern workforce without a college education, and it is vitally essential that Black males make positive connections while in college to raise the number of successful Black males in the workforce.

Tinto (1993) postulated that the students who are most likely to succeed and graduate tend to have a greater sense of commitment to their institution and feel a part of a community. A student's commitment to their institution is directly linked to pre-college experiences, socioeconomic background, community support, and personal attributes (Simmons, 2013). Black male students need opportunities and experiences that enable them to develop social, academic, cognitive, and vocational competence (Kramer, Wilcox, Lawson, 2020). Researchers continue to study support programs and methods for Black males. Kuh et al., (2007) found that when Black males actively participate and have support in academically focused activities in class and on campus, they tend to be more committed to their education (Tinto, 2000).

Theoretical Context

Shaun Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework (ADAF) & Albert Bandura's (1977,1986,1989) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) are the two theories utilized to guide this study. The ADAF is an informative perspective on how Black males navigate through postsecondary institutions and other educational environments despite the many obstacles and

threats to their success (Druery, 2018). Harper (2012) noted that the ADAF seeks to understand what factors contribute to Black men's success by approaching research from a positive perspective.

Albert Bandura (1977) developed the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which posits that learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behavior (Boston University, 2020). The School of Public Health (2019) noted that within the SCT, learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behavior. While this theory recognizes how environments affect behavior, it also focuses on the individual's potential ability to alter environments to achieve their purpose (Lee et al., 2018). Carey (2019) noted that the social cognitive theory also posits that as individuals extrapolate meaning from situations, they form self-appraisals based on their cognitive abilities and form self-efficacy beliefs about their likelihood of goal attainment.

Self-efficacy is also a significant part of the SCT; Self-efficacy is the personal belief that goals can be achieved in any environment based on the individual's confidence level. Social and environmental factors play a significant role in how individual views themselves and can be a determining factor in their cognitive abilities. Bandura (1977) noted people could regulate their level of physiological activation through their belief in self-efficacy, which is to say, their confidence in their capabilities.

Gary Becker's human capital theory (2009) suggests that the more capital (social/cultural) an individual earns, the more valuable they will be to themselves and their community. Becker (2009) defined human capital as an investment in an individual's education and training that is similar to business investments in equipment. St. John (2017) suggested that building human capital can reduce gaps in opportunities to attain a higher education. Bourdieu

(1986) suggested that by increasing one's cultural capital, it can produce more educated people generationally disrupting many of the cyclical barriers to college access found in minority communities.

In addition, Bell's (1995) critical race theory (CRT) has been utilized to explore Black males, which this theory explores hidden and blatant inequities towards minority students. Ladson-Billings (1998) suggested that the CRT begins with the assumption that racism is normal in the United States. Communities of color nurture cultural wealth through at least six forms of capital such as aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant (Yosso, 2005). CRT theorists have used various methods to challenge racial undertones that exist within higher education and have relied on counternarratives to share the experiences of individuals whose stories have often been omitted within educational research (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Ladson-Billings (1998) also argued that the CRT demonstrates how Whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation.

Problem Statement

The problem is that Black males are not adequality prepared for college due to the lack of tools and support systems designed to assist with preparation (Knight et al., 2004). Flennaugh et al., (2017) suggested that there have been higher numbers of Black male students graduating from high school over the past several decades; however, far too many do not find their way into postsecondary institutions, and for those that do, they persist at a much lower rate compared to other genders and races. Strayhorn (2010) noted that Black males only account for 4.3% of all undergraduate students in the United States.

Many Black males who attend college do not have the foundational principles to help them succeed (good study habits, time management, resource awareness, educational confidence,

and academic motivation) (Harper, 2012; Harper & Quaye, 2009). Researchers have revealed

that Black males are actively engaged in support programs such as BMIs have been able to

increase their ability to overcome challenges in college, despite academic under-preparedness,

low economic status, and coping with racially hostile environments (Harper, 2012; Harper &

Quaye, 2009; Palmer et al., 2010). According to the University of Louisville (2022), BMI

programs seek to increase retention, graduation, engagement rates, and overall success of Black

males by addressing various educational and social challenges through academic engagement,

mentoring peer connection, and student involvement.

Several HBCUs in North Carolina have successfully assisted Black male students on their

respective campuses by implementing BMI programs (North Carolina Agricultural and

Technical State University, 2022a). Exploring the success strategies of Black males who have

participated in a BMI program at an HBCU could provide valuable information for other

educational institutions that need to improve the educational outcomes of Black male students

(Arthur, 2016). Gaining a new understanding of the experiences of graduates from BMI

programs is expected to add to the research literature for Black male students.

Purpose Statement

This phenomenological study aims to identify and understand how Black Male Initiative

programs contributed to the completion of an undergraduate degree for Black males at HBCUs.

At this stage in research, Black Male Initiative will be generally defined as any leadership

development program designed to cultivate the talents and abilities of Black male students to

support their academic and future career goals (Augusta University, 2022). Additionally, the

definition of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) is "Any institution of higher

education that was established before 1964 and whose principal mission was and still is the

education of Black Americans" (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). The two theories guiding this study are the anti-deficit achievement framework (ADAF) (Shaun Harper, 2010) & Albert Bandura's (1977,1986,1989) social cognitive theory (SCT). Both theories allowed me to obtain the participant's belief in their knowledge, skills, and abilities to inform higher education professionals about the highest quality of support services for Black males.

Significance of the Study

Practical Perspective

Cati et al., (2015) suggested that having access to a quality education should be a fundamental human right; however, the educational system often deprives Black males of that opportunity. This study demonstrates the empirical, theoretical, and practical significance of understanding Black males' experiences who have participated in Black Male Initiative programs at an HBCU. The study was critical because it may help identify detailed engagement opportunities, motivating factors, and support systems that Black males need to become a successful college graduate. The problem is that Black males are not adequately prepared for college due to the lack of tools and support systems designed to assist with preparation (Knight et al., 2004). The knowledge created from this study can potentially be significant to institutions, faculty and staff, BMI program directors, and ultimately Black male students. Practically, this study pushes the research forward around this educational phenomenon and will influence policy, practice, procedures, and decision-making at HBCUs by providing valuable insight directly received from Black males in BMI programs. According to Patton (2016), every year, Black male students graduate high school, yet they are not academically prepared for the rigor of college instruction.

Empirical Perspective

Through a review of literature, this phenomenological study is essential as it will address and add value to college readiness and preparedness for Black males in undergraduate programs at HBCUs. Previous research focused on many structural and cultural issues; however, more research was needed to understand how these issues, compounded with racism, influence low-income African American males' post-secondary enrollment decisions (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Cherilien, 2020). This research contributes to the existing literature on Black male college success by adding insight into the experiences of Black males at HBCUs who have participated in a BMI program and successfully graduated. The participants included Black males who recently graduated within the last ten years and college seniors who will graduate within the next year. This study allowed the voices of Black men who have successfully participated in a BMI program and graduated to contribute to the research surrounding this educational phenomenon.

Theoretical Perspective

Additionally, this research provided a new perspective and application through Harper's (2010) ADAF and Bandura's (1977,1986,1989) SCT by observing and listening to the insight provided by the Black males who have persisted and completed a four-year degree from an HBCU. Consequently, this study incorporates theoretical significance by expanding the body of research for Black men in BMI programs and their view of self-efficacy and contributing factors that assist them in persisting.

<div align="center">

Research Questions

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I sought to gather in-depth descriptions of the experiences of Black male students who have participated in a Black Male Initiative program at an HBCU. One central research question and three sub-questions guided this phenomenological study. The researcher corroborated the questions through the anti-deficit achievement and the social cognitive theory the two theoretical

frameworks being utilized to lend to this study. I desired to describe Black male students' perceptions of the programs and resources they perceived assisted them in being successful in graduating and molding them into successful Black men.

Central Research Question

What role does the Black Male Initiative (BMI) play in Black male undergraduate degree completion at HBCUs in the U.S.?

Sub-Question One

What are the educational barriers that Black males face accessing college?

Sub-Question Two

How do Black males participating in a BMI program connect to an HBCU campus?

Sub-Question Three

How does participation in a BMI program prepare Black males to be successful after graduation?

Definitions

1. *Racism* - Any attitude, action, institutional structure, or social policy that disparages a person or group because of their skin color (Sue, 2010)

2. *Black Male* - A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (NCES, 2022b).

3. *Black Male Initiative* – Any program designed to increase the number of Black males who complete their postsecondary education and assist with building learning communities that promote brotherhood and develop leaders through academic success, personal growth, professional development, and self-responsibility (NC State University, 2022; University System of Georgia, 2022)

4. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) - Any institution of higher education that was established before 1964 and whose principal mission was and still is the education of Black Americans" (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

5. *Student Engagement* - The time and energy that students devote to educationally purposeful activities and the extent to which the institution gets students to participate in activities that lead to student success (Kezar et al., 2006)

6. *College Preparedness* - the "level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed without remediation in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program" (Conley, 2007).

7. *Efficacy* - The ability to overcome challenges and achieve goals (Bandura, 1997).

8. *Anti-Deficit* - A strengths-based approach to understanding how Black males have managed to experience success in higher education (Harper, 2010).

Summary

The pathway to post-secondary education for Black males is plagued with obstacles that can potentially hinder them from achieving an undergraduate degree (Cox, 2016). This study provides a greater understanding of the experiences and factors that assist Black males who participate in Black Male Initiative programs to persist in graduating and being successful. Therefore, the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study aims to identify and understand how Black Male Initiative programs contributed to the completion of an undergraduate degree for Black males at HBCUs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

According to Seidman (2019), Black males account for approximately 5% of the overall student population of all U.S. colleges and universities. This transcendental phenomenological study seeks to understand how Black men in Black Male Initiative (BMI) programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) graduate despite the many challenges they may face during their educational journey. Black Male Initiative programs are designed to increase the number of Black Males who complete their postsecondary education. In addition, BMI programs help build learning communities that promote brotherhood and develop leaders through academic success, personal growth, professional development, and self-responsibility (NC State University, 2022; University System of Georgia, 2022)

Two theories were utilized to provide the theoretical framework; Shaun Harper's (2010) Anti-Deficit Achievement framework (ADAF) allows researchers to explore positive-learning aspects of college persistence for Black males who have successfully graduated from a post-secondary institution. Albert Bandura's (1977,1986,1989) Social Cognitive Theory was also leveraged to understand better how Black males adopt behaviors and characteristics from positive influences or environments.

Chapter two of the study provides the theoretical frameworks and synthesizes relevant literature that communicates the importance of this topic, focusing on racial discrimination, Black male mentorship, college preparedness, the importance of HBCUs, and finally, factors that contribute to Black male students' success in higher education. Chapter two ends with a summary, which describes why this research is vital to understanding the methods to assist Black males in preparing and succeeding in college.

Theoretical Framework

Anti-Deficit Achievement Theory

Rose (2006) found that most researchers conduct research from the position of what is wrong rather than what is right. The anti-deficit approach focuses on the strengths and competencies of the subjects being examined (Rose, 2006). The anti-deficit achievement framework is formed from three decades of literature on Black men in education and society and theories from sociology, psychology, gender studies, and education (Harper, 2013). Dr. Shaun Harper (2010) developed this framework for the National Black Male College Achievement study he conducted, which consisted of him conducting research across 42 campuses nationwide. Harper (2013) noted that he structured his research questions to focus on academic success vs. approaching the study from a deficit perspective. In addition, Harper (2013) suggested that often researcher's explore Black males through a deficit lens and utilize commonly asked questions about topics such as educational disadvantage, underrepresentation, insufficient preparation, academic underperformance, disengagement, and Black male student attrition. By reframing these questions, the anti-deficit achievement framework seeks to understand how Black male undergraduates persist and successfully navigate their ways to and through various junctures of the collegiate pipeline.

Harper's (2013) ADAF research questions shed light on three pipeline points that help researchers better understand Black male undergraduate success. The three points are pre-college socialization and readiness, college achievement, and post-college success (Harper, 2013) (see Figure 1). Pre-college socialization and readiness refer to factors that influence students to continue to pursue their college education, such as family, primary and secondary school experiences, and any college preparation activities. After a student has entered a higher

education institution, college achievement and persistence are influenced by personal experiences and engagement. Williams (2019) noted that college achievement also explores the many educational (in-class, out-of-class, on-campus, and peer) experiences that influence the Black male undergraduate student to persist to graduation. The final pipeline of the framework is post-college success, which considers graduate school enrollment, and career readiness as measurable success factors.
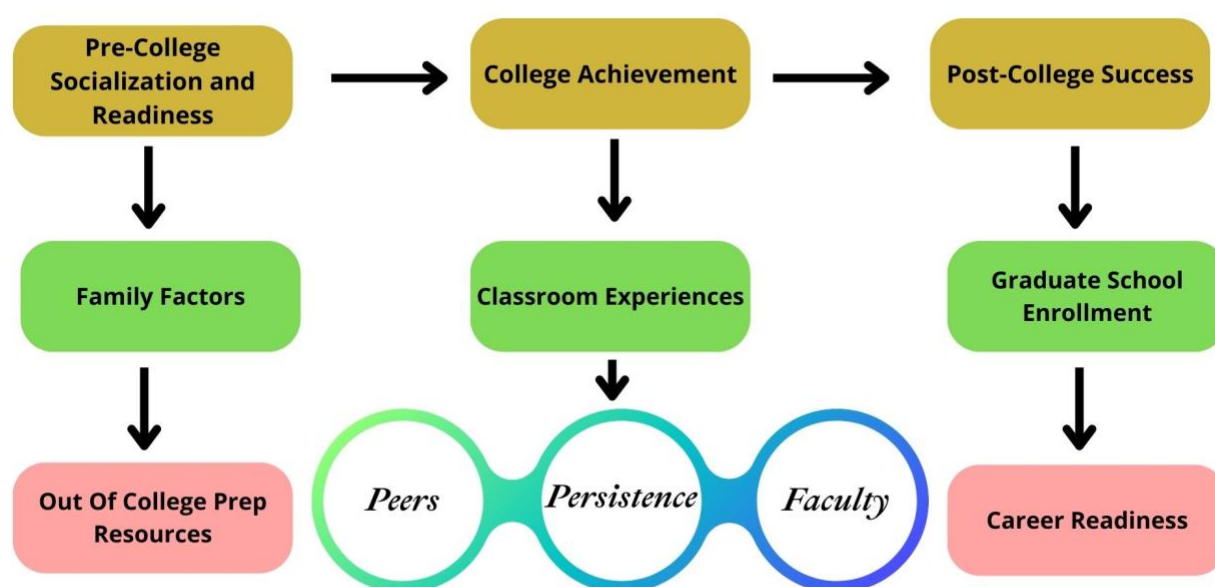
Figure 1: Shaun Harper's Anti-Deficit Achievement Conceptual Framework

Harper (2012a) drew from seven cultural and social capital theories to strengthen and add validity to the anti-achievement framework; those theories are:

1. Bourdieu's (1986, 1987) cultural and social capital theories focus on how achievers from low-resource backgrounds overcome their disadvantages and create meaningful and valuable relationships.

2. Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory focuses on one's confidence, competence, and self-identity

3. Yosso (2005), Yosso & Solórzano (2002), and Harper (2009) critical race theory which identifies students of color as the experts of their experiential realities and allows them to offer counternarratives concerning their success.

4. Tinto's (1993) and Swail et al.'s (2003) theories on college student retention examine the factors that keep students of color enrolled through degree attainment.

5. Steele (1997) and Steele and Aronson's (1995) stereotype threat theory focuses on the strategies minority students utilize to resist the internalization of disparaging misconceptions about members of their racial groups and how they respond to those stereotypes.

6. Weiner's (1985) attribution theory allows students to identify the person(s), resources, experiences, and opportunities to which they attribute their achievements.

7. Markus and Nurius (1986) and Oyserman et al.'s (1995) possible selves theory consider which experiences help students envision themselves in a future long-term career.

Social Cognitive Theory

The social cognitive theory (SCT) posits that learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behavior (Boston University, 2020). The School of Public Health (2019) noted that within the SCT, learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behavior.

According to Bandura (1986, 1989a, 1989b), the SCT assumes that three factors govern human choice: behavioral (e.g., decisions and actions), personal (e.g., physical factors, emotions, cognition), and environmental factors (e.g., selected, shaped, forced). Bandura (1986, 1989a, 1989b) also noted that these three factors change based on situations, personal experiences, and environmental changes (see Figure 2). Keys (1999) found that the core of the social cognitive theory is the role of interpersonal relationships in explaining individual belief structures.

Bandura (1977) conducted a series of original experiments known as the Bobo Doll Experiments in 1960, which observed the interactions of students being exposed to both aggressive and nonaggressive behavior towards a doll. The investigation found that the students reciprocated the behavior they witnessed toward the dolls (Pajares, 2004). Carey (2019) noted that the social cognitive theory also posits that as individuals extrapolate meaning from situations, they form self-appraisals based on their cognitive abilities and in turn form self-efficacy beliefs about their likelihood of goal attainment. While this theory recognizes how environments affect behavior, it also focuses on the individual's potential ability to alter environments to achieve their purpose (Lee et al., 2018).
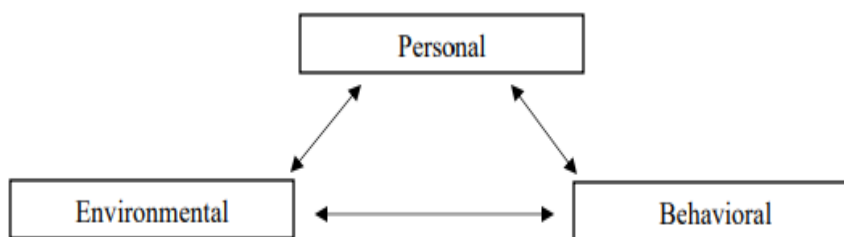

Figure 2: Social Cognitive Theory Reciprocal Determinism

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is also a significant part of the SCT; Self-efficacy is the personal belief that goals can be achieved in any environment based on the individual's confidence level. Fife et al.,

(2011) defined this theory as one's belief in their ability to accomplish a task. Bandura (1977) noted people could regulate their level of physiological activation through their belief in self-efficacy, which is to say that they believe in their abilities. Often individuals avoid tasks that may cause them to extend beyond their abilities, and if they attempt to achieve the task, they do not persist. Bandura (1977) found that when individuals become actively engaged with a task they are confident they can handle, it causes them to display confidence.

Berry (2018) contended that individuals with a heightened sense of self-efficacy are more likely to have high aspirations than those with low self-efficacy. In addition, Berry (2018) noted that individuals with lower self-efficacy are less prone to set goals and view hardships or complex tasks as personal threats. Bandura (1997) also indicated that there are four sources of influence on self-efficacy, which are as follows: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal/social persuasion, and physiological and affective states. Mastery experiences are vitally important to one's self-efficacy development. Betz (2000) suggested that success builds a robust belief in one's efficacy. However, failures undermine self-efficacy, mainly if the failures occur before a strong sense of efficacy is firmly established (Betz, 2000).

Bandura (1997) suggests that vicarious experiences are created when an individual perceives there to be a similarity between the individual and the model. Once the individual has found similarities, the individual will model their behaviors and actions after the model; however, the model's successes or failures can ultimately affect the individual's personal perceived self-efficacy. Betz (2000) found that vicarious experiences, specifically modeling, can be more effective for the individual if they are uncertain about their capabilities, as the models can potentially be more competent, which will help boost the individual's overall efficacy.

Pajares & Schunk (2002) suggested that when individuals receive positive affirmations or reinforcement from others, they are more likely to excel and have higher efficacy in their abilities. However, Bandura (1997) found that when an individual receives criticism or negative feedback, their confidence is diminished. Betz (2000) found that anxiety and depression have also been identified as emotional states that harm one's perceived efficacy. According to Bandura (1997), when an individual experiences high levels of stressful situations, it can lead to failure.

Pajares (1996) suggested that when an individual has a higher perception of their self-efficacy, they are more effective and have self-regulatory strategies at various levels. In addition, Pajares (1996) found that high self-efficacy can influence academic persistence, and the ability to maintain high academic achievement. Bandura's (1997) study also found a direct significant relationship between self-efficacy, perseverance, motivation, and achievement in an educational setting.

Related Literature

The following section provides information from existing studies regarding Black male persistence, mentoring, socioeconomics, and HBCUs. Flennaugh et al. (2017) suggested that even though higher numbers of Black male students are graduating from high school over the past several decades, far too many are not adequately prepared for post-secondary education. Bridges (2022) stated, "Among students enrolled in four-year public institutions, 45.9% of Black students complete their degree in six years, which is the lowest rate compared to other races and ethnicities. Black men have the lowest completion rate at 40%." However, Holcomb-McCoy (2010) found that school counselors, mentors, and community-based support can elevate and enhance Black male college preparedness. The related literature will discuss some factors that

Black males have overcome historically and highlight factors that assist them in preparing and succeeding in college.

HBCU History

According to Crewe (2017), HBCUs were created post-Civil War to combat African Americans' racial inequalities when trying to pursue post-secondary education. Before the Civil War, African American students were not allowed to attend college nor had any opportunities to obtain a post-secondary education (Bracey, 2017). The 13th Amendment freed all African Americans from slavery; however, it did not incorporate desegregation, which meant African Americans could not seek educational opportunities at predominately White institutions (PWIs) (U.S. Const. Amend. XII); Allen et al., 2007). Several Black-ran organizations such as the Freedman's Bureau, the Freedmen's Aid Society, American Missionary Association, and other Black church groups began to open HBCUs in the south to educate African Americans (Albrittion, 2012; Knight et al., 2012; Rovaris, 2005). Approximately 89% of all HBCUs were founded in the southern regions of the United States, although some can be found in the northern regions (Thurgood Marshall College Fund, 2019). Most of the HBCUs established during this time focused their educational curriculum on social skills (reading, writing, and basic math), trades, and religion (Allen et al., 2007).

Palmer et al. (2018) found that HBCUs are generally known for promoting and fostering an atmosphere that contributes to the progression of African American students. During the late 1800s, two prominent African American educational philosophers became the leading voices for African American educational opportunities (Allen et al., 2007). The two had varying perspectives on how African American education should go. According to Allen et al. (2007), Booker T. Washington identified with a vocational approach. From this lens, African Americans

should learn practical skills and trades. Washington believed that if African Americans had practical skills and trades, it would allow them to become self-sufficient and not depend on another race to help them progress (Allen et al., 2007).

Cantey et al. (2013) argued that Du Bois' view offered a more well-rounded education. Contrary to that perspective, W.E. B Du Bois believed that African Americans should focus on liberal arts because it would be more comparable to White Americans' education (Allen et al., 2007). The areas Du Bois often discussed consisted of sociology, literature, and philosophy. These two philosophers were vital during this time and offered new perspectives for newly enrolled African American students to consider.

The Second Morrill Act of 1890 was a land grant that required Confederate states to designate land for "persons of color" for educational purposes (United States Department of Agriculture, 2022). Crawford (2017) noted that 19 HBCUs were founded from this act, which gave more African Americans access to education. Even though HBCUs were ultimately created for African Americans to have access to education, they have always welcomed individuals from all nationalities. Allen et al. (2007) also found that some HBCUs were the first to admit women into college, which shows that these universities sought to provide quality education to those in need.

HBCUs' Significance

HBCUs are vitally important to the continued success of Black men because they are a relevant and viable option to access a quality four-year institution (Flores & Parker, 2013; Gasman, 2013). Historically, HBCUs have helped numerous Black men obtain degrees, and they continue to produce environments conducive to success. According to Gasman, Baez, and Turner (2008), HBCUs provide and create a safe environment that is welcoming and accommodating to

the needs of Black men. Reeder & Schmitt (2013) found that HBCUs create a nurturing, family-style environment that helps Black male students' self-efficacy, psychological wellness, academic development, and persistence. Research has shown that HBCUs have earned favorable reputations for admitting students who may not have been able to attend other institutions, which for some has been considered a negative aspect of HBCUs; however, the cultural standard to succeed can be seen as a motivating factor to graduate (Gasman et al., 2010). Compared to some Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), HBCUs are drastically underfunded; however, they are often praised for producing graduates with degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, as well as producing some of the nation's top Black lawyers, judges, and doctors (Shorette & Palmer, 2015).

One of the most significant aspects of HBCUs is their ability to provide Black men with a sense of rich social capital needed to navigate and understand life from a different perspective (Brown & Davis, 2001). They provide opportunities to engage in culturally specific events, activities, and organizations that reaffirm racial identity and support their sense of belonging (Davis, 1991; Palmer & Gasman, 2008). Most HBCUs are in urban areas, directly contributing to degree attainment for Black men (Gasman et al., 2015). Although HBCUs only make up 2.1% of higher education institutions, research found that more than 60% of Black male students are enrolled at an HBCU (Palmer et al., 2014). After a research study conducted by Palmer & Young (2010) revealed that Black males who graduated from an HBCU were more prepared and equipped to face societal racism and had a greater level of self-efficacy. Roebuck & Murty (1993) identified six critical goals that all HBCUs have in common, which are as follows:

1. The preservation of the historical and cultural traditions of the African American community

2. Servicing African American communities in central leadership roles

3. Supply and maintain economic function/budget within the African American community

4. Provide high-quality Black role models who explore and examine social, political, and economic issues

5. Produce graduates who participate in social justice for African Americans

6. Produce Black scholars who disseminate scholarly research and teaching to the African American community

Black Male Initiatives Contributing Factors to Black Male Student's Success

An essential component of the anti-deficit achievement framework is to shift one's perspective from looking at Black Men through the deficit lens to focusing on the factors that help them succeed in higher education despite their insurmountable challenges. Harper (2012b) noted that research has often focused on the academic challenges Black Male students face; however, that notion should be overshadowed by the experiences of those who have been able to navigate higher education and graduate successfully. Harper (2012b) conducted a study that examined 219 Black Male students from 42 colleges and universities in 20 different states. The study found that 56.7% of those interviewed were from low-class and blue-collar families, which did not deter them from achieving academic success and graduating from their respective institutions. The average GPA for the participants of this study was 3.39, and all were actively engaged in campus activities or held a leadership role, received honor and/or scholarships, and participated with faculty and school administrators. Various factors influence Black men to be successful and persist to graduation; however, research has shown that they are more likely to obtain a degree when they have engaged academically and have the proper support system (Harper & Quaye, 2009; Strayhorn, 2010).

Black Male Initiatives. According to Harper & Quaye (2009), many educational institutions have developed quality programs that create favorable opportunities for Black males to become academically engaged and involved in campus activities. Within the past 15 years, there have been tremendous efforts and attempts to improve the overall academic success and collegiate experiences of Black males (Brooks et al., 2013; Harper & Kuykendall, 2012; Brooms, 2016). According to Brooms (2016), BMI programs are created to promote the social and academic integration of Black males into campus communities and to prepare them for life after college. BMI programs empower institutions to recognize and understand the obstacles Black males face, the engagement experiences they prefer, and how they connect to campus, which allowed the institutions to actively strive to conquer the obstacles and create more opportunities for connection (Anthony, Skerritt & Goodman, 2012).

The University Systems of Georgia (USG) developed a BMI program that impacts their entire university system (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012; Harper & Harris, 2012). The BMI was created in 2002 and was the first university system to launch an effort to increase the low retention, enrollment, and graduation rates amongst Black males. In 2015, 26 of the 29 campuses within the USG offered a BMI program, and each initiative was individually designed to fit the needs of each college and university (USG, 2015). The multidimensional initiatives focused on academic support, mentoring, leadership development, summer preparation programs, and engaging students in the community and focused on activities both inside and outside the classroom (USG, 2015).

Barker and Avery (2012) conducted a study that examined 15 participants who participated in a BMI program for 2 years and found that all the participants noted that the BMI directly assisted them in building relationships, increasing their level of engagement, and gaining

access to resources and information. Brooms (2016) also conducted a study of 40 Black males

who were actively participating in a BMI program at two universities and found that the

participants also indicated that BMIs were essential in their success and engagement on campus.

Harper & Quaye (2009) found that understanding Black males' student engagement preferences,

and the motives behind those choices would be valuable to help increase student engagement and

retention.

Sense of Belonging

Scholars have examined how the sense of belonging affects learning and achievement

(Booker, 2006; Goodenow, 1992; Osterman, 2000) and found that it is an essential need that

must be met before higher motives can be achieved. Researchers contend that a sense of

belonging is shaped by the social spaces and contexts in which one engages, such as classrooms,

residence halls, and academic departments (Strayhorn, 2012). Black male students feel

welcomed and a part of the learning community and academic process, when they are made, feel

like they belong in the respective academic space (Shannon & Bylsma (2006). Institutions that

focus on creating an environment where Black males feel welcomed and as if they belong will

see positive results and retention of Black males will be higher. Brooms (2019) suggested that a

strong sense of belonging can yield positive (e.g., involvement, happiness, achievement, and

retention) outcomes for Black males. Uwah et al., (2008) conducted a quantitative study that

investigated the relationship between perceptions of belonging, educational aspirations, and

academic self-efficacy among 40 Black male students. Their results showed that Black males

who felt encouraged to be a part of the academic community had a higher self-efficacy

perception and were more inclined to higher academic achievements than those who did not feel

they belonged to the respective academic community.

Strayhorn (2012) describes seven core elements from his sense of belonging model that play a significant role in one's perceived sense of belonging:

1. A basic human need

2. A fundamental motive sufficient to drive human behavior

3. Takes on heightened importance

    a. In specific contexts (Settings)

    b. At certain times

    c. Among certain populations

4. Related to mattering

5. Impacted by students' intersecting social identities

6. Engendering other positive outcomes

7. This is a need that must be satisfied continually, mainly because these needs change as circumstances, conditions, and contexts change

Researchers Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera (2016) argued that the first-year experience is vitally important to students feeling connected or disconnected from the community on their respective campuses. When institutions place strong emphasis and effort on ensuring students have a smooth transition to their campuses and community, they increase the chances of retaining the student (Strayhorn et al., 2015; Parker et al., 2016). Black students who attend HBCUs often demonstrate different social and academic outcomes, strengthening their sense of belonging (Davis, 1991; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). Fries-Britt & Turner (2002) conducted a study examining Black students' experiences at HBCUs compared to Predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and found that HBCUs were more adapted to welcoming Black students into a community, which made their sense of belonging greater.

Mentoring

According to Dahlvig (2010), mentoring programs are vital to improving minority success in higher educational settings. The University of Cambridge (2019) noted that mentoring is a system that is made up of structured guidance where one individual expresses their knowledge, skills, and experience to help another individual progress in their own life or career. The University of Cambridge (2019) also suggested that the overall purpose of a mentor is to motivate and empower another individual and to help that person identify their issues or goals. Harris & Lee (2019) noted that mentoring is a highly effective strategy to help improve academic persistence and achievement. When a Black male student has a mentor, it can be a life-changing experience and set them up for success (Louis & Freeman, 2018). Harris (2012) found that mentoring programs directly impact the success rates of Black male college students.

Harper (2009) suggested that Black men constantly feel pressure from their families to obtain employment in hopes of being successful in the event they do not have the desire to attend college; however, Black men who have mentors and a desire to attend college tend to prove themselves academically able to overcome the social perception of being "criminals, irresponsible fathers, descendants of dysfunctional families, self-destructive drug addicts, materialistic, and violent. When Black men have mentors who can model behavior after, they tend to be more productive members of society. Mentors encourage, motivate, and uplift another individual while demonstrating to the mentee how to conduct themselves in certain situations and modeling positive soft/hard skills (Robinson, 2014). Robinson (2014) conducted a study examining Black men who were part of a mentor program. He found that the mentors inspired the younger males to become more productive and socially responsible. The study also found that Black men who had an active mentor persisted to graduation, changed the way they value

themselves, communicated their academic needs more effectively, and had an overall better chance of matriculating through college than Black males who did not have an active mentor.

Families of Black males have often relied on mentors as a viable tool to address cultural and social needs and to help assist with the educational gap (Butler et al., 2013; Harvey & Hill, 2004). Both formal and informal mentoring methods assist Black males in potentially avoiding destructive behavior and forces that could prevent the individual from being productive or achieving their goals (Butler et al., 2013; Johnson & Hoffman, 2000). Wyatt (2009) noted that mentoring can assist in minimizing stress levels while still helping improve the student's attitudes concerning their abilities, school, and academic achievement. Mentoring programs have been proven to increase retention, promote academic achievement, and promote positive behavior (Brown, 2011). A study conducted by (Brown, 2009) found that mentors and mentees do not need to be of the same race; however, it is beneficial for the mentor to empathize/sympathize with the mentee's issues.

Davidson and Foster-Johnson (2001) conducted a study that found two aspects of mentoring, which were psychosocial and instrumental. Psychosocial mentoring addresses the mentee's psychological and social needs; the psychosocial aspect should provide support to improve the mentee's sense of self and social interactions. Instrumental mentoring addresses the mentee's professional needs by providing access to career-related opportunities and enhancing their skills and professionalism (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001). LaVant, Anderson, and Tiggs (1987) suggested that mentoring is vital to the survival and empowerment of Black men as it enhances their ability to make educational advances.

Formal and Informal Mentoring. Mentoring allows Black male students to develop academic awareness and engagement and creates a sense of value (Burney, 2018). Two of the

most common mentoring approaches that programs take are formal and informal mentoring. Formal mentoring relationships are developed from a structured program and have specific goals and objectives they seek to meet (Larose et al., 2009). Palmer & Gasman (2008) found that formal mentoring programs outline clear mentor/mentee goals and provide the proper training and support for the mentors to help build the relationship's effectiveness. Often in a formal mentoring relationship, the mentor/mentee is paired after the mentee has completed a survey or an assessment that matches them with a mentor that potentially would fit their needs. Formal mentoring programs are also usually developed out of necessity or an issue, and most AAMI programs are created under this ideology (Palmer & Gasman, 2008).

As described by Ensher & Murphy (1997), informal mentoring relationships are developed from a shared interest between the mentor and mentee and are often organic. This mentoring does not operate from a structured approach and does not have to follow a "guideline" like formal mentoring (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007). Ragins, Cotton, and Miller (2000) suggested that informal mentoring is more advantageous for the mentee because it can yield more effective results, mentors have a sense of freedom in their approach to mentoring, and the mentor/mentee relationships have been known to last longer than those that are in formal mentoring programs.

Intentional Mentoring. An intentional mentor approaches a mentoring relationship with the kind of forethought and planning that would allow them to become deeply familiar with the prospective mentee; in addition, the mentoring relationship is taken seriously and involves creating an atmosphere of trust, support, and openness about the mentee's self-efficacy (Ramirez, 2012). Holmes & Willis (2022) suggested that the goal of an intentional mentor is to foster an environment in which the mentee enjoys the mentor/mentee experience that helps them to

develop without threat to the psyche or mental health, knowing that there is a caring, supportive individual that helps navigate through situations. Black male students tend to struggle when placed in situations where they do not feel supported by their institution, or professors, or have a mentor to help motivate them to overcome the obstacles they face (Mitchell & Stewart, 2012). Ramirez (2012) developed ten competencies to help intentional mentors establish quality relationships with their mentees.

1. Developing an awareness of the mentee's state of psychological development (e.g., as described in Chickering's Seven Vector Theory (cited in Chickering, 1969)

2. Understanding the status of the mentoring relationship (e.g., whether it is just being established or is ready to progress to an amicable separation).

3. Clearly articulating for the mentee, the details defining the nature of the mentorship;

4. Appreciating the three primary mentor functions offered to the mentee's career guidance, psychosocial support, and role-modeling

5. Maintaining a set of boundaries in the relationship that protect the mentee from coercive behavior that may compromise professional judgment

6. Acknowledging when a mentoring relationship has become dysfunctional and implementing strategies to correct the problems or to separate amicably

7. Developing skills in cross-gender relationships, which include developing an awareness of the obstacles and concerns a mentee of the opposite gender may be confronting

8. Developing skills in cross-race or cross-ethnicity mentoring-this competency involves developing sensitivities to cultural differences that may exist between the mentor and

mentee as well as trying to understand the obstacles encountered by mentees who are members of minority groups, particularly those underrepresented

9. Respecting mentees as autonomous young adults who are entitled to discover and create their paths with the mentor's support rather than merely viewing them as prospective clones of the mentor

10. Remaining vigilant about the benefits that the mentor can bring to the mentee, thereby ensuring that mentees do indeed gain helpful knowledge and skills to advance their career paths

Black males who participate in a mentoring program or a BMI program do not want a mentor that does not lead by example or one that believes in the cliché mantra of "Do as I say, not as I do," according to Ramirez (2012) is a surefire way to undermine a mentoring relationship. LaVant, Anderson, and Tiggs (1997) found that mentorship for Black males significantly enhances the success and graduation rate of those who attend a four-year institution.

Campus Organizations and Engagement

Black male campus organizations help provide a sense of belonging, promote persistence, and build community. Guiffrida (2003) stated that student organizations serve various purposes and can include but are not limited to, academic groups, Greek organizations, religious groups, political organizations, athletics, and student government. Brown (2006) suggested that campus involvement and participation help create attachments and a sense of belonging for Black males. Harper (2006) conducted a study that found Black males who were active in campus organizations, fraternities, and other social groups were more engaged in their academics and tended to gain more social capital than Black males who did not participate in campus organizations.

Campus organizations provide opportunities for Black male students to engage and contribute to the overall HBCU community (Simmons, 2013). According to Graham et al., (2015), campus organizations create a safe space for Black males to develop a racial identity, discuss topics they may not in other settings, assist with connecting to their academics, and most importantly develop a sense of belonging. According to Cokley (2001), Black males who attend HBCUs seek out and join organizations where they have access to Black male role models and perceived opportunities for success and organizations that align with their interests. Harper (2007) noted that Black males who participate in campus organizations tend to grow in their leadership abilities, and the opportunities to serve in an authoritarian role are greater than those who do not participate.

Kezar et al., (2006) defined student engagement as the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities and the extent to which the institution gets students to participate in activities that lead to student success. HBCUs offer a wide range of campus organizations and provide opportunities for students to engage in activities outside the classroom. Trippi & Cheatham (1991) noted that HBCUs engage students from the moment they arrive on campus, which has been noted as an essential factor in achieving successful outcomes because the students are more likely to connect with the services and organizations within their first year of college rather than their later years.

Cuyjet (2006) asserted that Black male students that are actively engaged in campus organizations have quality interactions with collegiate leaders (Chancellors, Vice-Presidents, and Deans), faculty, and staff, which helps the student create meaningful relationships, obtain a letter of recommendations, and find mentors. Black male students who are actively involved in campus

organizations and engaged in activities tend to have a higher chance of obtaining internships and connecting with high-ranking members in their respective fields of study (Cuyjet, 2006).

Black Greek Letter Organizations (BLGOs). African American male fraternities were founded as early as 1906, and they set out to provide Black men with a safe space to pursue educational and professional opportunities. Hughey et al., (2011) noted that African American fraternities serve as a vehicle to build camaraderie, self-sacrifice, persistence, and most notably, an unbreakable brotherhood. Kimbrough (2003) suggested that BLGOs have been known to create welcoming environments for Black males while challenging the Black male to reach higher academic and civic standards. Kimbrough and Hutchenson (1998) also noted that BLGOs produce confident leaders who are more involved in campus activities than those who are not. According to Lee & Ransom (2011), Black male students who participate in BLGOs tend to hold more leadership positions within student government, athletics, residence life, and new student orientations; all these positions require the Black male to be in good academic standing with their respective institution.

BLGOs are competitive and highly selective, requiring the Black male student who desires to become a member of a fraternity to meet a certain standard to be considered a prospect for joining. According to the National Pan-Hellenic Council (2022), which is a governing organization for all African American fraternities, these are three minimum academic requirements for membership:

1. Have achieved a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 the semester before spring intake (fall semester). Some organizations require a higher GPA for membership; therefore, a 2.5 does not guarantee a student's eligibility for specific chapters.

2. Be in good judicial standing with the university per the Office of the Dean of Students and have NO judicial, financial, or academic holds at the time of clearance/s.

3. Be a full-time student (passing at least 12 credit hours) at an eligible College/University

BLGOs hold their members to high standards, and each organization has its own governing body and rules the members must follow. Once a Black male becomes an official member of a fraternity, they become a lifelong member of a brotherhood that will assist them for the remainder of their life. Harper (2007) suggested that the information and life experience Black males gain from a BLGO can be used to uplift their respective communities and used to help their fellow brothers along the way. BLGO plays a vital role in the self-efficacy of many Black males, and colleges and universities must not "overlook the importance of BLGO" when it comes to Black male retention and persistence (Harper et al., 2005).

Micro & Living Learning Communities

Micro-communities are made up of individuals who have common interests and goals with one another. Micro-communities help students tap into their cultural wealth, deepen their cultural competencies, and reaffirm alternate forms of cultural capital (Brooms et al. 2015; Druery and Brooms 2018; Palmer and Gasman 2008; Strayhorn 2010). Grier-Reed (2010) found that micro-communities can become a haven for those that are part of a larger community, and it provides Black males with a chance to connect with like-minded individuals on a smaller scale. In addition, Grier-Reed, Madyum, & Buckley (2008) conducted a study that monitored an African American micro-community and noted that members of the group felt validated in their opinions and thoughts, developed a sense of resilience, enjoyed the intellectual stimulation, and felt comfortable talking about stressful issues amongst the group. Grier-Reed, Ehlert, and Dade

(2011) conducted a similar study, which examined Black students who actively participated in a micro-community and found that those individuals had higher retention and graduation rates compared to those who did not participate in similar groups.

Living Learning Communities (LLCs) have been considered a high-impact practice that many HBCUs implement that extends beyond the traditional classroom setting and engagement method (Gilbert-Thomas, 2018; Nosake & Novak, 2014). An LLC is a residence hall designed to bridge students' academic and nonacademic lives, address specific learning focus, and ultimately enhance their university experience (Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007). In the over 3,000 four-year colleges and universities in the United States, there are more than 600 Living-Learning Community (LLC) programs (US Dept. of Ed, 2019; Inkelas, Jessup-Anger, Benjamin, & Wawrzynski, 2018). LLCs work best when student affairs and academic affairs professionals collaborate to create an integrated curricular and co-curricular experience for LLC residents (Thomas & Eason, 2022).

Pike et al., (1997) noted that residence halls have been instrumental in supporting students in their academic and social transition into college. Many institutions have begun to develop residence halls that offer more study rooms and learning spaces than traditional ones. LLCs enable residents to experience a more educationally enriched community supporting their academic and career aspirations (North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, 2022). Researchers have found positive effects of LLCs on students' academic achievement, social development, and overall satisfaction with their university experience (Pasque & Murphy, 2005; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Students in LLCs have greater involvement with peer counselors and residence hall events (Inkelas, Daver et al., 2007), increased participation in student organizations, and more significant interaction with faculty and peers (Pike, 1999).

Obstacles Black Male Students Have Faced

Racial Discrimination

Hope et al. (2015) and Seaton et al. (2015) noted that racial discrimination is when minority racial groups/ethnicities are treated unfavorably by a majority racial group/ethnicities due to limited access to political power, economic resources, and social capital. Leath et al. (2019) found that Black male students experience racism in the class as a punitive treatment by teachers (based on negative stereotypes and feelings of threats around Black males), which has been linked to their development of oppositional orientations toward schooling. Black male students have learned a well-defined fear of excelling in academic areas traditionally defined as White Americans' prerogative (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Black male students also encounter experiences in school that challenge the meaning and value of their racial identities—such as discrimination in the classroom and peer contexts (Leath et al., 2019).

After the Supreme Court Brown v. Board of Education (1954) ruling, many American schools remained segregated into the 1960s. Black students continued to face racism and were not allowed to attend schools that were meant to be desegregated, which meant they were supposed to have access to better quality schools and education; however, they were not afforded that opportunity (United States Courts, 2021). The schools that Black students were regulated to did not have the same access to books, teachers, and academic opportunities compared to predominately White schools. Darling-Hammond (1998) noted that many schools that Black students attended were funded at rates drastically lower than those serving other races.

Racial discrimination exposure for Black male students at school is not uncommon, which includes reported experiences of adverse treatment from teachers (e.g., stereotype-based treatment, harsher punishment than for other children) and peers (e.g., social exclusion, verbal, or physical

harassment) (Leath et al., 2019). However, racial discrimination and racism are not one direct action but can be displayed in various forms, and they have derived from race-based unfair treatment (Braveman et al., 2017). Fordham and Ogbu (1986) argued that when Black male students have negative experiences on their educational journey, it tends to diminish the excitement to continue beyond the requirements of achieving a high school diploma.

The U.S. Department of Education (2014) found that 48% of African American students were suspended but only accounted for 18% of the total enrollment. The report also revealed that Black male students were suspended three times higher than any other race or gender (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Skiba et al., (2011) conducted a study that examined 364 elementary and middle schools across America and found that Black male students received more office referrals, corporal punishment, and expulsion for similar behavior that other race/ethnic groups displayed; however, the other race/ethnic groups did not receive the same punishment at the same rate as Black males. According to Gilliam et al. (2016), bias toward Black male students begins in preschool and continues to follow them throughout their academic journey.

Leath et al., (2019) explored the associations among Black students' school-based racial discrimination experience, racial identity beliefs, and academic engagement; the study consisted of 1,659 individuals who identified as Black/African American. Black males from the study reported experiencing more frequent racial discrimination compared to the Black girls who were a part of the study. Racial discrimination within the classroom was noted as one of the factors that negatively hindered the Black male's academic identity and desires to further their educational journey. Little & Tolbert (2018) suggest that teachers' prejudices against Black male students resulted in lower expectations, which ultimately affected their academic achievement; in addition,

it became the baseline for that student's academic achievement. Patton (2016) noted that the educational system is deeply rooted in racism and White supremacy.

Harper (2012c) claimed that today, racism is often ignored or downplayed, which compels some Whites to view racial discrimination through a narrow lens of overt, outrageous acts. In addition, Harper (2012c) noted that racism is often misinterpreted as people of color being sensitive or unfairly playing the race card. Black male students are consistently funneled into two paths toward post-secondary education: a community college and for-profit institutions; as an alternative to those two paths, a third is always present: working a full-time job, which results in a student not attending college (Dache-Gerbino, 2017).

Financial Obstacles

According to Medvide and Blustein (2010), many Black male students are usually first-time collegegoers, which they defined as a student whose parents have never enrolled in college. Forbus et al. (2011) also found that Black male students who identify as a first-time collegegoer usually fall under the umbrella of an economically disadvantaged student. Carey (2019) suggested that due to the financial challenges plaguing Black low-income families and the misunderstandings of the process of financial assistance, it is no surprise that adequately funding a college education is one of the most significant barriers to college attendance and completion for Black male students.

Research conducted by Browne & Battle (2018) suggested that since the 1960s, more Black families have been headed by a single parent, which is linked to high levels of unemployment and low earnings. Browne and Battle (2018) also found that the median Black family's income was approximately two-thirds lower compared to that of White families and the Black median family wealth. These results directly affect Black male students because their

desires to attend college can be affected by the lack of financial support they may have. Carey (2019) conducted a study that explored Black males' college aspirations at a Bronx, New York urban high school and found that participants' families supported their college ambitions but offered little support when it came to the financial process.

Knight et al., (2004) suggest that Black male students' financial hardships constitute a significant indication that they are hindered by the reality of not possibly being allowed to obtain a post-secondary education. For Black students to be fully prepared for college, they must be afforded the same educational opportunities and resources that other races have access to. Black families often must face the harsh reality that they may not be able to pay for their child's education, which can be stressful for the family and the student. Herberger et al., (2020) noted that higher economic status students tend to excel academically, are afforded educational opportunities, and have access to a more highly qualified teacher; compared to those in a lower social and economic bracket.

Financial Aid. Palmer et al. (2014) contended that most Black males rely on student loans to fund their post-secondary education. A study performed by Kaltenbaugh, St. John, & Starkey (1999) suggested that minority, low-income, Black students are more sensitive to tuition costs and less willing to use educational loans if they do not have to. However, a study by King (1999) on the use of financial aid for college students who attend four-year institutions revealed that 54% of Black students utilized a federal student loan compared to only 36% of White students. The study also showed that 62% of Black students received grants, and out of all the racial groups examined, they were the most likely to receive a grant. In recent years, states have begun to decline state and federal funding which has placed the burden of paying for college on

students and their families, making college affordability a real problem (Alverez & Marshall, 2018; Ishitani, 2006).

One of the biggest challenges for Black males is navigating FAFSA for the first time alone or obtaining all the required documents needed to apply for aid. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA) is the most notable avenue students utilize to access various types of need-based aid, which is the doorway to billions of dollars in federal grants and loans (Furquim et al., 2017). Despite the role FASFA plays in students attending college, many Black males do not take the time to complete the application (King, 2004).

Kofoed (2017) conducted a study that revealed that 20% of students eligible to attend college were from families who earned less than $50,000 a year and did not complete their FASFA application. Many researchers have suggested that due to the complexity of the financial aid system, in addition to the lack of understanding of aid and eligibility, many low-income and Black families are placed at a significant disadvantage (Avery & Kane, 2004; Dynarski & Scott-Clayton, 2006; Dynarski & Wiederspan, 2012).

Ziskin et al. (2014) studied students' perceptions of financial aid and found that students see the entire aid process as complex and time-consuming. Orr (2003) also suggested that due to a shift from grants to college loans, more Black males tend not to apply for college because of the looming fear of debt. Wilkins (2014) noted that often Black families are privy to the numerous methods to fund a college education, which is an attributing factor to why many do not apply. According to George-Jackson & Gast (2015), low-income, Black families seem to be the most impacted racial group by the contained economic and financial barriers.

College Preparedness

College preparedness is defined as the "level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed without remediation in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program" (Conley, 2007). Balfanz (2009) suggested that the primary purpose of high school is to prepare students for college, and after decades of school reform, it has left many Black male students unprepared for post-secondary education. However, Conley (2007) found that Black male students from low-income families are particularly vulnerable to a system that does not send a clear signal to students concerning their preparedness for college because they are most dependent on the schools to prepare them adequately for college. According to Valentine, Konstantopoulos, and Goldrick-Rab (2017), Black male students from low-income families are much more likely to not be prepared for college than higher-income White families.

Bryant (2015) argued that Black male students are often faced with not having well-qualified or highly experienced teachers. Black male students are also four times more likely than White students to attend a school where 80% or fewer teachers are certified, and 20% or more are in their first-year teaching (Bryant, 2015). Black male students are not always exposed to rigorous courses that well-qualified teachers teach, and a disproportionate amount of them attend low-performing, high-needs schools (Hope et al., 2015; Strayhorn, 2015). Kena et al. (2015) found that Black male teachers comprise only 2% of teachers, while 20% of students in public schools are Black.

One of the ways to mentally prepare Black males for post-secondary education is to have or see a Black male teacher or in a leadership role through their K-12 journey (Long, 2012). In addition, Long (2012) also found that some Black male students are emotionally and

academically disconnected from their education by the time they reach the fourth grade. Goins and Bianco (2016) believed that Black male students also lose interest in their education because they do not see any Black male teachers or leaders within their immediate educational environment.

Many Black male students accept negative labels placed on them by society or even education, which can hinder their desire to further their education (Goings & Bianco, 2016). According to Wells & Lynch (2012), the lack of college preparedness for many Black male students has been one of the primary reasons why they do not even apply or go to college. Barnes & Slate (2014) found that the college preparedness rate of White students was much higher than the college preparedness rates for Black male students. A study conducted by Pitre (2016) claimed that when students notice that their high schools are not adequately preparing them for college, they are much less likely to desire post-secondary education. The importance of quality education has become increasingly valuable, and society should continue to strive to provide quality opportunities for education regardless of one's race or social standing (Conley, 2010).

Black male students have faced both academic and non-academic (cultural and racial) risk factors that often are connected, which can act as a barrier to college access (Knaggs et al., 2015, Pitre, 2006). Academic barriers include rigorous curricula, the lack of up-to-date technology and textbooks, qualified teachers, and advanced placement courses (Cox, 2016; Hope et al., 2015; Knight-Manuel et al., 2019; Strayhorn, 2015). Barnes and Slate (2014) and Hurtado (1997) noted that schools are not adequately preparing low-income Black male students for post-secondary education or connecting them with the appropriate resources they need. Numerous researchers have suggested that Black male students need emotional support and care despite

their outward appearance of confidence, especially when transitioning from high school to a post-secondary institution (Brooms, 2018; Harper, 2015; Ida, 2017).

Summary

Persisting problems within the education system have caused Black male students to be unprepared for college. Many factors, such as race in the classroom, economic struggles, and disparities, the lack of proper family support and exposure, can cause these issues; however, studies have proven Black students are not entering college at the same rate compared to other races, and if they are some are not fully prepared or ready (Carey, 2019). Researchers have often explored the topic of Black males in education from a deficit model to highlight recommended changes institutions can make to asset more Black males in graduating. Many colleges and universities are attempting to identify more strategic strategies and programs to help with Black male student retention and graduation rates.

This study focuses on various factors that help Black males succeed in college and highlights the activities and programs that have made Black males engaged in their academics and community. Although this literature review examined the positive programs and activities that boost Black male student engagement and academic success, there is still a lack of research concerning the perception of engagement experiences, organizational involvement preferences, and reasons behind the preferences of Black male college students. Exploring the Black male perceptions can help HBCUs, and other educational institutions develop and implement effective programs to increase Black male college success. This transcendental phenomenological study aims to identify and understand how Black Male Initiative programs contributed to the completion of an undergraduate degree for Black males at HBCUs. Although Black males have widely been examined from a deficit lens, literature related to their success from an anti-deficit

perspective is scarce. Hence, the need to understand the impact of BMI programs, and the role

they play in a Black male's success.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to identify and understand how Black Male Initiative programs contributed to the completion of an undergraduate degree for Black males at HBCUs. I chose this research method to highlight and explore the lived experiences of Black males who have participated in a BMI program. Chapter three provided the research design, questions, setting, participants, procedures, and the researcher's role. Chapter three also focused on data collection, including an understanding of the three different methods utilized during the study. In addition, this chapter also highlights the data analysis and ethical considerations. Further research on Black males and the factors that assist with academic success was needed from an anti-deficit perspective.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research approach, which was appropriate for understanding the unique experiences and perspectives of the participants. Johnson and Christensen (2008) describe qualitative research as a method that provides more a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. I wanted to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences to identify the factors and programs that are most helpful to the success of Black male students. I focused exclusively on the participants' experiences in this transcendental phenomenological approach. Despite identifying as a Black male, I am confident I can bracket my experiences to pursue the truth as my participants perceive it.

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a methodology for discovering and comprehending the significance of people or groups assigned to a communal or human issue. Phenomenological principles assert that scientific investigation is valid when the information

gained comes about through rich description that allows understanding of the essence of experience (Moustakas, 1994). An essential focus of phenomenology is to condense the individual experiences concerning the phenomenon to understand the universal essence (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The famous philosopher Edmund Husserl introduced phenomenology in the twentieth century (Moran, 2000). Husserl believed strongly in separating philosophy from science and directing one's attention to the things that join an individual's experience to objects (Moran, 2000). This design has a solid philosophical underpinning and typically involves conducting interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13). Moustakas (1994) postulated that this methodology is made up of four main interviewing stages, which are as follows:

- epochè
- reduction
- imaginative variation
- synthesis

Moustakas's (1994) approach also has systematic steps in the data analysis procedure and guidelines for assembling the textual and structural descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Those steps are as follows:

- determine if the research problem is best examined by using a phenomenological approach.
- identify a phenomenon of interest to study, and describe it
- distinguish and specify the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology.
- collect data from the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon by using in-depth and multiple interviews.

- generate themes from the analysis of significant statements.

- develop textural and structural descriptions.

- report the "essence of the phenomenon by using a composite description.

- present the understanding of the essence of the experience in written form.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What role does the Black Male Initiative (BMI) play in Black male undergraduate degree completion at HBCUs in the U.S.?

Sub-Question One

What are the educational barriers that Black males face accessing college?

Sub-Question Two

How do Black males who participated in a BMI program connect to an HBCU campus?

Sub-Question Three

How does participation in a BMI program prepare Black males to be successful after graduation?

Setting and Participants

The following section describes the setting and participants in greater detail.

Setting

The setting for the study was all U.S.-based HBCUs. The phenomena of Black male undergraduate experiences provide discovery of knowledge to expound upon in research (Moustakas, 1994). Palmer (2014) noted that 60% of Black males enrolled in college attend an HBCU, which is why U.S.-based HBCUs were selected as the setting for this study. In addition, my goal was to obtain participants' experiences from various demographics. HBCUs are

generally comprised of a President or Chancellor who leads and guides all initiatives for the college or university. A Vice-President or Provost works directly with the President to oversee assigned departments and to ensure that each department or college is operating per their academic standards and the President's orders. College deans and department Executive Directors operate the day-to-day operations within their respective assigned areas and oversee the staff within the department. The faculty and staff within these respective academic colleges and departments typically serve the students directly, and this is where most student-faculty interactions happen.

Participants

This transcendental phenomenological study selected participants through criterion-based purposeful sampling and snowball sampling. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), criterion-based sampling seeks to identify participants that meet the case criteria. Snowball sampling generates a pool of participants through referrals made by individuals who share a particular characteristic of research interest with the target population (Crouse & Lowe, 2018). Participants must meet the selection criteria as outlined below:

- Identify as a Black male

- Recent HBCU graduate within the last ten years

- Black male seniors who will graduate college within the next year

- Participated in a BMI or male mentoring program

An online survey was given to potential participants to confirm that they met the required criteria (Appendix B). The survey questions identified demographic information and asked about age, gender, ethnicity, graduation year, and comfort level or experience using technology. This survey allowed for confidentiality. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest. The sample size for the

study was 10 participants.

Researcher Positionality

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that the researcher's positionality relates to the research's context and setting. I attended and successfully graduated from an HBCU. I have a distinct love for my alma mater, and I visit the campus yearly for homecoming! I also have worked at a large HBCU on the east coast. As a child, I grew up in a single-parent home with my mother, who instilled in me the importance of education and success. From an early age, my mother constantly promoted education and would take me to events centered on education. She also ensured I was active in my local community and church. I participated in sports starting at the age of six, playing sports such as baseball, soccer, basketball, and football. As I grew older and became more conscious of being considered a "nerd" for enjoying school by my peers, I began to morph into the class clown to deter my peers from bullying me.

The older I got, the less interest I showed in excelling in school, and I did what I saw my peers doing, which was just enough to get by. By the time I reached middle school, I had become a sports jock, and my entire life revolved around sports. As I transitioned into high school, that persona would only be magnified because my high school was known for its sports program. Like many of my peers in high school, academics were not as important as excelling in sports. However, I was conscious of maintaining a certain GPA to be eligible to participate in any athletic activity.

As my senior year quickly approached, I realized that some of my peers were being accepted to college. I had not even thought about college other than trying to obtain an athletic scholarship for track. My mother, the educational advocate, had me complete an application to a college, for which I received an acceptance letter. I participated in community programs for

Black males geared towards building character and excelling academically, which was one of the reasons I even began to get serious about being accepted into college. However, after high school graduation, I was not mentally prepared for college, let alone academically prepared. My mother also knew I was not ready to attend college straight out of high school, so she presented me with the option of attending a military school or a one-year Christian internship. I chose the latter because it seemed to be a much easier route than attending an army school. The Christian internship helped me mature quickly because it was fourteen hours away from home.

After completing the Christian internship, I attended college, where I quickly learned that the poor study habits, I developed in high school had come back to bite me. In my first semester, I struggled and tried to approach my college courses just as I did my high school courses. I had a support system via my family that pushed me to excel academically; however, many Black males do not have any support systems. I pray this research will assist students and institutions with various methods of helping Black males become successful college graduates.

Interpretive Framework

Social constructivism was used as the research paradigm to guide this study on the experiences of Black males who participated in a BMI at an HBCU. Social constructivism is built on the assumption that no worldview is explicitly determined by empirical or sense data about the world but by understanding it through forming meanings that correlate to their own experience (Patton, 2015). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), social constructivists seek an understanding of the world in which they live and work.

Philosophical Assumptions

As the researcher for this study, my philosophical assumptions align with the ontological perspective. Philosophical assumptions are certain beliefs that are added to research, sometimes

unknowingly (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Life experiences, education, and advice can be deeply embedded in the researcher's perspective, thus formulating how and what questions will be asked and how data will be collected. The three philosophical assumptions addressed in this study are ontological, epistemological, and axiological. Reflection of each philosophical assumption in light of the researcher's worldview grants the reader a more thorough understanding of this qualitative research study.

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumptions support the concept that others perceive reality from different perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative researchers attempt to uncover the multiple truths that individuals experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My ontological assumption is that Black males can be successful college graduates despite their potential obstacles. I reported the differences amongst participants' perspectives as themes, which aligns with the ontological assumption. Various ontological views provide vital details, as participants had shared universal realities and multiple realities connected with their perceptions.

This qualitative research method sought to discover the details by experiencing inductive, developing, and formation of the data collection. This information assisted the readers in understanding the participants' realities concerning the researched phenomenon and results. These research assumptions are subjective and perceptive to the participants portrayed through their multiple perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Epistemological Assumption

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that an epistemological assumption ensures that the researcher gets as close as possible to the study participants so that knowledge can come forth through subjective experiences. as an epistemological researcher, I was able to view the

participant's perspectives from their level in this investigation with an understanding of their perception of truth. It is vitally essential for the researcher to get to know the participants, which can lead to firsthand information being conveyed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As I conducted this study, I divulged that I graduated from an HBCU and did my best to make the participants feel comfortable while sharing their experiences.

This type of qualitative study was subjective as it sought to understand the experiences of Black males who have participated in a BMI program and successfully graduated from an HBCU. The knowledge gathered from the research study was from Black males' subjective experiences. However, critical common themes from the collected research provided a better understanding of their shared experiences related to the phenomenon.

Axiological Assumption

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the researcher is transparent with the participants about their biases, personal experiences, and belief systems. Based on my personal experiences as an HBCU graduate, I intentionally set aside my biases. This type of qualitative study aimed to understand the experiences of Black males who participated in a BMI at an HBCU. This axiological philosophical assumption finds a foundation in moral values and ethics. This assumption keeps the researcher from influencing the participants or the results of the phenomenological study. Axiological assumptions are the specific values that I brought to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During my time as an undergrad and a working professional, I valued the importance of mentorship and community connections.

Researcher's Role

My role as the researcher is, to be honest, forthcoming, and neutral throughout the process. I successfully graduated from an HBCU and previously worked as a Residence Hall

Director at a large East Coast HBCU. My goal was to put the participants at ease and make them

feel as comfortable and confident as possible during our interactions. According to Hopkins et

al., (2017), in phenomenological research, it is up to the researcher to decide if and when

personal experiences will be divulged to the participants.

Having lived as a Black man and successfully graduating from an HBCU, I had shared

experiences with the participants, and I was forthcoming with my experiences once participants

were chosen. The biases that I brought to this study of being a Black male who successfully

graduated from an HBCU were divulged along with any other biases that arose throughout the

study. As the researcher, I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam

et al., 2015). The researcher must have adequate recording equipment, specific research

questions, and a plan to analyze and interpret data. My philosophical assumptions played a part

in this research, but I conducted this study with integrity and professionalism.

Procedures

Creswell (2015) noted that in a qualitative research study, the procedures section includes

details and technical information regarding the mechanics and administration of data collection.

The required procedures for gathering the necessary research permissions were completed for

this study. All the required copies of the permission letters are located in the appendix section.

Permissions

I utilized social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram to solicit

potential participants. Before collecting data through individual interviews, a focus group

interview, and a journal prompt, I submitted documentation to the Institutional Review Board

(IRB) (Appendix A). I also provided them with a description of the participant criteria and

information regarding how to contact me if they met the criteria and were willing to participate. This process did not require permission.

Recruitment Plan

I utilized the criterion purposeful and snowballing sampling methods to identify participants. Purposeful sampling allows researchers to understand the phenomenon from a sample that meets specific criteria and has relevant experience with the researched topic (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2011). According to Patton (2002, 2015), purposeful sampling is a means to provide information-rich analysis from participants and identified this method as the most useful in gaining understanding. I used purposeful sampling to identify 10 participants who have experience with the phenomenon and were willing to participate in an interview, focus group interview, and writing a journal prompt. I disclosed the study's intent within the initial recruitment information provided to my professional contact and on the social media recruitment post. In the recruitment survey, I asked participants that met the criteria to participate in the study. Snowball sampling was also employed for this study, a recruitment technique in which research participants are asked to assist the researcher in identifying other potential subjects (Oregon State University, 2022). Participants who responded to the social media post and distribution information verified that they met the following criteria to participate in the study:

- Identify as a Black male

- Recent HBCU graduates within the last ten years

- Black male seniors who will graduate within the next year

- Participated in a BMI or male mentoring program

The goal was to obtain information-rich participants who had first-hand experience of being a Black male, participated in a BMI program, and successfully graduated college. I

selected participants based on the earliest responses to my request for research participants. After the selection process, I informed the participants and emailed them the informed consent documents (Appendix E). Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. Participants were asked to thoroughly read the consent documents and return them to me within 24 to 48 hours. I offered to meet with participants before the initial individual interview to discuss the research study and participant expectations if they had any questions or concerns.

<div align="center">**Data Collection Plan**</div>

Moustakas (1994) noted that data collected through various sources provide a thorough understanding of the phenomenon and strengthened the study's credibility. This study's first form of data collection was individual interviews, which were conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams was chosen as the interview method because this platform recorded and transcribed meetings. Next, I led a focus group to discuss the participants' shared experiences and discover their perspectives' similarities and differences. Finally, I gathered data through a journal prompt given to 8 of the participants, which asked them to write a letter to younger Black males who would be attending an HBCU and the things they may have to face and overcome; in addition, the prompt asked them to provide tools that would be needed to become a successful Black male college graduate.

Individual Interviews (Data Collection Approach #1)

Individual interviews were conducted with each participant to understand their lived experiences of the phenomenon (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) of being a successful Black male college graduate who participated in a BMI program. The individual interviews were utilized to answer the central research question (CRQ) and Sub-Questions (SQ) 1, 2, and 3. Gall et al.'s (2007) procedures for a semi-structured interview were followed during the individual

interviews. According to Moustakas (1994), the qualitative interview is a dynamic interaction in which words and discourse permit apprehension within and beyond the interview setting.

I relied on open-ended questions to further investigate participants' responses. Interviews were held on Microsoft Teams for one hour on a mutually agreed day and time. Microsoft Teams also served as my primary transcription software. Throughout the interview process, follow-up questions were asked periodically to provide deeper insight and detail to help code and create themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Before each interview, I was sure to note and remove my biases so they would not affect the discussion and the research interpretation of the phenomenon I was examining (Moustakas, 1994). If any technical malfunctions with Microsoft Teams, Zoom served as a backup recording option. During the interviews, I took notes and recorded any potential biases in my electronic reflexive researcher's journal. Table 1 identifies the individual interview questions used in this study to obtain a rich and thick understanding of the Black male's experiences.

Table 1

Individual Interview Questions

Interview Questions	Research Questions
1. Please introduce yourself and tell me anything you think is essential for me to know.	
2. Please describe what led you to apply for college.	
3. Please explain why you chose your specific institution.	
4. Tell me about your K-12 experience and how that prepared you for college.	SQ1

5. Please discuss any potential barriers you faced before applying for college.	SQ1
6. Please tell me about the support you had when applying for college.	SQ1
7. What concerns did you have enrolling in college as a Black male?	SQ1
8. Please describe your experiences as a Black male enrolled at an HBCU.	SQ1
9. Please tell me any challenges you faced during your first semester at your HBCU.	SQ1
10. Please describe how prepared you felt you were to attend college and what things you wish you would have done differently to prepare.	SQ1
11. Please tell me how and why you participated in a BMI program.	CRQ, SQ2
12. Describe the BMI program that you were a part of at your HBCU.	CRQ
13. Explain the primary factors promoted in your BMI that ensured you successfully graduated.	CRQ
14. Describe mentoring and engagement as a Black male student in BMI at an HBCU.	CRQ, SQ2
15. Describe or tell me about a mentor or role model you had at your HBCU.	
16. Please explain the activities that you participated in on campus.	SQ2
17. Please explain a few skills or life lessons you learned from the BMI program you were a part of at your HBCU.	SQ3

18. How prepared did you feel for life after college after participating in a BMI program?	SQ3
19. To what extent do you feel like you were a valuable member of your college community?	SQ2
20. Hopefully, you found these questions to be a good exploration of your background as a successful Black male college graduate. Would you like to add anything or elaborate on any of the topics we have discussed today?	

Questions 1-5 of the interview helped me gauge the participant's interest. These questions also allowed me to understand who the participants were and how they potentially viewed their education based on their experiences. These questions created a warm climate for comfort and ease of exchanging information during the interview (Moustakas, 1994). Questions 4-10 allowed me to understand more about SQ1 and the potential barriers the participants faced from their personal experiences. Questions 11-14 focused on the central research questions regarding BMI's role in degree completion for Black males. Questions 11, 14 -16, and 19 highlighted SQ2, allowing the participants to expound upon their perspective on connectedness and engagement for Black male students. These questions provide insight into some leadership roles and campus organizations the participants participated in outside the BMI program. Questions 17 & 18 shed light on SQ3 and allowed participants to assess their level of preparedness after graduation. Finally, question 20 allowed participants to revisit and expound upon any topics discussed during the interview.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan (Data Analysis Plan #1)

I began examining the Black male participant's lived experiences of participating in a BMI program at an HBCU by bracketing the phenomenon. I relied on the MS Teams recordings and transcriptions of the interviews to create statements about the participants' experiences and begin developing themes. I recorded each experience individually within a secured Excel spreadsheet, which allowed me to view each response uniquely. I used researcher-generated, descriptive coding to create a robust and comprehensive list of themes that helped develop rich descriptions. I drew initial codes from the key terms within the research literature and questions. I also developed additional codes as themes emerged. I created a coding Excel document and updated it throughout the research process.

Focus Groups (Data Collection Approach #2)

Focus group interviews were the second data collection method for the study. Gall et al., (2007) suggested that a focus group interview involves the interviewer and selected research participants, who freely reveal common ideas and experiences about the investigated phenomenon. Extensive data can emerge from a focus group and encourage stronger group interactions (Barbour, 2007). The focus groups were also conducted using Microsoft Teams; I selected 3-5 participants who were enthusiastic and engaged in the individual interviews to participate in the focus group interview. Creswell & Poth (2018) indicated that focus groups help the researcher identify cultural norms and issues of concern within a group where everyone has experienced the same phenomenon and are appropriate when the interactions between participants will possibly yield the best results. Microsoft Teams served as the meeting platform for recording and transcription purposes. For accuracy, each participant was provided a meeting transcription for member checking. Table 2 identifies the questions asked during the focus group.

Table 2

Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions	Research Questions
1. Please start by introducing yourself and include what HBCU you attended, your major, your graduation year, and the name of the BMI program you participated in.	
2. Please share a few things you learned from your BMI program that made you a successful college graduate.	CRQ, SQ2
3. Please share why you enrolled at an HBCU and what role that decision played in your student success.	CRQ, SQ2
4. Discuss your potential academic success and path if you had not joined a BMI program at your HBCU	SQ1
5. Please share other activities you participated in on-campus outside your BMI program.	SQ2
6. Discuss your K-12 experience and share how it prepared you for college.	SQ1
7. What barriers did you face as a Black male on your educational journey?	SQ1
8. What advice would you give to younger Black males about being a successful college graduate?	CRQ
9. Please list the top three things Black males need to succeed in college.	SQ2

10. What can other higher education institutions do to better support the success of Black males?	CRQ, SQ2
11. Would you like to add anything or elaborate on any of the topics we have discussed today?	

Question 1 created a warm climate for comfort and ease of exchanging information during the interview (Moustakas, 1994), and it also allowed the participants to introduce themselves and become familiar with one another. Questions 2, 3, 8, and 10 focused on the central research question regarding BMI's role in degree completion for Black males. Questions 4, 6, and 7 allowed me to understand more about SQ1 and the potential barriers the participants faced from their personal experiences. Questions 2, 3, 5, and 9 & 10 highlighted SQ2, allowing the participants to expound upon their perspective on connectedness and engagement for Black male students. Questions 3, 8, 9 & 10 shed light on SQ3 and allowed participants to assess their level of preparedness after graduation. Finally, question 11 allowed participants to revisit and expound upon any topics discussed during the interview.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan *(Data Analysis Plan #2)*

I used the recordings and transcripts from the focus groups to create statements about participants' experiences. I viewed and wrote each experience individually within a secure Excel spreadsheet. I removed any redundant or overlapping statements. I then began to analyze the recording and transcripts for additional codes, patterns, connections, divergent perspectives, or emerging themes. I relied on the codes established during the individual interviews and added emerging codes if necessary. I used Otter.ai to analyze the transcriptions for additional codes and create textural descriptions.

Journal Prompt (Data Collection Approach #3)

This study's third data collection method consisted of journal prompts (Appendix H). I selected 3-5 participants to participate in this data collection approach. Black males who participated in a BMI at an HBCU provided a detailed letter to future Black male HBCU students, describing their undergraduate experiences and suggestions on becoming successful graduates. According to Adams & van Manen (2017), composed letters to future Black males serve as a concrete first-person description of a lived experience and starting point for phenomenological reflection and exploration. This method allows the participants to express themselves authentically, giving them the autonomy to draft, edit, and submit their responses to the prompt. This process helped me examine the answers in detail to increase the study's reliability. It also increased the study's validity when subjects responded accurately to the journal prompts. The participants received a link via email to access the following journal prompt in Microsoft Forms. Table 3 identifies the journal prompt question.

Table 3

Journal Prompt Question

Journal Prompt Question
As a Black male who has successfully graduated from an HBCU and participated in a BMI program, please write a letter to future Black males who will attend an HBCU. Please discuss the possible challenges they may face on their academic journey, how to overcome them, how to connect to campus programs, and how to navigate life after college.

As a Black male who has successfully graduated from an HBCU and participated in a BMI program, please write a letter to future Black males who will attend an HBCU. Please

discuss the possible challenges they may face on their academic journey, how to overcome them, how to connect to campus programs, and how to navigate life after college.

Journal Prompt Data Analysis Plan *(Data Analysis Plan 3)*

I relied on a five-step process to analyze and synthesize data. Those steps included organizing data, reviewing, and exploring data, creating codes, revising codes for themes, and consistently presenting codes (Moustakas, 1994). Data was collected through Microsoft forms and then converted to a Microsoft Excel document for data analysis. I prepared and organized data, which included printing and reading participants' journal responses multiple times to develop an in-depth understanding of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2014). Next, I examined data, which allowed me to divide responses into meanings so that each theme had only one meaning (Peoples, 2021). I then presented the themes in a consistent manner to describe the story based on data provided by the participants.

Data Synthesis

Creswell (2007) referred to data analysis as preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to validate the analysis process using Microsoft Teams; Otter.ai was also used for transcription accuracy. In addition, I relied on member checking for accuracy. The data from the journal prompt was collected using Microsoft Forms and then converted to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for data analysis.

Data from all data collection methods were synthesized using Microsoft Excel into clear evidence that identified codes, subthemes/patterns, and overarching themes that provided answers to the study's research questions. All codes were derived directly from individual

interviews, focus group interviews, and journal prompts; there was no set codebook. Once the participants completed the member-checking phase of the individual and focus group interviews, the data was used to find codes and create themes using qualitative data hand coding (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldana, 2021). Inductive coding was utilized over deductive coding because it reduces researcher bias (Saldana, 2021).

Codes were organized based on the hierarchical coding framework (Saldana, 2021) and the Black male experiences from different topics. Saldana (2021) suggests that the hierarchical coding framework is made up of three levels, in which the topic is described at the top, responses are specified in the middle, and the theme specific to that topic is detailed at the bottom. Manual coding was selected for this study because it allows the researcher to streamline the analysis process and become more familiar with the date quicker (Saldana, 2021)

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) conceived of the foundational concepts and terms that establish the trustworthiness of a study, specifically credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Patton (2015) argued that trustworthiness is built through time, relationships, and attention to data process and analysis throughout the research. The researcher's attention to bias within the study can produce more trustworthy reflections and data analysis (Patton, 2015). To increase trustworthiness, (a) I incorporated triangulation to help reduce bias and cross-examine the integrity of responses; (b) I allowed member checks, as it is the foundation of credibility, to allow participants to review their own words in the transcript; (c) responded to participant's text/email inquiries within 24 hours; (d) proactively communicated with participants. The failure to maintain deadlines and fabricate or misrepresent facts destroy the trustworthiness of a study

(Check & Schutt, 2012). Trustworthiness was vital in creating a safe space that allowed participants to be open, honest, and vulnerable during the data collection phase.

Credibility

I relied on member checking and triangulation to ensure that my research was credible. According to Patton (2015), triangulation and analytical perspective increase the credibility of research findings. Member checking is done by providing transcripts to the participants to check for accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants were allowed to review their responses for both the interview and focus group sessions, and they addressed any corrections that needed to be made. Individual interviews were conducted first in the data collection to safeguard participants' perspectives and opinions. Yin (2018) suggested that focus groups be conducted first; however, for my study, I did not want participants to be persuaded by the opinions or statements of others. The goal was to allow the participants to be authentic throughout the data collection phase. Triangulation was also used to establish credulity by utilizing multiple sources of data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The different sources included interviews, focus groups, and a journal prompt; all were used to discover themes, which added validity to the study results (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability for findings from the context of your study to be applied to another context or within the same context at another time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability shows that the findings may have applicability in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), largely achieved using thick descriptions when describing research findings (Geertz, 2008). It is essential to acknowledge that the researcher can only create the conditions

for transferability but cannot assure transferability: this judgment can only be made by the research.

Dependability

I demonstrated dependability in the study by documenting every step of the research process. I also established dependability by keeping a researcher's reflexive journal, including the epoché method. The reflexive journal allowed me as the researcher to note and set aside my personal bias that may have stemmed from me identifying as a Black male and successfully graduating from an HBCU. Moustakas (1994) postulated that in the epoché method, the researcher suspends their judgments, sets aside their biases, and revisits the phenomena with a pure transcendental approach.

I also used an audit trail to check for dependability, in which I thoroughly detailed the process of collecting data and analyzing it. I relied on two processes during the audit trial; first, I created an Excel tracking document at the start of the study, which outlined critical decisions, rationale, and potential consequences. In the second process, I relied on an auditor to review the process and findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the extent to which the study's findings are shaped by the research participants and based on the researcher's personal biases, self-interest, and desires (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability ensures that findings are transferable between the researcher of the study and the participants with thick necessary descriptions. Triangulation of the data also supports confirmability within the study. I tracked and reviewed all data as essential throughout the entire research process. In support of understanding Black males' experiences who participated in a BMI and successfully graduated, I utilized multiple strategies

to confirm the information and maintain objectivity. Using epoché throughout the study, I held the phenomenon at the center of the study. I used transcriptions of interviews and member checking to ensure the accuracy of the interviews and focus groups. I also used direct quotations and participant experiences throughout the study to provide insight and support for dependability and confirmability. Research documents were safeguarded through triangulation and reflexivity.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations had to be the focus of the research. Creswell (2015) identified three principles that guide ethical research: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice. The first step in considering the ethics of this research study was to obtain IRB approval from Liberty University. I also got permission from the sites I would use to interview participants. Once participants were confirmed and agreed to participate in the study, I secured written consent forms from all the participants and informed them of their right to withdraw from the study at any time (Joyner et al., 2018). After receiving the consent forms, participants were immediately assigned pseudonyms to safeguard their personal information. All interview recordings, transcriptions, and researcher's notes were encrypted with a password on a virtual file storage network to protect data. The files will be deleted three years after the completion of this research study. Divulging any risks associated with the study, protecting the confidentiality of the participants, and clearing up misconceptions are essential in phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994).

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Summary

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Moustakas (1994) noted that a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach is a method to capture how participants experience the phenomenon and to provide a thick description of the experience. Chapter three focused on providing an understanding of the study

through an overview of the research, beginning with an explanation of why a qualitative design, specifically a transcendental phenomenological design, was ideal for best displaying the collected information. I created research questions from the purpose of the study, theoretical framework, and literature to help capture participants' experiences of being a Black male who participated in a BMI at an HBCU.

I identified participants who had experience with the phenomenon using criterion-based purposeful sampling and snowball sampling. I described the setting, the participants, the procedures, and the researcher's role in this chapter. Data collection and analysis were explained in addition to the ethical considerations needed to protect the study and its participants. I utilized chapter three to give the audience a basic understanding of the critical concepts of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This phenomenological study was designed to identify and understand how Black Male Initiative programs contributed to the completion of an undergraduate degree for Black males at HBCUs. Throughout this study, I sought to understand the various challenges Black males face during their educational journey and the positive factors that help them persist to graduation. Within chapter four, I introduce and provide a brief description of the eleven participants. Following the descriptions, I evaluate the different themes that emerged after analyzing the data collected from each participant. Finally, chapter four concludes with discussions on how the emerging themes address the central and sub-questions.

Participants

This study consisted of ten participants who identified as Black males, and successfully graduated from an HBCU within the last ten years. All the participants attended various HBCUs in the Southeast region of the United States, and they ranged in age from 22 – 33. Each of the ten participants was a full-time student during their undergraduate tenure, and they all had a mentor who served as a pivotal person in their collegiate success. Seven of the ten participants persisted to a master's degree, one will start his master's program in the fall, and one participant is currently obtaining his Ph.D. The other two participants are in the process of considering a master's degree. Six of the participants who obtained their master's received them from an HBCU. All ten participants participated in the individual interview portion of the data collection phase; eight participants completed a journal prompt; and three participants participated in the focus group interview.

Table 4 provides background information on each of the participants based on the following criteria: age, graduation year, undergrad major, graduate degrees, university region, household status, and current employment status.

Table 4

Portrait of Participants

Participant	Age	Graduation Year	Undergrad Degree	Graduate Degree	Household Status	Employment Status
John	22	2023	Graphic & Visual Design	Master's Applicant	Both Parents	Full-time Student (Senior)
Travis	22	2022	Accounting	Master's	Both Parents	Full-time Student (MBA)
Lucas	23	2022	Criminal Justice	Master's	Single Mother	Full-time Student (MBA)
Franklin	24	2021	Industrial & System Engineering	N/A	* Single Mother	Full-time Job
Jake	24	2021	Social Work	Master's PhD Student	Single Mother	Full-time Ph.D. Student
Christ	26	2019	Business Admin.	Master's	Single Mother	Full-time Job
Kobe	32	2014	Marketing & Com.	Master's	Single Mother	Full-time Job
Bobby	32	2013	Criminal Justice	Master's	Single Mother	Full-time Job

Raymond	33	2013	Economics	Masters	Single Mother	Full-time Job
Malcolm	33	2013	Graphics & Visual Design	N/A	Single Mother	Full-time Job

John

John is a 22-year-old graphic and visual design major. He currently is running a videography and photography business while in his last year of undergrad. He started his business while in undergrad because he wanted to help his peers understand the importance of marketing themselves and wanted to be a resource they could utilize. He attended a community college where he played basketball before attending his HBCU. He is currently a senior and has plans to further his education in a master's program beginning in the fall of 2023.

Travis

Travis is a 22-year-old MBA student who is currently applying for full-time jobs to work in the financial industry. While in high school, Travis played basketball and then switched to track. He went to a predominantly White high school, and there he experienced microaggressions from his teammates and other peers. Travis received a full-ride scholarship to run track at a few universities; however, his grades were not the best, and he had trouble passing the required standardized test. He was able to secure a track scholarship to his HBCU. He is now in the first year of his MBA degree, where he is excelling!

Lucas

Lucas is a 23-year-old MBA student. He grew up in New York and did not take school seriously after being labeled as a student with a learning disability because he could not catch

onto the work as fast as his peers. Throughout his K-12 tenure, he was required to attend after-school programs, in-school tutoring, and other activities to help him understand the coursework. He knew that he was capable of doing the work had he taken it seriously; however, he has defied the odds and now is in an MBA program and looking forward to entering the workforce as a social worker!

Franklin

Franklin is a 24-year-old industrial & systems engineer. He currently works full-time as an engineer in Texas. He grew up inspired by his mother, and he knew he wanted to become an engineer from an early age! He attended elementary and middle school in North Carolina before moving to New Jersey to live with his dad. While in North Carolina, he did not receive a lot of encouragement from teachers or anyone in the community to attend college. He also attended predominately White schools during this time. He did mention to his teachers his aspirations to be an engineer. Once he moved to New Jersey with his dad, he attended an inner-city high school that was 75% Black. Here he received much support from teachers and community members to attend college and even look at HBCUs. Once he graduated high school, he was motivated to attend college.

Jake

Jake is a 24-year-old social worker who is currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program. He is a first-generation student, has six siblings, and moved around a lot while growing up. A single mother raised him; he also is the second oldest, which required him to grow up faster and have more responsibility than his peers. He never participated in sports, but he viewed school as a sport and knew that he wanted to succeed and excel no matter what. From an early age, he was able to identify that he wanted to surround himself with individuals who took school seriously.

Seeing that he had to help raise his younger siblings, he did not get to participate in extracurricular activities as much as he wanted. His passion for school allowed him to graduate early, and he began applying for college in his junior year of high school. He graduated from his HBCU and immediately enrolled in a master's program. He is currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program and aspires to help others succeed!

Chris

Chris is a 26-year-old business administrator, and he is also a newlywed. He graduated from his HBCU in 2019 and immediately enrolled in his MBA program. He experienced most of his MBA during COVID, which required him to take all classes online abruptly. His mother raised Chris after the untimely passing of his father. Sports and church became an outlet for him and his siblings. Through sports and church, he was able to develop a support group and community that assisted his mother with raising him and making sure he did not go without the necessities. In his freshman year of high school, he found himself in some major trouble, and the school offered him suspension or joining an after-school mentor group.

He chose the latter and noted that the mentor group changed his life. He even became a mentor in college and joined the fraternity of his mentor.

Kobe

Kobe is a 32-year-old marketing and communications major who is currently working in the industry as a Sales Technology Project Manager for a Fortune 500 company. He is the oldest of six siblings and was raised by a single mother. Kobe grew up in the inner city; however, his mom bused him to the other side of town to attend better schools and for quality education. He attended three different middle schools due to his academic and behavioral issues. His mother was trying to find a good fit for him; she also held him back in the seventh grade because he was

not taking school seriously. While in high school, Kobe did not put forth an honest effort in the classroom; however, he did what he needed to do to keep his grade up for sports. It was not until late in his junior year that he began to look at colleges and try to buckle down. He graduated from his HBCU in four years and obtained an MBA degree!

Bobby

Bobby is a 32-year-old MBA student. Bobby grew up in a low-income area of his city, and a single mother raised him. He went to schools outside of his district to obtain a quality education, which meant that he was often the only Black male in his classrooms. He was able to join his elementary hall monitor program, which also served as a motivating factor for him to do well in school and eventually get into law enforcement. During his fourth and fifth grade year, he began to feel and notice classmates picking on him because of the clothes he was wearing and the lack to keep newer clothes or brands. He was able to attend an academically gifted middle school, and he also joined an after-school program which helped keep him out of the neighborhood trouble. Bobby attended two HBCUs during his undergrad tenure and successfully graduated in four years with a criminal justice degree.

Raymond

Raymond is a 33-year-old upper-level project manager for a national consulting firm where he travels all over the country running technology projects. Raymond was raised by a single mother who had a stroke before he was four years old. He had an entire community of family to help raise him and assist his mother with his care. Growing up, Raymond played sports and saw that as his ticket to success. He did not place much emphasis on education or excelling in the classroom due to the idea of being able to succeed in one of the many sports he played. Attending mostly predominantly White K-12 schools, he experienced racism because of his

upbringing, and his lack of focus in the classroom. He was labeled by teachers and peers; however, sports were his outlet. He only applied to one HBCU because of his grades, and he was required to attend a summer bridge program to be fully accepted into the university. He graduated from his HBCU in four years and then returned to the same HBCU to obtain his MBA.

Malcolm

Malcolm is a 33-year-old Graphic & Visual Design major. He is not currently working in his field but still does art on the side. Malcolm was raised by a single mother, and he grew up in an urban area of his town. Growing up, Malcolm was a decent student throughout K-12, and he had aspirations of going to college to become an engineer. He did feel like he was just another number while in school, and he switched schools often, which did not allow him to truly build friendships or meaningful connections. After switching schools many times, he was able to connect and thrive in the urban schools because he was able to make connections and had friends, teachers, and coaches to help push him toward college. His course load also changed from seven classes a day when he attended the predominantly White high school to four classes at his urban high school. He was also able to participate in more extracurricular activities. He went on to graduate from his HBCU in four years and is contemplating returning to school to obtain a master's degree.

Results

This section provides a platform for the participants' voices to be expressed without any interpretation of their experiences of the phenomenon. This section will also describe the analysis of data, focus on answering the central and sub-questions of the research, and discuss emerging themes that developed from data collection. Finally, this section will conclude with a summary of the chapter.

The Village

There is a famous African Proverb that exemplifies the importance of having a village: "It takes a village to raise a child" (African Proverb, n.d.). Within the Black culture, the community is often held near and dear to the members who are part of a particular community. Often within these communities, the individuals are like-minded and play an essential role in the lives of others around them. For many of the participants, their village consisted of immediate family members, mentors, community leaders, and peers.

Family and Community Programs

Family played a major role in the overall success of the participants, both directly and indirectly. Throughout the interview process, participants often referred to a lesson they learned from a family member, striving to succeed to make their village proud and even understanding that they had younger siblings looking up to them. During Raymond's interview, he stated, "I would call one of my uncles when I wasn't doing well or when I was having issues so he could help me navigate through the issues." Jake noted, "My mom stressed the importance of me getting an education because I was the first one in my family to go to college, which made me want to succeed even more. I grew up with six siblings, so they were my daily motivation to do the things I needed to graduate."

Franklin also discussed the importance his family and community played in him going to school to be the first engineer in his family: "There was a big push for me to go to school from my family and my community. While I was in school, my family would contact me to motivate me because I was going to be the first one with an engineering degree, so they often made sure I had everything I need to be successful."

Being a part of a supportive community reduces stress, anxiety, and promotes a feeling of belongingness amongst the group (Osterman, 2000). In the interview with Bobby, he stated: "I was in an after-school program that was run by community leaders and the housing authority. It was a place where the kids in my neighborhood could go and do all our homework, and we didn't have to worry about issues, especially if things weren't great at home. We all were like-minded kids just having fun in the program and enjoying life."

Malcolm expressed his sentiments when discussing spending time with his family and community and how it made him feel. "Being those spaces around Black people and Black culture, that's where I felt like I was able to thrive."

Women in Capes

Seven of the ten participants were raised in a single-mother household. All seven participants somehow attributed their mother as a motivating factor for their success. Some discussed the level of commitment their mother had to them regarding their educational success and even the sacrifices they made for them.

Chris stated, "My mother placed me in sports and church programs to keep me active in positive programs to keep me away from trouble. She knew that as I got older, she would need help from family and friends to keep me on a straight path, so she relied on her network of family and friends to take me and my brother to practices and school events when she couldn't."

Raymond noted that his mom was his constant motivation because of everything she did for him. "My mom had a stroke when I was four years old, and she lost all mobility in one side of her body. However, she made sure I had the things I needed to be successful even though there were some things she was not physically able to do she found ways to get things done. She

is my biggest motivator and motivating factor in my life. If it was not for my mom reaching out to one of my uncles, I probably would have not even gone to college."

Kobe began getting in trouble in school and hanging with the wrong crowd in the seventh grade. As a result of not doing his schoolwork, his mom gave him a wake-up call by holding him back in the seventh grade while his friends moved to the next. "My mom did not play with me, and she made me retake the seventh grade, which was an embarrassment to me, but she knew it was what I needed. Growing up in a single-mother household and with a sister has made me have a level of appreciation for women, and I do everything I can to make my mom and sister proud."

Bobby's mother had him bussed to another school thirty minutes away from home to ensure he received a quality education. "My mom decided she did not want me to go to school in my school district because the schools were bad, so she had me bused to White schools across town. I was able to experience things my friends in my neighborhood weren't. My mom did not go to college, but she always desired for me to go, so this was her way of setting me up for success."

On Campus Engagement

Brown (2006) suggested that campus involvement and participation help create attachments and a sense of belonging for Black males. John, Franklin, and Jake all served as Resident Assistants while enrolled at their HBCU.

Jake stated, "Being a part of many organizations on campus was my way of giving back to other students, and the community, and provided me the opportunities to grow into a leader. I met so many peers, staff, and community members that I stay in contact with today. Also, when I was an RA, I did not think I would enjoy it; however, I loved it because I was able to connect with so many students, and I loved helping the freshman with things they needed."

Brooms (2019) suggested that a strong sense of belonging can yield positive outcomes for Black males (e.g., involvement, happiness, achievement, and retention). Travis, Chris, and Lucas all joined fraternities and were active members in leadership roles within their organizations. Chris also played basketball all four years of college, and he stated, "Being on the basketball team allowed me to make many connections with professors, faculty, and staff, and I was afforded many opportunities because I was also active in student organizations",

Bobby participated in several organizations, and he thoroughly enjoyed being a part of one of the campus modeling troops. "Once I joined the modeling troop, I interacted with so many students that I would never have, and I was able to travel to other schools for modeling events, which I always looked forward to."

Malcolm participated in a hometown organization on his campus, and he stated, "Being around people from my hometown, people I already knew and some I didn't made me feel right at home. I was able to connect with some and even travel back home during breaks. Some of the people from that group that I met I still stay in touch with to this day."

John started a videography and photography business during his junior year, and he is now one of the most requested photographers on campus. He discussed the importance of stepping out, "In my junior year, I just stepped out and started my business. Once I did that, it was like everything fell into place. I met so many Black students who enjoy videography and photography, and I know have interns who are learning the craft. I'm able to teach them how to use their camera gear, how to get gigs, and how to market themselves. I also have joined a Journalism and Mass Communication club to see what that has to offer for life after college."

Mentors

Dahlvig (2010) postulated that mentors are vital to improving Black male success in higher educational settings. All ten participants held high regard for their Black Male Initiative programs and their mentors. During the individual interview, Chris stated:

 "My mentors from my BMI program, and the mentors I had around my HBCU, equipped me with the tools to survive and excel in the world."

Both Raymond and Jake shared their sentiments for their BMI programs stating that their programs were the reason they applied for scholarships and even considered looking at internships while in college.

Travis found himself in trouble during his first year, and this is how he was introduced to his BMI program and a mentor that he still has. Travis stated:

"During my freshman year, I was running track and getting in a lot of trouble. This was during COVID so we weren't allowed to do anything on campus, but I broke all the rules and still stuff anyway. After getting caught and getting into some serious trouble, I was introduced to my mentor, who was over a male program on campus. He helped me settle down and get more focused. He often would tell me to slow down and enjoy the journey. Those are words that I live by to this day. I was able to connect with other students and build lasting relationships. He is somebody that had I not met him when I did I don't know if I would have finished school."

Wyatt (2009) noted that mentoring can assist in minimizing stress levels while still helping improve the student's attitudes concerning their abilities, school, and academic achievement. During the interview with Franklin, he stated:

"I gravitated towards the Black men on my campus that I felt were doing something positive and had characteristics I wanted. One mentor, in particular, helped me expand my thinking and got me to think outside the box. He constantly encouraged me to go harder and dig deeper internally to do my best. All my mentors from my HBCU played a major role in the person I am today."

Defying the Odds

According to Teti et al. (2011), Black males in the United States face numerous and significant adversities, and the evidence is irrefutable. All the participants discussed some of the obstacles they faced while on their academic journey.

Overcoming Low-Income Areas

Raymond, Malcolm, Kobe, and Bobby all grew up in the same city and shared similar experiences of growing up in low-income areas. They grew up in single-mother households and lived in parts of town considered low-income or economically challenged areas.

Bobby stated, "I grew up in the hood, and not many of my friends made it out. I only know two people to go to college from the apartments where I grew up. Many of the friends I grew up with stayed in the same area or somewhere in the city similar to those apartments."

During the individual interview with Kobe, he talked about the challenges he faced in living in the particular part of town he did. "I grew up on the side of town where there was always something for me to get into, and the people I was hanging around, my mom knew they were nothing but trouble. I started hanging around the wrong crowd, and that influenced me to do the same things they were doing. Most of the people who grew up in that area were just doing enough to get by." Raymond held high regard for the area he grew up in because "it made him

the man he is today"; however, he discussed how proud of himself he was for not getting stuck in the "hood." Raymond stated:

> I lived in section eight apartments, and to be honest, looking back on it those were some hard times and the area was rough, but I didn't know it at the time I was just enjoying life as a kid. The older I got, and when I went to middle school, I started to realize the things I did not have compared to other students. My mom was on food stamps due to her stroke, so we always had food, but I never knew how we got it until I was older. Now that I have a good job and two degrees I am blessed to look back and think about how I did not get stuck in the hood and how I made it out.

Inadequate School Systems

Darling-Hammond (1998) noted that many schools that Black students attended were funded at rates drastically lower than those serving other races. Raymond stated:

> Something I've always found interesting, and I understand it better now that I am grown, is my mom had me go to a school 30 minutes away from our house because the school in my district was trash and did not have anything students needed other than just a place to go. I rode the bus across town to go to a better school. I was sometimes the only Black person in my class, but I enjoyed going to that school.

While interviewing Franklin, he stated, "Once I transferred to a different school, I did not realize the resources I did not have access to at my old school. At my new school, every student got a laptop and was able to have access to teachers outside of the classroom. That was new to me, and a shock to think I was not even aware that this was a thing."

Stereotypes

Black male students encounter experiences in school that challenge the meaning and value of their racial identities—such as discrimination in the classroom and peer contexts (Leath et al., 2019). During the individual interview with Travis, he got choked up while talking about some of the things he experienced on his academic journey. He stated:

> In high school, I went to a pretty much all-White school, and often I tried to fit in just because I knew I was Black. I ran track, and I was really good. I also had braids and unlike some of the Black people I knew, my parents had been married at that time for over 30 years. My White teammates often made jokes about my hair and constantly asked me to touch my hair. They also joked about my parents not being married and that I was lying about living with both parents. My teachers at the time also just labeled me as a Black jock because I was a student-athlete and never had any high expectations of me.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) argued that when Black male students have negative experiences on their educational journey, it tends to diminish the excitement to continue beyond the requirements of achieving a high school diploma. During the focus group, two of the participants discussed how they began to dislike school because they noticed the teachers treated them differently, especially when it came to discipline. Both agreed that they had White friends in their class and would often get in trouble for talking; however, they would get sent to the principal's office, and their White friends would get told to stop talking and behave.

Self-Inflicted Circumstances

All ten participants acknowledged that there were some things that they would go back to redo from their undergrad years. They provided some words of encouragement to younger Black males about avoiding some of the mistakes they've made to not have to experience some of the

things they have. Some of the things were self-inflicted and could have been avoided had they put forth some effort to avoid some things.

First Year Experience

The first year of college is often the most challenging year for new students simply because it is a major adjustment. During all phases of data collection, the common theme of not taking the first year seriously constantly arose. A commonality among all the participants was they were not as focused on academics as they should have been. In addition, most participants attributed partying as one of the main reasons they were not as successful as they should have been during this year. During my interview with Raymond, he stated:

> My first and second years of school were lit! I had so much fun in my first year, but I partied a lot and just enjoyed my time. At the time, I thought I could manage the work and continue to party and enjoy the campus, but I quickly found myself in a hole. My mentor used to get on me all the time about not taking school seriously. I sometimes used to go to more parties than classes. Now that I am older, I would go back, and party way less than I did. I would have tried to stay focused from the get-go vs. trying to play catch-up later.

Skipping Out on Resources

A common theme in my discussions with the participants was that they would take advantage of the available resources before going to school. Many participants were not even aware of some of the resources offered to them during their education journey. Lucas mentioned in his interview, "I didn't even know that I could go and get extra tutoring if I was dealing with mental health issues or family issues. I knew we had a counseling center, but I did not know everything they did in the office."

During the focus group interview, all the participants alluded to the fact that they wished they could go back to high school and use their guidance counselors more than they did. They also discussed not being aware of many of the resources their schools offered, some being SAT/ACT prep classes and college tours.

Black Male Success

Despite the many challenges the participants faced, they all overcame them and graduated from their HBCUS; some even have gone on to get their master's degrees. One of the participants is currently obtaining a Ph.D. in social work.

Graduate Degrees

All the participants smiled when asked about their greatest academic achievement, and all said graduating and making my family proud. They all also attributed their mentors and members of their villages as being their motivating factors to get to the finish line.

Lucas stated in the focus group interview, "One of my greatest flexes is graduating from undergrad and now getting my MBA, can't nobody tell me nothing." The level of excitement the participants displayed when discussing their graduation day showed their level of vulnerability and sense of understanding their emotions and all they overcame. Bobby stated.

On my graduation day, I did not know how to feel because I was so excited. My entire family was there to witness me walk across the stage. I can't even describe what I was feeling because knowing where I come from, not many people make it here, made me so proud. All of the obstacles I overcame finally paid off, and no one can't take a degree away from me. Jake shared the same sentiments when asked about his graduation, and he stated:

I was ready to turn up because I was so excited. Oh, and I did turn up that night! My family was there my friends were there to watch me graduate. I was the first one in my

family to be at this stage in life, and I was so proud that I could be the first one. I knew I

would be an inspiration to my family and my siblings.

Jobs

All participants discussed one of their motivating factors for attending college was to

obtain a job after they've successfully graduated. Six of the ten participants are currently

working full-time jobs, and some are working directly in a role within their field. The salaries

ranged from $85,000 - $130,000; the participants who are currently still enrolled in an MBA

program all have secured a job post-graduation and are also currently working as graduate

assistants. During all individual interviews, the participants were asked the question about where

they currently work or planned to work and how much they made.

Raymond stated, "I currently work as a Cyber Security Risk Consultant at one of the top

consulting firms in the country, and I work directly with high-value and high-risk companies. My

salary is right around $129,000 and some change! I am working in the field that I studied while

in undergrad and my MBA program."

Kobe stated, "I work as a Sales Technology Project Manager at a reputable engineering

and technology company. I went to school for an MBA, so you can say I am working in my field,

seeing that I am on the business side of the company. My annual salary is over $100,000 that's

all I'm going to say"! Kobe made this statement with the biggest smile on his face!

Chris stated, "I graduated from my MBA program in 2022, and I had a job with a major

clothing company that houses some of the top brands you see and hear about every day. I worked

as a Sales Project manager, and my salary was $80,000, which is decent, seeing that I graduated

in May 22' and had a job by June 22'. I am considering this my starter job because it's not

ultimately where I want to stay for thirty-plus years!

Giving Back

One of the most unique and interesting findings is that all ten participants shared the same feelings of reaching back and helping the next generation of Black males. Participants were asked to write a letter to younger Black males and encourage them as they soon will be on the same journey all of them once experienced. All the letters were completed by the participants at different times; however, the common theme amongst all of them was for the younger Black males to keep their heads up and keep pushing no matter what challenges they faced. Here are some of the excerpts from a few participants' letters.

Excerpt from Jake:

You've made it! You are officially a college student at one of the greatest HBCUs! You are about to learn so much, grow, change, and evolve on your new journey. EMBRACE IT! This new transition may seem difficult or uncomfortable at first but, you got this!! Lean on all available support systems (family, mentors, friends, classmates, professors, roommates, and suitemates). You will find your new village as you become more familiar and comfortable in your new college environment. Hang on… Enjoy the ride.

Excerpt from Bobby:

Keep your head high young man. You will encounter several obstacles throughout your academic journey. Hardship financially, educational differences, maybe a professor you do not work well with. You may lose friends; your life will change in ways you can't currently imagine. The only common denominator is YOU! With the right attitude and ambition, all the prior points made will come and go. You will grow through it all. You will excel in your studies, you will find your mentor in a professor, and you will find new more idealistically compatible friends. You can only control what you can control. It's

nothing personal, life comes for us all. Just make sure you pay attention to the lessons

that need to be learned and remember even a little progress is progress. Just keep moving

forward, young man.

Excerpt from Chris:

Being able to relate to your peers, coming from shockingly similar backgrounds, and

sharing cultural experiences also contributes to why attending an HBCU is one of the best

possible choices to make as an African-American student. The supportive atmosphere

that an HBCU offers a Black student is incomparable to any other institution. This

support helps students navigate life during college and after college. In addition to the

support, experience, and culture attending an HBCU is taking a tour through history and

using what you will eventually learn to contribute to a successful future.

Outlier Data and Findings

During the data analysis, there were two major apparent outliers.

Community College Route

Nine participants enrolled and attended college the traditional way, enrolling and

attending their HBCUs directly after their high school graduation. However, John went a

different route by attending a two-year community college before transferring to a four-year

institution. John was an active member of the basketball team at his community college, and he

was able to complete all his general education courses before transferring. He credited his time in

community college for his level of maturity when he transferred to his HBCU; however, there

were some things he missed regarding learning compared to his peers who went straight to

college after high school graduation.

The traditional college route did not appeal to him at the time because he had the desire to play collegiate-level basketball and was unsure if he would make the team at a four-year institution. John felt more prepared for college because he made the necessary adjustments in community college that helped him succeed at his HBCU. John stated, "It felt good to go to an HBCU with an associate's degree in hand because my friends had been there two years and still had two more to go before they received a degree."

Losing a Parent & The Option That Changed His Life

At the early age of four years old, Chris lost his father. He stated during the individual interview, "After I lost my dad, I can remember having to grow up a lot faster than other kids. My brother and I became the men of the house and helped my mom out. Not having a dad growing up changed a lot of things for us." Chris went on to discuss the trauma around not having a dad throughout his life; however, his mom did everything she could to ensure he and his brother had mentors. Both family and church members stepped in to help his mother raise her two boys. Chris showed a little emotion while discussing this topic, and there was a sense of reverence when he spoke about his dad that was honorable!

During his first year of high school, Chris found himself in a predicament where he was faced with being suspended from school. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time and hanging with individuals that were troublemakers. School officials gave him and his family the option to either be suspended for multiple weeks or join an after-school mentoring program that he'd have to attend consistently. Not wanting to be out of school for a long period, he decided to attend the after-school mentoring program.

The first few visits to the mentoring program for him were solely to fulfill the request of his school officials; however, he quickly fell in love with the program and gleaned from his new

mentor. The program was led by members from a local chapter of a Black Divine Nine fraternity, and members from the local college would come and mentor the students. Chris mentioned that he knew nothing about Black fraternities and had never had college-level exposure at the time. Chris attended the program as a faithful member all four years of high school, and he even discussed not being fazed by college party life, and any other distractions that presented themselves because the members already schooled him about staying focused. Chris was so inspired by the fraternity-led program that he later went on to join the same fraternity. He is now an active member of a local mentoring group in elementary and high schools which is led by the fraternity.

<div align="center">

Research Question Responses

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In this section, there will be answers developed to support the research questions. The central question will be listed first and will be followed by the sub-questions. The answers provided for these research questions will be short and direct narrative answers, with the support of utilizing themes developed in the previous section.

Central Research Question

What role does the Black Male Initiative (BMI) play in Black male undergraduate degree completion at HBCUs in the U.S.? The participants credited much of their collegiate success to their BMI programs and specific mentors they made connections with. The BMI programs offered a chance for the participants to establish, grow, and sharpen their skills. When the participants spoke about their respective BMI programs, they all did so with a smile on their faces or a laugh due to reflecting on the good memories they had while a part of the program. Jake stated during the individual interview, "I know being a member of my BMI program helped me grow while on campus. There were things I would have never stretched myself to do, or even

thought about doing if it weren't for the program. Travis stated in his journal response to younger Black males:

Connect yourself to a BMI program as soon as you get to campus because this is where you find like-minded people and create lifelong friendships. Your BMI program will keep you active on campus and keep you involved with things both on and off campus, and never be afraid to ask questions or for help. The mentors in your BMI programs will help you find out who you are and what you like to do and understand this is not an easy task, but once you master these steps and continue to mature, it will make life easier.

Sub-Question One

What are the educational barriers that Black males face accessing college? Participants were faced with several challenges while in their pursuit of a degree. Several of the participants discussed not knowing about or using resources that were available to them. Kobe stated in the focus group, "My high school counselors never made a big push to connect with me or even talk with me about college. I played football, and even with that, no one, not even my coaches, discussed college with me until late in my senior year. I was not thinking about the college application process, nor the timing that goes into applying for college."

Several participants grew up in low-income areas of their town, presenting a set of challenges they had to overcome. Two of the participants were bussed to a school twenty minutes or greater to schools outside of their assigned district for a chance to receive a better education. Chris wrote in his journal response,

Some of the challenges that may be seen are the often lack of resources compared to other schools in your area and even the U.S. One challenge that I noticed throughout my journey was the shortage of staff readily available when it came to my academic

progress. While the faculty and staff that I did work with were great, I found myself having to take initiative and make sure I was putting myself in the best possible position.

During the individual interview with Raymond, he discussed having to overcome so many challenges, especially since his mom had a stroke and only has mobility on one side of her body. He stated:

I like many others, am faced with the struggle of trying to make it day to day. My neighbors were going through the same financial challenges I was because we all lived in Section 8 housing. At the time, we didn't know much about money or whatever; all we knew is that we had each other to lean on if we ever really needed anything. Growing up my mom couldn't afford tutors and SAT prep classes for me. I had to learn most of the stuff on my own. I only applied for college because my friends were talking about where they were going after college. I knew nothing about the process or none of that. I got accepted into college and didn't know if I could even go because I didn't have money to pay for it. I didn't even know about financial aid until one of my friends told me I had to fill out the FASFA forms to get help with school.

Sub-Question Two

How do Black males participating in a BMI program connect to an HBCU campus? Many of the participants credited their BMI programs as the reason they were so involved on campus. The participants were made aware of programs offered on their college campus and were able to join other programs and organizations because of the connections they made from their BMI program. Jake, Franklin, and John all became Resident Assistants at their universities because they learned about the position from one of their BMI peers. The BMI mentors challenged all three to apply and even conducted mock interviews to ensure they were fully

prepared. In the individual interview, John talked about all the opportunities he had simply because he worked in housing at his university and the connections that were created for him. He stated, "Man, I was able to make so many connections both professionally and personally from that RA job. I met so many people, and it taught me the true power of networking." Chris wrote in his journal response:

> BMI programs help you understand and expose you to the weekly campus events, which those events make it possible for students to meet campus leaders, connect with potential internship and job opportunities, and other people who will ultimately become a part of their lifelong journey towards success and progression.

Sub-Question Three

How does participation in a BMI program prepare Black males to be successful after graduation? All ten participants were eager to share how they felt prepared for life after college. The currently working participants noted that the skills and training received from their BMI programs were paying off and being used daily. Many of them talked about the soft skills training they received during their time in a BMI program and the importance of those skills in their work environment. Jake wrote in his journal response:

> After graduation, I learned to give myself lots of grace during the transition. I wanted things to happen so fast because, after all, you go to college to get a job, and to use the skills you've learned. However, it does not always happen right away, and one of the things I learned from my BMI program is to celebrate the now and appreciate the moment!

During the individual interview with Kobe, he talked about feeling a sense of pride because he graduated from an HBCU and how taking all the experiences he's learned with him

into the workplace has been beneficial for him. He also shared that he has been able to navigate tough conversations both in the workplace and personally because of the teaching he learned from older Black mentors in his BMI program. He stated, "Yeah, I learned so much from the older guys in my program because they already navigated the waters that I am currently treading, so when I started listening to their words, it made my life so much easier."

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

This transcendental phenomenological study explored Black Male Initiative programs and how they contributed to the completion of an undergraduate degree for Black males at HBCUs. Chapter four provided an overview of the study and focused on delivering brief explanations and insights into the participants. Chapter four also explained the four emerging themes, sub-themes, and two outliers. The data analysis process helped dictate the themes. The chapter also thoroughly provided direct quotes from the participants for each of the themes, sub-themes, and outliers. Chapter Four concluded by answering the study's central research question and the sub-questions based on the information shared throughout the four themes. The results of the study revealed that Black males positively benefit from being a part of a Black Male Initiative program and attending an HBCU. Furthermore, the findings revealed that Black males need consistent professional and personal support throughout their academic journey. Lastly, the findings suggested that Black men are resilient, powerful, and, most importantly, intelligent.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

This qualitative gives voice to Black men who have participated in a Black Male Initiative at an HBCU. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to identify and understand how Black Male Initiative programs contributed to the completion of an undergraduate degree for Black males at HBCUs. Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework was the conceptual framework for this study. Albert Bandura's (1977, 1986, 1989) social cognitive theory served as a guiding theoretical framework. Chapter Five consists of five discussion subsections: (a) interpretation of findings, (b) implications for policy and practice, (c) theoretical and methodological implications, (d) limitations and delimitations, and (e) recommendations for future research.

Discussion

I know that Black males encounter a set of barriers that many others may never face. For those Black men who are in pursuit of higher education, they must learn to endure, overcome, and excel in the face of adversity, racism, and even lack. From the beginning to the end of the study, it was my goal to provide a voice to successful Black males and bring a greater understanding of their challenges, struggles, and perseverance to a broader audience. Studies centered around Black males often focus on their struggles, but this study focused on their success. I hope the results presented in this study will encourage educational systems and college communities to create Black Male Initiative programs to provide positive support and mentors to Black males. This section will discuss five major subsections, which include (a) Interpretation of Findings; (b) Implications for Policy or Practice; (c) Theoretical and Empirical Implications; (d) Limitations and Delimitations; and (e) Recommendations for Future Research.

Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of this study was to identify and understand how Black Male Initiative programs contributed to the completion of an undergraduate degree for Black males at HBCUs. The transcendental phenomenological approach allowed me to obtain data from the participants through individual interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts. This research was needed to understand how Black males navigated and persisted through their educational journeys. Four major themes emerged from the research, which is (a) the village, (b) defying the odds, (c) self-inflicted circumstances, and (d) Black male success. Two outlier themes also emerged from the research (a) the community college route and (b) losing a parent & the option that changed his life.

Summary of Thematic Findings

I transcribed all the interviews and focus groups, which produced thick and rich descriptions of the phenomenon. I utilized a researcher's journal for all coding, bracketing, and thematic reduction. Four major themes emerged from the research, which is (a) the village, (b) defying the odds, (c) self-inflicted circumstances, and (d) Black male success. Two outlier themes also emerged from the research (a) the community college route, and (b) losing a parent & the option that changed his life. These themes aligned with the literature presented in chapter two. This research also contributes to increasing the percentage of Black men who have participated in a Black Male Initiative and graduated from an HBCU.

All participants expressed the importance of various contributors that led to their success and how they overcame the challenges they faced. Some contributing factors to their success were family, a positive mentor, community engagement, and leadership roles.

Creating a Brotherhood. Creating a brotherhood and facing challenges with peers and friends created a sense of belonging for the participants. A strong sense of community created a safe space for the participants to share their feelings, concerns, successes, and failures without fearing being judged. Grande et al. (2013) defined brotherhood as a community of individuals connected through tacit understanding, common experiences, traditions, and identity, in some way, shape behaviors. All the BMI programs promoted making connections with other members as an effort to establish that brother-to-brother bond and insisted that the participants rely on one another when navigating college, courses, and everyday life. The bond between the participants to their brothers from their programs has withstood the test of time, and many of the participants have multiple brothers they met during their time in their programs.

Raising the Bar. As participants were comfortable with other members from their BMI programs and their HBCU campuses, they began to hold their brothers accountable for becoming successful. Several of the BMI programs partnered with outside mentor companies that partnered members with alumni and executives to assist with being positive role models for the members. However, the participants held their peers accountable, and they would issue academic challenges to one another to defy the odds. Two of the most common challenges were GPA and being a leader on campus. The SCT (1977, 1986, and 1989) suggested that individuals adapt their behaviors based on learning through observation. Internal brotherhood challenges served as a source of motivation for participants to push themselves to do better both academically and personally.

Testimony of Challenges. Despite the many challenges participants faced and even overcame, they all viewed those challenges as obstacles that made them stronger. Participants provided strong examples of racial stereotyping, macroaggressions, and implicit bias from

teachers/professors. Many of the participants faced similar challenges during their K-12 experiences; however, many of the participants went on to graduate from undergrad and even went further to obtain a master's degree. Living in low-income areas as adolescents was common, bringing challenges of food and clothing security, transportation, and even being forced to help provide for their families at a young age. Despite the many challenges, the Black male participants all were optimistic and had a positive outlook on life and their journeys.

Implications for Policy and Practice

There has been a great push for diversity, equity, and inclusion in recent years. Many corporate partners have committed to hiring more graduates from HBCUs. There has been more representation of Black male students in corporate spaces. As the world becomes more diverse, educational institutions must be aware of the many challenges. Black males are faced with offering support. This section includes specific recommendations for K-12 institutions, HBCU administrators, faculty, staff, and families of Black males.

Implications for Policy

Results from this study could serve as a foundation for substantial policy nationwide. This study yielded results to implement policy in both K-12 and higher education institutions to support Black males' success. I recommend that K-12 school systems implement Black Male Initiatives throughout their school districts. Gordon et al. (2010) postulated that building interventions that understand the factors that preclude and include Black male students in the academic environment is crucial to lessening their adverse experiences. The results from this study support the need for Black male interventions earlier in their academic journey. The guidance and mentor support they would receive would provide Black males with positive role models, create safe spaces, and assist with combating challenges. From elementary school

through high school, Black male students are mostly taught by White female teachers and have few interactions with Black male teachers (Rodgers Jr. and Rodgers, 2023).

Implications for Practice

HBCUs and other institutions of higher learning should establish Black Male Initiatives on all college campuses. University leaders can support this policy by creating faculty and staff buy to help support these programs. Many institutions are immersed in research, which could be a selling point for faculty to assist and provide data on engagement, GPA, retention, and persistence. The research provided insight into the self-efficacy developed by participants of BMI programs. Universities could also create designated learning spaces for BMI participants, which will promote the notion of brotherhood and community amongst participants. This policy could be accompanied by the support of corporate partners who have a passion for HBCUs and are focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Seeing that there is a major push to level the playing field in terms of diversity, institutions can leverage access to Black males by establishing partnerships with corporate partners. Both parties could create a co-curricular plan that assists Black males with their professional and personal development. In addition, the BMI programs could be funded through corporate dollars.

In addition, HBCUs and other universities should create a designated colloquium for the Black male freshman. Often Back males are measured based on retention and persistence, which is measured in essence by their enrollment numbers. GPA and other metrics are also taken into account; however, the research provided great insight into the need for first semester support Black males need. Participants from the research suggested that if they could go back and redo their first semester, they would take it more seriously and start strong vs. playing around and not

being serious about their academics. These courses' curriculum could focus on professional and personal development, which would accompany what the BMI programs would be teaching.

Theoretical Implications

Throughout my study, I aimed to understand the challenges Black males faced and, with the support of BMI programs, how they overcame those challenges and persisted to graduation. This study was grounded in Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, with a significant focus on self-efficacy. Shaun Harper's anti-deficit achievement framework was also utilized for the study, confirming Bandura's social cognitive and self-efficacy theories.

This study contributed to Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory because participants observed positive behaviors from their mentors and began to mimic those behaviors. Many participants in this study wanted to be successful despite the many obstacles and challenges they faced, which led them to find positive mentors and join Black Male Initiative programs. All the participants discussed the importance of having a positive role model whom they could glean from and use as a reference for the person they wanted to become. In addition, their internal challenges developed an unbreakable internal motivation and self-efficacy. Several of the participants felt like they could accomplish any goal and overcome any obstacle after graduating from undergrad. Many of them persisted to obtain a master's degree, and they shared that their internal self-belief helped them achieve new heights.

Harper's anti-deficit achievement conceptual framework suggested that when Black males have an all-encompassing support system, they can mimic successful behaviors and persist through any situation. This study provided insight into Black males who had support throughout their educational journey, and how important it is to have a village for a Black male. In addition, this study offers that Black males who have a proper support system, join Black Male Initiatives,

and desire to be successful can complete a four-year degree, and achieve any goal they set for themselves.

Empirical Implications

The findings from the study highlighted the need for continual support for Black males and suggested that their environment plays a major part in their success. Although many theories are rooted in educational practices, I have not identified a specific theory that theorizes the success of Black males in higher education. Seeing that there are minimal theories supporting Black male success in higher education could be a result of why Black males have the lowest graduation rates. Several themes emerged by analyzing individual interviews, focus groups, and a journal prompt exercise that supported the literature in Chapter Two.

All the participants expressed their gratitude for their HBCUs and the important role they played in helping shape them into the person that they are and are becoming. Authors Reeder & Schmitt conducted a study that found that HBCUs create a nurturing, family-style environment that helps Black males with their psychological wellness, academic development, and persistence. In addition, Palmer & Young (2010) found that Black males who graduated from an HBCU were more prepared and equipped to face societal racism and had a greater level of self-efficacy than those who did not graduate from an HBCU.

One of the themes that emerged from the study was the level of on-campus engagement and the sense of belonging it created for the participants. Several of the participants held on-campus jobs, joined fraternities, and were members of on-campus organizations. Harper (2006) suggested that Black males who are active in campus organizations, fraternities, and other social groups are more engaged and have a higher chance of persisting to graduation. Participants expressed their need for wanting to be connected to their campus, and many of them had a strong

desire to hold a leadership role in an organization, which forced them to uphold a certain GPA to stay active in the organization. Opportunities to interact with upper-level leadership were often presented to those participants who were in leadership roles in their organizations. Author Cuyjet (2006) suggested that Black male students who are actively engaged in programs and organizations have higher-quality interactions with collegiate leaders.

The participants were able to share their opinions and views on the importance of a quality K-12 education, the obstacles they overcame, and the role their BMI program played in their success. Several of the participants expressed that they were bussed to another school district during their K-12 journey to receive a quality education. This was done because their assigned school did not have adequate resources for them to fully succeed and excel to the next level. All the schools these particular participants attended where White schools, and while there they encountered both racism and implicit bias. Even though these participants were seeking a quality education they had to overcome the obstacle of being different from most of their peers. Fordham & Ogbu (1986) conducted a study and found that when Black male students have negative experiences on their educational journey, it tends to diminish the excitement to continue beyond the requirements.

A few of the participants discussed their level of disengagement from the classroom because they felt different, and could not identify with the school, peers, faculty, and staff. The resources that were available to them were not utilized because they were either not aware or did not want to attend because of the fear of greater judgment. Gilliam et al. (2016), noted that biases towards Black male students being in the early stages of their education and continue to follow them throughout their academic journey.

All participants were members of a Black Male Initiative while enrolled at their HBCU, and each of them contributed a level of their success to the BMI program they were a part of. Previous studies indicate that BMI programs promote both the social and academic engagement needed for Black males to succeed on a college campus. The participants proved this point to be true as they highlighted the increase in their social and academic engagement. Participants were asked to what extent did they feel like a valuable member of their university community, and all responded that they felt like they were a valuable part of the campus. A strong sense of belonging was found to increase involvement, happiness, achievement, and retention (Brooms, 2019).

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study that cannot be controlled. Several limitations were present throughout the data collection phase. The entire study was conducted virtually, which presented me with the first limitation. I relied on technology such as Microsoft Teams, Otter.ai, social media, and other Microsoft Office Suite applications to complete all forms of participant solicitation, data collection, and data analysis. Scheduling both the individual and focus group interviews also presented issues as all of the participants either worked full time or were in school full time. The focus group presented the most scheduling conflicts as three participants agreed to the interview date but backed out the morning of the interview. Lastly, the use of technology throughout the research presented issues as some participants had connection issues and were not able to join the interviews promptly.

Delimitations are purposeful decisions the researcher makes to limit or define the boundaries of the study. There were three main delimitations in my study. The first delimitation was the participant size, and the participants were selected based on criterion sampling. Ten

participants were selected for the study. I wanted to ensure that I was able to obtain rich data and insight into the phenomenon being researched. The second delimitation was the gender of the participants. While conducting my literature review, I recognized that Black males were not graduating at the same rate as other races and genders. Therefore, I decided to specifically research Black males and attempt to understand the unique challenges they faced. The final delimitation was the research site setting, which was HBCUs. I selected HBCUs for this research because they were created out of necessity for Black Americans. Research suggests that Black students tend to connect to campus resources more at an HBCU than at a PWI.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was conducted with a qualitative methodology; therefore, it focused on the lived experiences of 10 Black males. Utilizing this methodology gave the participants a voice and a way to express themselves about the phenomena being studied. The study explored the impact of BMI programs and the role they play in the overall success of Black males. The study also provided evidence that there is an urgent need to investigate and research Black males in higher education via the lens of those who have succeeded. There has been little research conducted on Black males from a success perspective as most of the research tends to explore from a deficit standpoint.

Future research should include Black males who have successfully graduated from Predominantly White Institutions (PWI), as they may have faced similar challenges. Researchers should also consider employing quantitative methods to explore Black male graduates, which would allow for more participants to participate in the study and provide statistical data to strengthen the study of this phenomenon. In addition, further research should include Black male participants from other regions of the United States and potentially include Canada. I would also

recommend researchers consider studying other minority groups such as Black women, and Hispanic males who are pursuing a post-secondary degree. Finally, future researchers should consider investigating Black males who have not participated in a Black Male Initiative to see what factors went into their success, and how they persisted to an undergraduate degree.

Conclusion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to identify and understand how Black Male Initiative programs contributed to the completion of an undergraduate degree for Black males at HBCUs. The central research question for this study was, "What role does the Black Male Initiative (BMI) play in Black male undergraduate degree completion at HBCUs in the U.S.?" Shaun Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework provided a conceptual framework for this study in collaboration with Bandura's (1977, 1986, 1989) social cognitive theory serving as the theoretical framework. The setting for the study was all U.S.-based HBCUs and explored the experiences of 10 Black males who successfully graduated with an undergraduate degree.

Data was collected utilizing individual interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts to develop detailed and rich descriptions of the participants' experiences. Data was analyzed using phenomenological reduction procedures. It was my goal to provide a voice to successful Black males and bring a greater understanding of their challenges, struggles, and perseverance to a broader audience. This study's findings yielded four major themes, which were the village, defying the odds, self-inflicted circumstances, and Black male success. Throughout the study, all the participants in some way shared that they were grateful for the BMI programs, in addition, to the live long brotherhoods they developed.

Many participants are still in contact with several mentors from their respective programs. Many participants noted that in addition to their mentors, they were extremely thankful for the brotherhood they created with other members from their BMI programs, and how those relationships helped them during trying times. In addition, the brotherhood created assisted in motivating some participants not to give up and helped them persist to graduation. Despite the challenges and obstacles, the participants faced on their educational journey, they all shared how those things made them stronger people and helped shape them into the person they are.

Some recommendations that have been derived from this study are the need to introduce Black males to a mentor early in their academic journey or have them join a Black Male Initiative to provide them with positive images of success. In addition, it will offer them the support they need to become a successful college graduate. I highly recommend that future research on Black males is continued and through the lens of success compared to a deficit approach. I also would recommend that parents advocate on behalf of their sons, and do everything in their power to connect them with positive male role models or a Black Male Initiative program early in their educational journey.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 9, 2023

Jenard Moore
Katelynn Wheeler

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY22-23-572 Exploring the Lived Experiences of Black Males Who Have Participated in a Black Male Initiative Program at a Historically Black College or University

Dear Jenard Moore, Katelynn Wheeler,

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: January 9, 2023. 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: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT SIGN UP

Research Participant Recruitment Sign Up

Study Title: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Black Males Who Have Participated in a Black Male Initiative Program at a Historically Black College or University

* Required

Participant Requirements

You must meet these requirements to be eligible to participate in this study

1. Do you identify as a Black male? *

  ◯ Yes

  ◯ No

2. Did you graduate from an HBCU within the last 10 years, or currently a senior who will graduate within the next year? *

  ◯ Yes

  ◯ No

3. Did you participate in a Black Male Initiative or Black Male Mentoring program while enrolled at your HBCU? *

  ◯ Yes

  ◯ No

Potential Participant Information

All information will be kept confidential

4. First and Last Name *

5. Phone Number *

6. Email *

Consent To Be Contacted

This form is for contact purposes only, and you are not considered a research participant at this stage. The researcher will contact you with further instructions and forms if you are selected to

7. Does the researcher have your consent to contact you? *

○ Yes

○ No

APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Recipient:

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in organizational leadership. The purpose of my research is to understand how Black Male Initiative programs contribute to the completion of an undergraduate degree for Black males at HBCUs. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must identify as a Black male, graduated from an HBCU within the last ten years, or be a college senior who will graduate within the next year and participated in a Black Male Initiative program or male mentoring program. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in the following: audio- and video-recorded individual interview (45 - 60 minutes), audio- and video-recorded focus group (45 – 60 minutes), and journal exercise (30 - 45 minutes). You will have the option to participate in member checking (reviewing transcripts of interviews to ensure accuracy) (30 minutes). Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact complete the Recruitment Sign-Up form via the link below.

CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP

A consent document will be sent to you electronically via Adobe PDF Sign after you contact me to discuss the research. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Once received, please sign the consent document and submit it back to me. Your signed consent document must be received prior to the start of data collection.
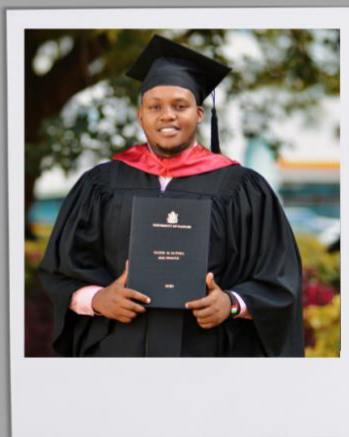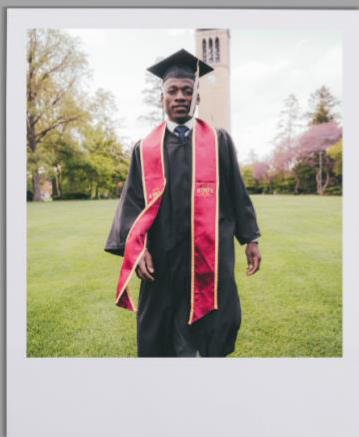
Sincerely,

Jenard D. Moore
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT FLYER

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM

Consent

Title of the Project: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Black Males Who Have Participated in a Black Male Initiative Program at a Historically Black College or University
Principal Investigator: Jenard D. Moore, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must identify as a Black male, graduated from an HBCU within the last ten years, and be a college senior who will graduate within the next year, participated in a Black Male Initiative program or male mentoring program. 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.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

This phenomenological study aims to identify and understand how Black Male Initiative programs contributed to the completion of an undergraduate degree for Black males at HBCUs.

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:

1. Participate in a one-on-one virtual interview with the researcher. Interviews should take approximately 45–60 minutes to complete (audio and video will be recorded).
2. Review your one-on-one interview transcript. This will take approximately 20–30 minutes. Transcripts will be emailed to you 1 week after the interview and should be returned 1 week after receipt.
3. Participate in a virtual focus group with a maximum of 5 other participants who qualified for the study (this focus group should take approximately 45–60 minutes; audio and video will be recorded).
4. Review focus group transcript. This will take approximately 30–45 minutes. Transcripts will be emailed to you 1 week after the interview and should be returned 1 week after receipt.
5. Complete a journal prompt, which will be sent via Microsoft Forms (this should take approximately 30–45 minutes).

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include:

1. Increased knowledge on the topic of Black Male Initiative programs and the factors that promote success for Black male students

2. Providing relevant, up-to-date data for higher education faculty, staff, and administrators regarding Black male students.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating 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. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Data collected 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 and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for 3 years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other focus group members may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on 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, aside from the 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 Jenard D. Moore. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at ███████████████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Katelyn Wheeler, at ███████████████████.

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 IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

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 of 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 audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

APPENDIX F: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Individual Interview Questions

Interview Questions	Research Questions
1. Please introduce yourself and tell me anything you think is essential for me to know.	
2. Please describe what led you to apply for college.	
3. Please explain why you chose your specific institution.	
4. Tell me about your K-12 experience and how that prepared you for college.	SQ1
5. Please discuss any potential barriers you faced before applying for college.	SQ1
6. Please tell me about the support you had when applying for college.	SQ1
7. What concerns did you have enrolling in college as a Black male?	SQ1
8. Please describe your experiences as a Black male enrolled at an HBCU.	SQ1
9. Please tell me any challenges you faced during your first semester at your HBCU.	SQ1
10. Please describe how prepared you felt you were to attend college and what things you wish you would have done differently to prepare.	SQ1
11. Please tell me how and why you participated in a BMI program.	CRQ, SQ2

12. Describe the BMI program that you were a part of at your HBCU.	CRQ
13. Explain the primary factors promoted in your BMI that ensured you successfully graduated.	CRQ
14. Describe mentoring and engagement as a Black male student in BMI at an HBCU.	CRQ, SQ2
15. Describe or tell me about a mentor or role model you had at your HBCU.	
16. Please explain the activities that you participated in on campus.	SQ2
17. Please explain a few skills or life lessons you learned from the BMI program you were a part of at your HBCU.	SQ3
18. How prepared did you feel for life after college after participating in a BMI program?	SQ3
19. To what extent do you feel like you were a valuable member of your college community?	SQ2
20. Hopefully, you found these questions to be a good exploration of your background as a successful Black male college graduate. Would you like to add anything or elaborate on any of the topics we have discussed today?	

APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions	Research Questions
1. Please start by introducing yourself and include what HBCU you attended, your major, your graduation year, and the name of the BMI program you participated in.	
2. Please share a few things you learned from your BMI program that made you a successful college graduate.	CRQ, SQ2
3. Please share why you enrolled at an HBCU and what role that decision played in your student success.	CRQ, SQ2
4. Discuss your potential academic success and path if you had not joined a BMI program at your HBCU	SQ1
5. Please share other activities you participated in on-campus outside your BMI program.	SQ2
6. Discuss your K-12 experience and share how it prepared you for college.	SQ1
7. What barriers did you face as a Black male on your educational journey?	SQ1
8. What advice would you give to younger Black males about being a successful college graduate?	CRQ
9. Please list the top three things Black males need to succeed in college.	SQ2

10. What can other higher education institutions do to better support the success of Black males?	CRQ, SQ2
11. Would you like to add anything or elaborate on any of the topics we have discussed today?	

APPENDIX H: JOURNAL PROMPT

Journal Prompt Question

Journal Prompt Question

As a Black male who has successfully graduated from an HBCU and participated in a BMI program, please write a letter to future Black males who will attend an HBCU. Please discuss the possible challenges they may face on their academic journey, how to overcome them, how to connect to campus programs, and how to navigate life after college.

APPENDIX I: PORTRAIT OF PARTICIPANTS

Portrait of Participants

Participant	Age	Graduation Year	Undergrad Degree	Graduate Degree	Household Status	Employment Status
John	22	2023	Graphic & Visual Design	Master's Applicant	Both Parents	Full-time Student (Senior)
Travis	22	2022	Accounting	Master's	Both Parents	Full-time Student (MBA)
Lucas	23	2022	Criminal Justice	Master's	Single Mother	Full-time Student (MBA)
Franklin	24	2021	Industrial & System Engineering	N/A	* Single Mother	Full-time Job
Jake	24	2021	Social Work	Master's PhD Student	Single Mother	Full-time Ph.D. Student
Christ	26	2019	Business Admin.	Master's	Single Mother	Full-time Job
Kobe	32	2014	Marketing & Com.	Master's	Single Mother	Full-time Job
Bobby	32	2013	Criminal Justice	Master's	Single Mother	Full-time Job
Raymond	33	2013	Economics	Masters	Single Mother	Full-time Job

| Malcolm | 33 | 2013 | Graphics & Visual Design | N/A | Single Mother | Full-time Job |